

The Mariners Voice



February 2008

Issue 5

Exciting Times

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I'd like to start this issue by applauding the lads. Since our winter break they've come back stronger than ever. Only one defeat in six games (and that was harsh) and now sitting right on the shoulders of Ryton and Whickham in 4th place, and still with games in hand.

Things are looking, and feeling great at the moment. These are exciting, but crucial times at Filtrona. At the end of this month we could be sat comfortably in 2nd place, and have a cup final to look forward to.

The lads are working their socks off for us. Perhaps it's time to make sure they know we appreciate it. I know theres shouting and applause throughout the game. That's great!

I know we all do appreciate the sweat they shed out there, but do we actually show enough?

I'd like us to show just a little bit more, so how about we make sure that the team KNOW we appreciate them and what they do out them. Why don't we all gather to applaud the lads off at the end, I know that a lot of us are there anyway, so a minute or so applauding and congratulating the teams efforts won't hurt.....but it may just help show how much they are appreciated.

We (the supporters) are part of this promotion drive too.....So lets do OUR bit just as well as the lads are

CUMMON SHIELDS

Penrith Town	23	17	2	4	49	23	26	53
Ryton	26	16	1	9	59	32	27	49
Whickham	25	15	3	7	54	42	12	48
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South Shields	24	14	4	6	65	38	27	46
Thornaby	23	13	3	7	49	37	12	42
Birtley Town	27	13	3	11	47	50	-3	42
S'land RCA	23	13	2	8	51	36	15	41

A Voice In The Crowd by Colin Porter

After reading the excellent previous voice in the crowd articles by John / Steve and not forgetting the young Mariner section (Christopher) it confirms the passion felt by supporters for this club. We all have one common goal, success on and off the pitch.

Having watched Shields man and boy since the exciting successful days of the late 60s, I was going to attempt to write this article non sentimental and without my claret and blue blinkers on, but am afraid found it impossible.

During the time of writing this article we have trounced Hebburn 6-1, fought a real battle to beat Ryton 3-2, been defeated and kicked off the park 4-2 at Horden and defeated Thornaby 3-2 in the cup quarter final. So it now looks like promotion will go to the wire again, a possible cup final and a nail biting exciting end of season run in store. Not for the feint hearted.

The club has a real buzz about the place at the moment both on and off the pitch. It is amazing to see so much claret and blue around the ground on match days (home and away) with hats/ scarf's / T shirts /replica strips, not to mention the new Shields banners that have recently appeared behind the goals. Other league teams must be very envious of our support.

Watching Shields a few years ago was a habit, now match days are a real pleasure; there is a definite feeling of optimism at the club. The season so far has been a real rollercoaster of emotions. Early season we were like a runaway train dead certs for promotion then spluttered midway, we have played sometimes breathtaking and other times suicidal football.

Off the pitch we are certainly shaping up to Conference league standards. The structure of the club appears sound with a strong committee/Secretary/Chairman in place.

The pitch is looking in good condition, all credit to grounds person. Our refreshments are also up their in the Conference league, this is always re-confirmed after visiting various away game tuck shops. Well done Ladies. Our match day programmes are first class, always a good read especially when back in the comforts of the warm house.

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“Our refreshments are also up their in the Conference league, this is always re-confirmed after visiting various away game tuck shops. Well done Ladies”

(I had to get a pie related quote in somewhere....Mick)

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The supporters club has gone from strength to strength with a membership of 49 senior and 8 junior, that's approximately 1/3rd of the average gate...

Very encouraging seeing the next generation of supporters coming through with the junior Mariners section.

The website is also proving very popular with various photos/history/ club shop items and not to mention the ever popular Mariners message board forum, where everyone has an opinion which makes for a healthy and sometimes heated discussion.

We have a first class club shop operating in the bar before kick off selling SSFC memorabilia. So off the pitch everything is shaping up very nicely indeed.



"South Tyneside's senior club"

On the Pitch

At the beginning of the season I was absolutely certain that we had the squad to get promotion (still am) but then hit the sticky period before Xmas.

Although we possessed bags of skill, and played excellent football we sometimes missed chances during tight vital games, often being just simply unlucky. It's all part of the game and come the end of season they reckon your luck evens itself out so perhaps we have turned the corner. This problem appears to now be eased with players coming back from suspension and our recent new signings.

The management team will I am sure prove to be a success, possessing bags of experience on the coaching and playing side. Also gaining valuable experience every match.

Looking at the subs bench we now appear to have real strength in depth. All the squad could easily be in the starting line up, come the end of season every player will have played their part of the successful campaign (hopefully).

Which brings me to my next thought, the Gaffer has the hardest job of all at the club picking what he believes is the best team on the day, that's why I think its good that when things are going not so good the supporters continues to back the manager.

I believe that the majority of present squad players consider it an honour to wear the Shields strip, and are also aware that some people at the club live and breathe The Mariners.

Early season we have had players scouted by higher league clubs , however offers were declined and players decided to stay which bodes well for the future.

South Shields F.C. is a sleeping giant steeped in history that is starting to wake up. With a town population of 60000 plus we could be getting gates of thousands rather than hundreds.

The club and supporters must continue to promote SSFC to the public; hopefully this will attract disgruntled fans from Newcastle or Sunderland.

Who instead of paying high prices to watch mediocre overpaid footballers can come along to Filtrona and watch an honest full blooded exciting game of football including a pie and pint at a fraction of the cost.

Nothing succeeds like success, at the moment we are definitely heading in the right direction upwards and onwards both on and off the field.

UPWARDS AND ONWARDS.

A Message From The League Chairman; Mike Amos

The Inside Track by Philip Reay

Another month has raced by and the race for promotion to the First division of the Arngrove Northern League continues to be very tight with most of the top sides dropping points in the last month; sadly we are one of these, the result at Horden was very disappointing to say the least however I feel the least said about that the better.

As our supporters association takes shape and grows it was interesting to note the Ground rules in the Horden programme relating to the conduct of supporters at the game, I was appalled to say the least at the pitch invasion by the drunken moron and hope strong action is taken it was fortunate that he did not become aggressive, perhaps if we had of been winning at the time his mood may have been different.



One of the positive points that has come from the formation of the supporters association is the improved attitude towards match officials. It may seem only a small thing but it has not gone unnoticed with match officials, long may it continue. I have also spoken to the League Chairman who was impressed by the supporters association's stand on bad language.

Since the last news letter Studs has moved to strengthen the squad and both new signings Duncan O'Brien and Ian Hudson made impressive debuts in the cup victory over Thornaby on Tuesday night, the search to strengthen the squad continues and hopefully promotion will result.

February is going to be a vital month with a series of four home league games to come against Birtley, Hebburn, Prudhoe and Darlington RA, the return from suspension of club captain Lee Paul Scroggins will be a boost to the side along with the new additions.

Off the park the club continues to seek new sponsors and promote events to raise the money required to be competitive, hopefully by the time you read this we will have had a successful and enjoyable race night and brought in some much needed revenue.

Unfortunately one of our sources of income has come to an end; the weekly draw has had to be halted as we are not selling enough tickets to cover the costs.

Whist the monthly contribution to the newsletter is an informal way of communicating with the supporters association one of the things the committee is keen to introduce is to have a representative of the association at committee meetings to see/hear first hand what is happening at the club.

It is good to see the newsletter expanding with more content and contributions from a range of people, as I wrote in my last contribution if anyone would like to contribute an article for publication in the programme have a word with me.

As ever Onwards and Upwards.

If the average occupant of an ANL dugout swore in the street with the same volume and frequency that he does during a match he'd be locked up, charged with causing an affray and fined a week's wages.

If the average ANL player reacted in the same gratuitously foul-mouthed way to situations at home as he does to the most minor irritations on the field, their lass would have walked out long ago.

That's why I was delighted to read the plea in issue four of the Mariners' newsletter for all concerned with the club simply to mind their language. What a difference it would make if they did – though it has to be said that the problem is very rarely with spectators.

Offensive language is truly a curse on the game, one of the biggest problems we face. I have dozens of letters from decent people, often family people taking kids and grandkids to matches, who've been aghast at what they've heard go unchecked. Often they vow not to return until something is done about it.

So what can we do? The laws of the game, which apply equally to those in the dugout as to those on the field, remain clear: it is an offence punishable by dismissal from the field to use offensive, insulting or abusive language.

Why don't referees and their assistants enforce it? Why do they apparently assume that if someone's allowed to eff and blind throughout ninety minutes that none in the crowd is going to be offended? Why do so many match officials either seem to be careless of the reputation and future of the game at this level or to have a yellow streak all the way down their smart black outfits?

The Northern League has long tried to take a stand against swearing. Four years ago we tried to persuade all clubs voluntarily to sign a charter committing themselves to a campaign against offensive language. I've a feeling, and it doesn't now matter, that South Shields were one of the three or four who declined to sign.

For some time it seemed to be working quite well. Then someone at the FA took it on himself to change the whole interpretation of the law on offensive language. It could be divided, he said, into what was outright nasty and what was merely born of frustration. A referee should be allowed to "manage out" swearing.

In that act, the FA gave carte blanche to every cowardly or incompetent match official in the land to turn a deaf ear to anything he wished and a blind eye to anything that might be considered for the good of the game. Wholesale swearing goes wholly unpunished, the game suffers and still they pick up their ever-inflated brown envelopes.

Received wisdom was that referees would only punish foul and abusive language when it was aimed directly at them or their assistants, but now in almost every game we hear examples of obscenities being hurled clearly and directly at the official and we see them not just ignoring it but running away from it. So much for managing it out.

Because I believe that the unchecked use of obscenity so greatly threatens the game at our level, I wrote in December to Ray Lewis, the chairman of the FA referees committee, proposing that, as an experiment for season 2008-09, the ANL should become a "zero tolerance" area for those who swear.

The experiment would closely be monitored by both the FA and the League. The idea is

being considered by the FA referees committee on February 7 but, to be honest, I don't expect them to take it on board. They have an agenda of their own.

So here's the big challenge for the South Shields Supporters Association. Why not work with all concerned at the club to make Filtrona Park – and those grounds you visit – a **The Man Himself: Gary Steadman** every 20 minutes in its own right. It won't be easy, Men will curse and revile you, as the bible puts it, but the benefits and the positive publicity would be enormous.

Hello all,

There'll always be times when a player, badly injured or in sudden pain, will instinctively a few quick words as I'm dashing out for the Hebburn game. I think 9 points out the last 12 is just what we needed, a bit dissapointed with the Hornden game as i thought we deserved something out of that game but as a whole i,m delighted with the squad now with the additions of Nathan Wright, Willie Crew and Duncan O'brien just what we needed to freshen things up.

So lets hope for 2 points against our local rivals tonight and give this town and its support ers a boost. Don't anyone give the clubs about to bring a major game, because it's a family game, just as much into the 1st division children – especially when our clubs depend on them paying at the gate. It's also supposed to be disciplined game, but it's being played by wholly undisciplined people and controlled by cowards.

So can the supporters association work with the club to achieve this potentially massive breakthrough? Will South Shields be known not just for its annual attempt at promotion from the second division but for bringing something potentially groundbreaking to football?

That's your first great challenge – to convince the parent club seriously and strictly to try it, to harness the potentially massive publicity that being the game's first zero tolerance area would bring and to watch the effect on crowds in the next 12 months.

I'll help in any way I can. Every good wish to your association.

Mike Amos
Chairman, Arngrove Northern League
2007

January 18

Down Memory Lane

From the next issue I hope to run a regular item about South Shields FC from years gone by.

I have already been very kindly supplied with some very good material, but as always I need more. So please dig around in your little boxes, lofts, cupboards and memory banks, for anything and everything to do with South Shields Football club.

If it interests you, it'll interest others

Diary of Events

Sat, 09/02/2008	South Shields	Prudhoe Town	ANL2
Tue, 12/02/2008	South Shields	Darlington RA	ANL 2
Sat, 16/02/2008	Crook Town	South Shields	ANL2
Tue, 19/02/2008	South Shields	Sunderland RCA	ANL2
Sat, 23/02/2008	South Shields	Stokesley	ANL2
Tue, 26/02/2008	Whickham	South Shields	ANL2

If you have anything you'd like to see or say, in the Mariners Voice please send your ideas and submissions to m.viney@smartbuilddolutions.co.uk

http://www.southshields-sanddancers.co.uk/mariners/football_club.htm