

Fans Forum – Friday 25th November

Are the rumours true that Brent Leister has gone to Tadcaster?

(Tony Brown) Yes the rumours are true; it was published in the paper recently.

Are the rumours true that Frank Belt has gone to Bridlington?

(Tony Brown) Yes, we received 7 days from Bridlington for Frank; Frank wants regular first team football and is not currently getting this at Scarborough. Tony also pointed out that it is often the case that fans do not see what happens off the pitch in training etc. These factors play a large part in the management teams' decisions to let players go.

Have we put in any 7 day requests for players?

(Tony Brown) Yes, two of them, though we're not proceeding with one, the other one is a defender.

Is Dean Windass going to be with the club long term?

(Tony Brown) Darren and Tony meet with Dean quite often, however he is contracted to Sky and thus his responsibilities lie there. Tony expressed his gratitude to Dean for his time with the club and hopes that Dean will continue helping the club around his other commitments.

Bearing in mind the current financial state of the club and that we are projected to make a loss at the end of the season, how will the club facilitate the extra costs involved with getting promoted?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) The club tried addressing this issue previously by encouraging the uptake on sponsorships through reduced prices. However, lowering the price did not attract any more people to the sponsorships and thus created a downward spiral of losing more money. The club are now looking to push all their income streams as much as possible and run the club more as a 'business'. One positive move towards this was the appointment of a General Manager – Aaron Best – this has initial costs though it is Aaron's task to assist in raising finance for the club.

Geoff pointed out that away travel costs will likely double if we're promoted and thus the generation of more income is vitally important. The club will be setting specific budgets to ensure that we aim to at least break even year-on-year.

A commercial panel has been formed within the club, this consists of a number of people who have volunteered their time and services into pushing income streams for the club, providing contacts for possible sponsors and generating new ideas for additional revenue streams. This should help in financing any promotion we may achieve.

Has the club thought about buying a minibus?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) The club and the board have discussed previously the possibility of attaining a minibus and are looking around for grants that may be available to the club to cover the cost of this purchase.

(John Clarke) The difficulty with a minibus is getting drivers, these are costly to hire so unless anyone knows of someone who would be willing to drive the bus it may be difficult to implement.

Why is the Boro Draw so expensive? Some people can't afford £5 a month and it would be better at just £1 an entry.

(Geoff Osguthorpe) This would be difficult to administer at £1 each as it would take more time and would need more people to sign up before it became viable for the club to run.

(Sandra Troughton) It is important to note that this draw is not just for fans, it is for the wider audience of Scarborough, who are currently an untapped resource in terms of funding.

(Nick Finch) This is a new avenue to raise funds for the club. Nick also stressed the importance of fans to help generate revenue for the club, and not just by dipping in their pockets every week. The club needs its fans to help push our money making ideas and come up with ideas themselves, much like the standing order initiative that has taken place on the Surfing Seadog. One man, Andy, cannot generate 50% of the clubs income on his own as he has been doing before. It needs more people to get involved, find sponsors themselves or pass the contacts to the board to chase up.

(Aaron Best, General Manager) It is important to note that the Boro Draw is not just for financial benefit, it is also a means of raising awareness of our club to encourage more fans. It is also a source of gaining more public relations through the media and allows us to push our community efforts further by showing that we are promoting a draw based in Scarborough, not one in Sheffield. It also has the benefit of appealing to more sponsors who will see the impact and coverage we get in the media as well as the monthly events held for the draw.

(Chris Rooke) The new model rules allow us to generate larger amounts of funds and explore larger scale investments to help the club in the future.

(Geoff Osguthorpe) The new model rules allow us to operate a shares scheme to raise funds. This will be separate to membership and does not allow people to hold majority voting or power; no matter how much money is invested everyone will still have equal rights.

(Dave Holland) The shares are effectively a loan over a set period of time where there will be a guaranteed return after the period has ended. This will effectively provide the clubs working capital.

(Chris Rooke) This scheme has not been set up yet and thus the full details are not available, once it has been discussed further the fans will be notified.

(Sandra Troughton) This is how FC United of Manchester funded their new ground.

(Geoff Osguthorpe) Tax relief will be provided on all investments, this will make it more appealing to businesses.

Everything we have heard tonight is expansive and about raising funds, this is great, but are we monitoring costs? Can you assure us of tight budgetary control?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) The club has overspent in various areas but in general from the budgets set by the directors the overall budget is in reasonable control. It is the responsibility of each director to monitor their costs and meet their budgetary targets.

(Chris Rooke) The directors now receive regular statements of income and expenditure, this communication allows them to be fully informed and address any issues before it's too late.

(Stuart Keith, Board Financial Advisor) Was part of the steering group when the board was set-up and has worked in finance since 1980 within business. Stuart monitors expenditure within the club and assesses the budgets, what they are doing and informing the board where they are going wrong and what can be done to correct this. It is important to highlight that expenditure is not the problem in the club.

(Dave Holland) Stuart is a prime example of the calibre of people the club hopes will join a financial committee, much like the commercial committee, to help provide advice for the club.

Can we make the Scarborough public more aware of what the club is about and what it is doing?

(Wendy Danby) This year with the youth squads the football profile has gone up, they are drawing in their own fans from friends and family. A meeting is being held this coming Wednesday to discuss creating an infrastructure for next year's youth set ups to encourage the progression through to the senior teams.

(Dave Holland) The General Manager, although his focus is currently on raising money, has a key objective in his role to raise awareness of the club. The board are well aware of the issues in the town with regards to the public not knowing who the club are and are working on ways to improve this with Aaron. The club is in regular contact with the council and the FA regarding the Weaponness development and are gradually working more and more closely with them. The club are now getting help from experts with the experience of running grounds and a club.

Is the board wanting to run the ground?

(Dave Holland) The club is keen to play an important part in the development and future of football at Weaponness.

Where is the guarantee on the shares scheme?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) This would depend on the scheme, whether we want to raise money for a ground, or to fund a new kit etc. This will also dictate the likely return investors will see. It is too early to be able to give out specific information on this, the club will look at guarantors, and when they have explored this in depth they will let you know.

What are we doing about the lapsed members? And are we trying to attract new corporate members?

(Chris Rooke) The current approach to corporate memberships isn't really good enough; this needs looking into and needs to go back onto the board's agenda for discussion to look at creating a better package to sell to businesses.

A lot of Chris' time has been focussed in re-organising the membership database as it was awful! However the database has now been reviewed, enabling the club to rely on it more for income generation, the production of financial planning information, an organised approach to renewal notifications etc.

Chris' next major job is to tackle lapsed members; there are currently about 400 of these. We need to try and find out why people don't want to be members anymore, it may be that members do not realise they have lapsed. There are plans in place to rectify this.

(Nick Finch) Anyone with any IT skills that could set up a database for the club and free up some of Chris' time for other duties are asked to make themselves known to the board.

Are there any grants that we can access as a club that the government cant?

(Dave Holland) There are likely to be some, though we hope to be able to partner or support the council. It's about fulfilling certain criteria to be eligible for grants, bringing people together to assess what we can get from any schemes.

Was the £20 sponsorship for the Guisborough game a success?

(Andy Troughton) Yes, a great success.

Why was the Guisborough match £7 to get in?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) Financially it needed to be that way, people generally come because they want to watch football, and the loss from these matches needs to be reduced or averted. The other option is to reduce expenditure but this means reducing players' wages.

(Stuart Keith) The amount of people extra that the match would have needed to make the same amount of money at £5 a ticket would have been unachievable.

Why were the fringe players played?

(Tony Brown) The club needs to be able to assess what is best for Scarborough Athletic, the players that were played needed to be assessed.

Can we get out of the NRSC next year?

(John Clarke) Yes, for a £500 fine.

(Dave Holland) We need to be aware of the politics around a decision like that; we are a North Riding team currently playing our home games in the East Riding.

Are we looking to move our youth squads up next year?

(Wendy Danby) It will be looked at in the next managers meeting.

(Eric Richardson, U12's coach) The youth squads want to ensure that they act as feeder teams for the first team. This is what the youngsters want and this is what they play for on a weekly basis.

(Wendy Danby) The youth squads were put together very quickly and a structure now needs to be created in order to bring them together next year.

Are two of the set-ups losing money?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) This year the youth and reserve teams were set up to be cost neutral. Some of our calculations were underestimated. The club is currently working on balancing the books, and is keen to hear of possible sponsors willing to support these teams.

Can the club please provide an update on the FA fines?

(Dave Holland) The disciplinary hearing took place on Thursday 24th November (last night). Dave and John put together a statement in support of the club, thought the FA is very strict on abuse to officials and the club were fined £150, though £100 was suspended from the original £250 figure. The club needs to encourage all of its members to cut down on the language at match days and especially to officials, the FA did not hold the fans responsible, they held the whole club responsible.

How much have we raised in standing orders?

(Geoff Osguthorpe) This is not a club run scheme and therefore the club cannot provide exact figures on the amount raised so far, though it is thought to be £2000+ per year.

(Chris Rooke) The club would like to thank all the fans that are contributing to the club through this new scheme, however it is important that the club shows its appreciation to those fans that have been providing regular donations for some time too.

The club would like to encourage all members to please return their Christmas draw tickets, sold or unsold.

Rob Bernard would like to inform everyone that he will be forming part of a group of 6 individuals who are walking to Bridlington on Boxing Day to raise money. Half of the money raised will go to St Catherine's Hospice, the other half will be donated to the club in some way, possibly the Back2Boro campaign. Details will be released soon.