

AFC Wimbledon US Dons Newsletter

Issue 15 – September 2006

Contents:

US Dons – News

AFCW News

Guest Column

Fundraising Activities

Contacts

US Dons – News

Well, the season is finally underway. With the World Cup this year it has seemed like there has been no break from football. But that's OK with most of us. The Ryman league is in full swing and this week marks the start of the cup campaigns.

How do you think we started the season? How do you think we will fare, after the start we have had? Do you think our start bodes well for a promotion push this year? How is the new team settling in and can they carry us to conference football next year?

Send in your views and we will publish them and give a synopsis of where the US Dons Supporters feel the club will finish. E-mail your responses to me at: davgarlinge@aol.com.

Don't forget to check out the club news on the official website. Also Paul Raymond's "Itmustbedons" website is a great source for Wimbledon news. For hme games you can dial up "Radio Wdon" and listen to some interesting commentary as well as some interesting and little known statistics. And while listening to the commentary you can go to the Old Central web-page for some spirited chat with other Don's fans from all over the world, and I mean all over the world.

The web-sites are listed at the end of the newsletter.

Anyone interested in playing in a Premiership fantasy league, a free one, can log into 'www.fantasy.premierleague.com' and sign up. There is an AFC Wimbledon league (go to the Join a League section and enter the code: 8341-2232), as well as the overall league and various country leagues. If there is any interest we can also set up a US Dons league as a little rivalry amongst ourselves. Let me know if you're interested and I can set up the league.

As always, any news items, comments or ideas are welcome.

We have a contacts page attached, and anyone who doesn't mind sharing their information, 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

With one sixth of the league over, 7 games, we are one of only three unbeaten clubs. Unfortunately we are currently sitting in eighth position in the league, 4 points behind the division leader. We have been held to four draws to go with our 3 victories. Our defense has done it's part allowing a league leading 3 goals conceded, but our forwards have, at times, had a tough time scoring. Two of the last three games have seen scoring outbursts of 4 and 3 goals, so maybe the offense is beginning to gel. Let's hope so. There is still a long way to go, but we need to start our push for promotion into high gear. There have been some surprises in the league with a couple of the promoted clubs being the frontrunners, Horsham and Margate. Will they stand the test of a long season, or will they fade as the long season begins to take its toll. Hopefully, we are better equipped to withstand the long season and have enough depth in our squad to come out ahead.

The Cup season began this week with a home tie in the Westview cup against Hastings United, from the Ryman first division. It was an opportunity for Dave Anderson to "blood" some of the younger players. Despite being a goal down midway through the second half, the Don's prevailed with two late goals, for a 2 – 1 victory.

The F. A. Cup games begin this coming Saturday, with a home game against Horsham. What was thought to be an easy tie when the draw was announced may not be the case! Horsham promoted last season to the Premier league are the early frontrunners and 4 points ahead of us, unbeaten, and scoring a lot of goals. This will be a test, both to stay in the cup, for a much-needed financial boost, as well as how the league shakes out. Tune in to Radio WDON, and listen to the game.

A disappointment to date, have been the home crowds. After four home games in the league, they are running about 4,000 shy of last years' average. Is this due to football burnout with a World Cup hangover? Is it due to the end of the summer holidays and school just starting? Or are we losing some support? Send your thoughts in!

Some other happenings at the club include the resignation of Kris Stewart as the Chairman. He has put in a lot of hard work and inspiration to raise this club from the ashes, and every true Wimbledon supporter owes him a huge Thank You. So from all of us at the US Don's Thanks Kris for a job well done, and we hope you can enjoy the fruits of what you started and carried for four years, from the Tempest End, cheering the team on to promotion.

THANKS KRIS!

COME ON YOU DON'S

Guest Column:

HOW THE HELL DO WE GET FROM HERE TO THERE?

NEWS that a 'businessman' wants to buy into AFC Wimbledon has opened some old wounds, but TREVOR PEARCE says it's only started up a debate about exactly what the fans want to achieve with the fans-owned club.

GIVEN the world of rumour and disinformation that is the post-World Cup close season here in old Blighty, you could have been forgiven for dismissing the notion that a businessman was preparing a bid for AFC Wimbledon — surely given our history anyone with even a vague clue as to who we are and what we are about wouldn't try to buy the club from the fans?

Certainly I did, and I was consequently amazed to find out that, not only was it a true story, but it had got as far as being debated by the board — and there were even a minority who felt that it should have been given more consideration.

As always with these kind of commercially sensitive deals, facts are a little thin on the ground — we don't know who the businessman was, whether he was a long-term Wimbledon supporter or a businessman looking to make a profit out of the club, and we don't know much about the plans that the businessman had, should his bid have been successful.

We do know that the bid was considered by the AFCW board, and after some deliberation it was decided that “The sale of a controlling stake in the club would be contrary to the spirit and/or letter of the Society's Objects and Aims.”

At that point I believe most Wimbledon fans were perfectly happy with the Board's approach. We have, after all, dealt with businessmen wanting controlling interests before, and not so much had our fingers burnt as our arms chopped off.

However, the inevitable Wimbledon twist to the story came a day or two after the club released their version of events, when Xavier Wiggins revealed that he had arranged the original meeting between the board and the businessman, and that he felt that the deal had not been given sufficient consideration.

I've never met Xavier, but to call him a Wimbledon stalwart is to underplay his role.

This is someone who has been an active Wimbledon supporter from the 1980s, a former fanzine editor and leading light in the campaigns against Dublin and Milton Keynes. When someone with his background is prepared to back up an approach a re-think is perhaps needed.

Subsequent debate has come back to the question that I think we have still to resolve.

What exactly is it that we want to achieve?

Obviously we want to win the League and Champions League every year, but in reality we have decisions to make.

Is our priority the league place? A return to Merton?

Are we prepared to sacrifice on-pitch success in order to support initiatives such as the women's and under-16 teams? Is fan ownership the means, or the ends?

Both Xavier and fellow veteran Lee Willett have put forward the view that our number one priority should be a return to Merton - and if that means selling to corporate interests then so be it, as long as there is a guarantee that this won't lead down the path it did before.

Others have stated that they would rather remain a fans-owned club in the Ryman League than sell our souls to the corporate devil.

I personally would like my Wimbledon back - the team that took on, and beat, the big boys, that drank at the Fox and Grapes and played at Plough Lane, with salt in the half-time tea and a cold bath at the end of the game for the opposition.

But even if we were to agree on that (and I don't get the sense that I am in a majority here) - how the hell do we get from here to there?

Smeltz no icon, but he was sure special

Newly-wed COLUM McANDREW bids a fond farewell to AFC Wimbledon's first-ever international Shane Smeltz, who is now with Halifax Town after a couple of seasons at KM.

YOU have to admire the journeymen pro. The player who puts his professional career before their personal needs. The game is littered with those who move lock, stock and barrel around the country and back again to where they are required.

The back pages of the papers are full of details of the Premier League's elite who move even further afield in search of fame, fortune and major sponsorship deals. Rarely do you hear of a player who moves to the other side of the globe with no guarantee of success.

When Shane Smeltz arrived on these shores in 2004 he hoped of a professional career. He spent time at West Ham before signing for Mansfield Town. It's fair to say he didn't set the world alight there with only four appearances and eventually he was released. Not to be deterred, he took this knock on the chin and vowed to return to follow his dream. He arrived at AFC Wimbledon, a surprise to some, and bided his time until his next opportunity. Two seasons later and it has arrived and he is off to Halifax Town in the Conference.

He arrived at Kingsmeadow late in the Combined Counties League season when it was pretty much a certainty that we'd be promoted as champions. His job was to reinforce the front line at a time when injuries and suspensions were in danger of leaving us short. To say his arrival was the stuff of dreams (two goals that stood out in an otherwise dull away win against Newport IOW) is probably understating things but then that just about sums up his time at AFC Wimbledon.

There are those who'd argue that Shane disappeared whilst on the pitch only to arrive a few moments later on the ball, beat three players before turning and unleashing a ferocious shot into the far corner of the net. There is an element of truth to this but there is no doubting his record. I was surprised to read that Shane had played 50 times for the Wombles yet had scored 26 goals. That's a strike record that would make any striker proud. Only Richard Butler and the ubiquitous Kevin Cooper can boast better strike rates, but remember they played at least one whole season in a league where even I could have got the odd goal!! I can't help think of Shane in the same terms as Chris Waddle, Matt Le Tissier and our own Glyn Hodges. These were the players that took your breath away and left you asking, "How did they do that?" in some games whilst being completely invisible in the next. This is a gross injustice to Shane as he never quite fitted into that category. Yet the fact that I do think of him in those terms does beg the question whether he should be held in high esteem? "An erratic talent" is just one term used to describe him. As The Big Tissue put it recently, "everything was missable for him but by the same token nothing was impossible." As if to illustrate this they added how, "he mesmerised three Bromley defenders in an area of the penalty box roughly the size of an average toilet cubicle before crashing the ball against the crossbar."

Yet for me his place in the AFC Wimbledon hall of fame is secured not for his long service, charisma nor dedication to the cause. He wasn't here long enough to secure iconic status. He didn't appear to have the personality to bond with the fans, in fact many of his goal celebrations were low key to the point of disinterest. He may have hung around for a while and helped us to ever greater success but everyone knew that eventually he'd be off back to New Zealand or, more likely, to a league club. No, I don't place him in the hall of fame for any of these reasons. I'll remember Shane as the player who turned up at our door saying "Giz' a job", showed true professionalism and managed to score some of the most sublime and defining goals of AFC Wimbledon's history. A Dickie Guy or a John Fashanu he ain't but he left a sizeable imprint on the field during his short time at Kingsmeadow to convince me that he was special.

Now he has gone, we all have to hope that he goes on to bigger and better things for two reasons. Firstly, it is always good to be able to talk over a beer with your mates that you remember a player when he played for Wimbledon. It's something we've got used to over the years. I've had many a conversation about Nigel Winterburn, Dave Beasant, Dennis Wise, Warren Barton, etc. It's been a while since I've been able to add to that list. Perhaps I may have just such an opportunity in the future. The other reason to hope for bigger things for Shane is the sell-on fee that forms part of the contract. Obviously the specifics are secret but even if it is 1% and he is sold for £500,000 (not too unrealistic for a prolific striker) that means £5000 coming our way and that's not to be sniffed at. As Shane begins his career with the Shays it's time to summarise his contribution to AFC Wimbledon. He started with a 20-yard "stunner" against Newport IOW. He added solo goals (running half the length of the field before rolling the ball into the Folkestone Invicta net). There were many examples of brilliance both as a goal poacher and provider. He huffed and puffed occasionally but never complained. He was also acknowledged by everyone around the club as a pleasant individual. In the

day and age of megastar players will egos bigger than their pay packets that is both refreshing and welcome. Way to go Shane!

Thanks to our guest columnists and to Rob Smith of WDSA for his help and support of this newsletter.

Fundraising Activities

Not much interest seems to have been generated lately on the fundraising front! In the past we have had two “Don’s Diets”, there has been a couple of E-Bay auctions of Don’s memorabilia and last year we sponsored a kit.

Anyone have any ideas of how we can show support of our club?
Send in your suggestions and let’s show the club they have our support.

Anyone with ideas to help us show support for our club is encouraged to send their ideas to us. E-mail them to Dave Hambly or myself.

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 (Old Centrals): <http://www.afcwgb.co.uk/gb.php>