

AFC Wimbledon US Dons Newsletter

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US Dons – News

Welcome to all of the new members who have recently joined. It is amazing how our numbers continue to climb. We will be over 50 regular members before too much longer. For you new members send me a some short notes on yourselves to acquaint the other members about you. How you came to support the Dons, your memories and why you continue to support the club. Tell us how you are still involved, are you a shareowner, etc? Do you get back to see any games?

Feel free to send articles or anything you feel may go well in this Newsletter.

Existing members don't forget you too can add any contributions, including BIO's. Some of you existing members have changed your e-mail addresses, as your newsletter is not being successfully delivered via e-mail. Be sure to update either Dave Hambly or myself for continued e-mail delivery.

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

We are in the final third of the season and remain with a good chance of making the playoffs and possibly qualifying for election to the Conference on our first try. The run in will be a tough one as we play many of the teams above us, who are also chasing those promotion spots. The good news is, we have been playing better against the top teams than the lower teams. Don't forget you can listen to the home games, LIVE on the web (address is posted later on in the newsletter) and join the chat-line during the game and converse with other supporters worldwide. Look forward to seeing you out there!

“Come on you DON'S”

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David Garlinge
(Limeydg).

AFCW News

The results this past month have been mixed. Some good results and some not so good. We seem to raise our game against the top clubs, but play down to the level of the lower clubs. Inconsistency has been the blight of our season so far, as evidenced by the Home draw against Windsor and Eton, followed by the superb 1 – 0 victory at Fisher. The good news is, the run in to the finale will pit us against most of the teams above us. A win in these situations is worth six points as opposed to the normal three points. Let's hope our pattern of play continues and we win the big games and hope we can finally beat up on the lower teams.

On the team front the news has been as good. An injury plagued season has turned even worse with the loss of Richard Butler for possibly the rest of the season. By far our most potent striker, who never gives up and seems to inspire the rest of them with his infectious play. The two new strikers brought in both suffered knocks in their first game. Shane Smeltz was away on international duty for New Zealand., but is now back and will hopefully bring his shooting boots. He played in one of the international games and by all reports had some rave reviews.

On the business front, another successful fundraiser was held by the Trust. A Dinner with Dave Basset appears to have been a great success. Everyone had a great evening and it was finished off with a money-spinning auction. Several items were donated and over Nine thousand pounds was bid and raised, which will further reduce the debt owed to the Khosla's.

Don't forget, you can listen to the Home games on the Internet at 'www.wdon.com', and while enjoying the game you can hook up to the new chat-room at: '<http://www.afcwgb.co.uk/gb.php>' and chat with some of your fellow Dons. Several of the US Dons are on there as are some of the other distant supporters and the home based supporters who can't make the game in person. Hope to see some of you out there in the coming weeks

Guest Column:

WHAT IS THE POINT OF WIMBLEDON'S FOOTBALL CLUB?

AFC Wimbledon are facing a dilemma: should the club focus on an all-out assault for a Football League place and hang the expense or build a stable and secure future, asks TREVOR PEARCE I once saw it written that the correct answer to the exam question: "What were the effects of the French Revolution of the 18th Century" is "it's too early to say." And certainly anyone thinking that AFC Wimbledon is now fully established and focused on its future goals is, to be frank, living in cloud cuckoo land. Not only have we not focused on our goals, after a mere four years existence we haven't really begun to work out exactly what those goals are, and we are reaching a point where more focus will be needed (although we might get some leeway thanks to the likes of Folkestone and Chelmsford de-railing the juggernaut).

It is a common misconception that we are able to outbid clubs are our current level for players. Yes, of course, we have a more sizeable fan base by some margin (although Chelmsford, with their new stadium, have attracted a few 2000+ crowds of late, but this is unlikely to last). But we also have the small matter of the Khosla debt to service.

We are now competing with clubs like Billericay and Fisher, who have chairmen who are prepared to bankroll their club to a higher level — and who, without our history of the consequences of this kind of behaviour, are perhaps less cautious than we feel we need to be. Obviously on that fateful day in May 2002 we were more or less unanimous that we needed to set out our own football club. But what many didn't realise is that there was more to this than finding the best 11 players and sending them out to do battle on our behalf. Is this a club whose focus is on simply getting up the league and re-claiming our league position? Or is it one that should focus more on community representation than our previous incarnation? Should we put all of our income into the first team, or should we bother with youth teams and women's teams? What is the point of Wimbledon's football club, and what do we want it to say about football in Wimbledon?

As we have steamrolled up the divisions we haven't really had to give this much thought. With our resources we have been confident of setting up community links, youth teams, women's teams and so on, and still able to attract players that enable us to win every week. But we're coming to a point where we hit a wall. We can still attract players because of the size of the club - - at our level, the chance to play in front of 2,500 every week can bring Conference level players to us even if they could earn more money elsewhere. But having said that, there are chairmen out there who, for whatever reason, are prepared to pay out money that their clubs cannot actually sustain for the glory of promotion. Hornchurch were an example that some chairmen have not been careful to heed (a club flying high in the Conference South level, paying out wages that wouldn't have looked out of place at 3rd Division clubs, when the chairman's double glazing business went bust, taking the club with it).

Fisher are probably the worst-supported club in the division, paying the highest wages. Billericay and Braintree attract 250 supporters every week, and yet have full-time players. While we are quite right in saying that this is unsustainable and sooner or later they may well have to pay a heavy price. The fact has been that another club with another (perhaps) reckless chairman will arise to take its place — and these are clubs we have to compete with.

I do believe that we won't be in the Ryman Premier for long — we seem to have adjusted with recent results against Worthing, Staines and Walton & Hersham.

And in actual fact, on crowd size alone the Conference South doesn't seem that much of a jump. But at that level we will be competing with more clubs who are prepared to mortgage their futures for the chance of a crack at league football, which we are not.

If and when we get to Conference level, then the likelihood is that we will be playing against clubs who can match our support and whose ambition may well be seen to exceed their income. But at the end of the day I have never yet heard a group of fans singing "our books are more balanced

than yours". The question is whether the board will be able to withstand the pressure to spend money we don't have to chase our dream of reclaiming our league status.

REVOLVING DOOR AT KM

Robert Smith

IT'S becoming a transit lounge at the Meadow of Kings as Dave Anderson wheels-and-deals 'Arry Redknapp-fashion bringing in new players and sending others packing as the push is on in earnest for a place in the end-of-season playoffs. I tuned into Radio WDON the other morning to listen to the Braintree match and luckily I didn't switch off, as some did. Actually, contributor David Bugg was halfway down the Kingston Road to the British Rail station when he heard a huge roar in the 97th-minute!! It looked like the Dons were down the pan after leaders Braintree grabbed what was then considered a late goal before skipper Steve Butler rammed home the equaliser seven minutes later. I thought from what I heard that Braintree deserved to win, they created the more scoring chances and were rock-solid at the back. But full credit to AFC for going right to the bitter end. At the time of writing the Dons are three points behind fifth-placed Worthing with two games in hand, so the promotion push is well and truly on. DA has signalled an all-out assault by signing three players, striker Liam George and midfielders Dean Brennan and Martin Carthy. That meant Mark Peters, Nas Richardson and Barry Moore were surplus as DA tries to improve his squad for a crack at the Conference South. Braintree, seven points clear, look the champions, but if AFC can find a run of consistency, a play-off place is well in reach. DA's transfer activity recalls the time when Dave Bassett shelled out a then record £125,000 for John Fashanu from Millwall to get the Dons into the old first division in March 1986 and the galvanising effect he had on the team. I'm not saying George, Brennan or Carthy will do that, but Anderson's motives show a clear motivation that AFC believe they can greatly improve their chances of going up with the right new talent. I've said it before, but the revolving transfer dealings make it hard for fans like us so far away to get a fix on the AFC players, with so many coming and going. By my count 41 players have been used in some capacity or other with 11 players signed since the opening day's game and 11 gone. That is a boggling turnaround and the business is done with a ground debt in the background and still they come in as shown by George, Brennan and Carthy. If in a few months' time all of DA's transfer wheeling-dealing has paid off and the Dons do get to the Conference South at the first attempt, I don't think there will be any grumbles, but the loyalty factor is certainly getting a very serious work-out right now.

Thanks to Robert Smith (WDSA) and Trevor Pearce.

Please Keep these articles coming. It would be great to hear some viewpoints from some of our own US Dons. Your feelings of the direction AFCW is taking, how Dave Anderson is managing the playing staff or how the Trust is doing in getting the books balanced.

Fundraising Activities

Currently not much happening here.

We need your help to come up with some ideas of how we can help our club raise the money to further reduce the debt owed to the Khosla's.

If you look on the "ItmustbeDons" website, Paul Raymond, webmaster, lists an Amazon.com web click-thru. For any purchases initiated from the "ItmustbeDons" web-site, Amazon funds a donation (commission). This is paid quarterly and Paul passes on the donation to the AFCW Stadium Fund. For the year Paul indicated this enterprise netted over 850.00 for the Fund. SoCal, maybe we could set up a similar setup on our website? What do you think.

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.

If any of you have had trouble getting on to this site, they have had a few problems during a system upgrade. Things are back to normal now, so please take a look and feel free to join up for this worthy cause.

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.

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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>

