



NEWSLETTER ISSUE NUMBER 98

JULY 2020

Thank you

These have been incredibly tough times for all of us, and I truly hope that you and your families are safe and in good health. These past few months have tested us all. Life without so many things we previously took for granted, not least our ability to watch and enjoy the U's play football, has been really hard to take. For the players and fans to be denied the "true" climax to the season, where I genuinely thought we could have made the play offs for real, and then carried that form into a Wembley final where so many of you would have been there, I felt really sorry that we all missed out.

A heartfelt thank you for your support of the CUSA and of course Colchester United last season. It is hugely appreciated and when football gets back to some sort of normality with fans watching from the stands rather than their sofas, I look forward to seeing you all again

If this lockdown has proven one positive thing, it is that the game of football is nothing without its' supporters, and that is even more relevant for the U's, because we do have some of the very best

A final thanks and best wishes to Roman Coaches and their drivers, who were tremendous for us last season, not least with the Old Trafford adventure. I sincerely hope that you survive this really difficult period because we want to enjoy your company again at some point soon next season

Up the U's!
Jon

Hello to all of our members. The CUSA Committee hope that you have all come safely through the last 4 months and are at least able to enjoy a little more freedom as the lockdown has started to ease. I am sure that we have all missed our football and there appears to be a glimmer of hope that some of us might be able to watch the U's at the JCS for the 2020/21 season if the COVID 19 crisis continues to improve.

I have kept a diary of the main events since early March, to reflect the key football related events and mood of a period none of us have ever before had to experience

March

It is 4.15 a.m. on Saturday 7 March. The alarm goes off and I get out of bed to get ready for the 6 o'clock coach to Carlisle, along with 44 hardy U's fans.

Even as we speed our way north the dark clouds of coronavirus are already looming. Hand washing is more frenzied and there is sanitiser in the toilets when we arrive at Brunton Park. Malcolm Cole and I were due to go to a FSA meeting in London the following Thursday, but decided not to risk getting on a crowded tube at 5.30 in the evening. In hindsight this was a wise move.

The U's pull off an excellent 3-0 victory with Kwame Poku scoring twice and Luke Norris once, to give us a long but happy journey home, contemplating an exciting end to the season.

The following Friday morning I was walking up a hill in Manningtree when I heard my phone's message tone. When I stopped to look at it I just saw something about the Scunthorpe game being postponed before it disappeared off the screen. Looking at the BBC Sport football website I discovered that all Premier League and EFL football was suspended for at least 3 weeks.

After that things moved very quickly, shops, schools, restaurants, pubs, gyms and leisure centres were closed, aircraft grounded leading to a full lockdown on the 23rd. Stay at home, social distancing and self-isolation became the words of the time. Lifestyles and finances were being changed overnight. By the end of the month confirmed cases and deaths were rising daily.

Much was being said about football and do we /don't we finish the season. Robbie Cowling favouring finishing it behind closed doors, but as the month finished all football including grass roots was suspended until at least 30 April.

April

Things got worse at the beginning of April as the number of cases and deaths continued to rise. Boris Johnson is in intensive care. Adhere to government guidelines to save lives and stay safe became the key message.

Premier League players were asked to take wage cuts and rich clubs criticised for furloughing non playing staff. EFL and National League football was postponed indefinitely, whilst the decision to declare the season null and void for clubs below tier 6 caused uproar. The Premier League are apparently in discussion with the government about re-starting, behind closed doors, in June. At least there will be football on the TV.

It is Easter Monday and we enter a 4th week of lockdown. The virus is far worse than we were initially led to believe and more than 10000 people have died in the UK. Although only 5 weeks football feels like something from a distant era, who knows when we will be back at the JCS again. Let us hope the social distancing measures start to bear fruit soon. The EFL have said that the season can be completed in 56 days, although probably behind closed doors, I guess most of us will be getting to grips with *ifollow*.

Robbie Cowling appeared on *Look East* from Tiptree. He said he was confident that the U's would survive but questioned whether other clubs would. Into the second half of April the immediate outlook looks grim and uncertain.

It is 25 April and we should all be watching our final league match of the season. Whilst some may fantasize about automatic promotion, I think more realistically we would be either celebrating being in the play offs or commiserating just missing out again. The reality is, of course, markedly different. Numbers of Covid 19 deaths have reached 20,000 with true numbers possibly twice that and despite the lockdown, daily numbers have not fallen significantly. As a result

Robbie Cowling has said that he has no alternative but to release Luke Prosser, Frank Nouble, Ryan Jackson and Brandon Comley when their contracts expire. Bad news for us U's fans, but better than no club at all.

So where does this leave football ? Yesterday I read a sobering article by Daniel Storey in the *i* addressing Chris Whitty's (Chief Medical Officer) briefing on Wednesday afternoon, entitled "*The inconvenient truth is that the game's gone for a long, long time*". The end of season may well have finished at Carlisle, although the EFL are looking towards a closed doors finish. Football stadiums and away travel are incompatible with social distancing and thus football as a spectator sport may well have to wait until a vaccine or significant treatment is available, an early solution to which Mr

Whitty poured cold water on. Of course he may not be right, there is no doubt enormous pressure to find a safe vaccine to avoid the world going in to economic meltdown in which a number of football clubs may not survive. These are surreal and anxious times indeed.

May

It is May 9. Boris Johnson has addressed the nation.

On the football front, the game has restarted in South Korea and they are looking to do the same for the Bundesliga in Germany, all behind closed doors. Project Restart is proposed for the Premier League, on neutral grounds behind closed doors from around 8 June, but there is debate going on and different clubs have different views. This will also require 40000 Covid 19 tests.

It is May 16. We could have been on our way to Wembley for the play off final. 20 plus coaches organised in 10 days, a fraction of the time we had for Manchester United and 20000 plus U's fans to cheer the boys on. Alas, despite some easing of the lockdown procedures, for many of us little will change for some time, with social distancing remaining in place and the way of life we all took for granted including attending football matches, gone for the foreseeable future. However, there is a glimmer of hope for our football team. League two has agreed to terminate the season and use a points per game basis to decide final placings. This puts us in 6th place with a play off semi-final against Exeter City. Stevenage would not be relegated and I think it is only fair that Barrow are promoted given there is a place available due to Bury's demise. All this has to be ratified by the EFL and FA, but hopefully we will at least be able to watch the U's on TV in their quest for promotion. Not the same as being there of course but better than nothing. As for the 2020/21 season, who knows ?

June

As May goes in to June the U's are back in training. 28 squad and staff members were tested for COVID19 last week and 4 results were positive. No other information is being provided. The meeting with the EFL which we hope will ratify the League 2 proposals is set for 8 June. However, what League 1 ultimately decides could affect the outcome.

It is 9 June. The EFL have finally ratified the League 2 proposals and we have a 2 leg play off against Exeter to look forward to on TV. Of course, we can't be there and neither can we be at Wembley should we reach the final. This is massively disappointing, whichever clubs get to Wembley, this is an occasion as much for the fans as the players, coaches and owners. As football fans we can't help feeling cheated by a virus. Having expressed our frustration, this needs to be put in perspective. Over 40,000 people have died and many lives will never be the same again.

18 June, the U's are on TV, playing Exeter in the play-off semi-final first leg, cheered on by a few hundred cardboard cut-outs ! I have already been interviewed on Radio 5 live who then asked for a further comment on the game early in the second half. Both sides look a little rusty, not surprising after a 3 and a half month layoff and lack of atmosphere.

Cohen Bramall wins the game 1-0 with a superb 81st minute free kick. It's a lead to take into the second leg, which looks like being a very tense affair for us U's fans.

22 June, sitting in front of the TV to watch the second leg. We start slowly and hand Exeter the initiative and they score an early goal to level the tie. Strong finish to the first half but nothing to show for it. Half time seems to galvanise Exeter again, but they are handed a second goal due to Dean Gerken's mistake, ouch. The U's then rally, Courtney pulls a goal back and Kwame has a great chance to win it in a strong performance in the last 20 minutes. Unfortunately I think that effort led to tired legs and minds in extra time and we were undone by a quick break which Exeter are good at. Given the 3 month hiatus due to the virus, could the EFL not have scrapped extra time this year, especially as games are being played on warm summer evenings ? Irrelevant now as we look to start a fifth season in League 2.

June 29. Northampton thump Exeter 4-0 at Wembley to earn promotion to League 1. This means that 22 of our 23 opponents for next season are now known. 13 are in the north, 1 in the midlands, 4 in the west and Wales and only 4 (Cambridge, Southend, Leyton Orient and Crawley) are relatively local. That is of course, if they all survive. Ordinarily this would mean a lot of travelling but we have no idea when it will be safe to travel by coach.

Robbie Cowling has put out a club statement which includes details of how season ticket refunds will be dealt with. One option is to transfer the refund into a Club United fund with supporters being able to suggest ways of spending the money raised. This proposal is supported by CUSA, not only does it enable the fans to help the club through these difficult times, it also gives us a say in how the money might be used.

July

7 July As lockdown eases we can enjoy some freedoms, albeit with a degree of nervousness about a potential second wave. We await details of fixtures for 2020/21, whether some fans can be allowed back into stadiums and if so when.

July 14 Just read that John McGreal is leaving the club following discussions with Robbie Cowling. I think John has done a good job over the last 4 years, given the circumstances. He had a genuine affection for Colchester United and was not using the club as a stepping stone to greater things as many of his predecessors did. We are at the lower end of the attendance spectrum for league 2 and whilst we have an excellent training facility at Florence Park, we cannot compete on salaries with many of our rivals. Good luck John, best wishes for the future.

I will continue to keep a diary through the coming months until "normal service is restored". Please stay safe and keep well.

Mike Heaps
CUSA Secretary

CUSA Player of the Season

The CUSA is delighted to announce the winners of our Player of the Season awards for the sadly curtailed 2019-2020.

As in previous seasons, all of the members travelling with us to the U's away games have had the chance to vote for their best player on the journey home, and as in previous seasons, with 19% of the points awarded, Tom Eastman will be our CUSA Away Player of the Season.

Congratulations to Tom, and well done to Dean Gerken and Frank Nouble, who were 2nd and 3rd placed respectively.

For our main award, with 40% of all votes cast, we are really pleased to announce that man again, Tom Eastman, is our CUSA Player of the Season. Well done and thanks Tom for another outstanding and consistent season. Despite Tom being our clear winner, it is great to see that in total 12 different players received votes, with Cohen Bramall being 2nd in the votes and Ryan Jackson coming in 3rd

Thank you to everyone who cast votes for these 2 CUSA awards

We hope to make a presentation of the trophies to Tom when we are allowed to do so next season, and we are also pleased to announce that in consideration of the fact that Tom has been our Player of the Season for many seasons, the CUSA will be presenting him with a special memento to reward his performances for the U's and the high regard in which he is held by our membership

Paul Wright

Very sorry to have lost one of our most loyal of members, and a man who was utterly devoted to Colchester United for so many years. He will be sorely missed and all of our thoughts and prayers go to his family and friends at this most terrible of times. RIP Paul Wright

Paul had a unique "affection" for referees, particularly one or two, which are best not to name publicly. All who knew him will really miss his critical opinion of the men in black

Colchester United Football in the Community - Coronavirus Community Support

CUFITC are doing amazing work in the community during this crisis - please seek them out on Twitter and follow all of the great things they are helping with. However they could really do with some financial support to carry on during these difficult times. The family of the dearly departed U's fan and CUSA member Paul Wright asked for donations in his memory to be made to the work they are doing, so if you are able, please could you visit the Just Giving website and search for CUFITC, where you will find their Coronavirus fundraising page

The CUSA has pledged £300 on behalf of our members, in memory of Paul and also to support the CUFITC team

Corin Haines, Head of Community, has said "on behalf of all our staff and trustees, many thanks for the CUSA superb donation to our COVID outreach campaign. Very generous. Please pass on my thanks to the members"

Policing and Football

Hello to all the CUSA members reading this and let me introduce myself to those of you who don't know me. I'm Pc 71164 Niki Howard and I'm the Dedicated Football Officer responsible for all things Colchester United on behalf of Essex Police.

I've been asked to produce this for the CUSA newsletter to explain to you all a little more about myself, what I do and why you will have seen myself and my Football Officer colleagues at Colchester United fixtures up and down the country!

Having grown up in Colchester I spent many a Saturday afternoon at our wonderful old Layer Road ground after my Dad first took me there around 1990. Parking the car on Boadicea Way, walking up Layer Road at around 2:30pm, getting to the ground and walking past the old astro turf at the back of the Family Enclosure hoping that the gate was open to have a quick kick around and then spending the next 90minutes cheering on the U's in a good game...or if not so good, looking forward to a half time Burger!! As I got older we moved over to Terrace 3 and 4 swapping at half time as I'm sure many of you did too. Then into my late teens and early 20's I ventured over to the Barside to soak up the livelier atmosphere and may have popped into the Drury Arms for a pre or post-match Beverage every now and again! I joined Essex Police 2006 and this put a halt on my Saturday afternoons at Layer Road initially when the shift work kicked in and when we moved to the Community Stadium I was one of those affected by the change of matchday routine and just didn't get hooked by the new set up. Little was I to know that a few years later I'd be back in a very different capacity!

In late 2012 I took over as the Dedicated Football Officer (DFO) for Colchester United. The role has been around for some time and was previously known as the Football Intelligence Officer, some of you may remember my predecessors Ryan from who I replaced. The DFO role itself is defined by the College of Policing and is available for you to see (along with other roles) via the College of Policing Website - Authorised Professional Practice - Public Order - Policing Football. Or in summary;

Dedicated football officer (DFO)

The primary role of a dedicated football officer is to work to the police lead for football in fulfilling all the responsibilities listed above.

A DFO provides a focal point for all information and intelligence relating to the club for which they have responsibility. The activity of a DFO is generally directed at minimising the impact of anti-social behaviour and criminality at events both within the police area where they work and also the police areas that are responsible for 'away' fixtures. Wherever possible a DFO or football spotter should travel to 'away' fixtures.

A DFO should be regarded as a key element in planning any football event regardless of the match categorisation. Host operations are encouraged to deploy both home and away DFOs or football spotters at all matches regarding them as community officers for the substantial numbers of supporters present at any fixture. A DFO directs, collects, evaluates, analyses and disseminates intelligence products to minimise football-related crime and disorder. These products also help to determine the strategy, tactics, resource levels and support services required for the policing of any football event.



Roles and responsibilities

- prepare accurate and timely intelligence and information products for all fixtures (home and away) involving the clubs for which they hold responsibility
 - act as a key link between the police, club, supporters and other stakeholders
- utilise social media to good effect in line with force policy for information, intelligence and investigation
 - attend planning meetings
 - prepare and deliver appropriate briefing for all staff policing the event
- be a source of specialist advice on the policing of the club for the POPS (Public Order Public Safety) command team
 - have a good knowledge of the club's supporters
- be deployed at the football event to monitor and observe the safety measures provided by the club (eg, stewarding effectiveness, provision of police services)

To achieve this, the DFO will:

- have a sound understanding of the principles and methods associated with intelligence management, information management and covert policing
 - have attended an accredited football officers course delivered by the UKFPU
 - have access to the products, processes and systems used by the local/force intelligence units
- collate all evidence, information and intelligence in support of Football Banning Orders (FBOs) on conviction (section 14A Football Spectators Act 1989) or on complaint (section 14B Football Spectators Act 1989)
- coordinate and manage football spotters (home and away) and intelligence gathering teams. This includes conducting intelligence-specific briefings and debriefings

- complete and submit match summary reports, items for inclusion in the UKFPU national incident assessment and relevant graded intelligence reports to the UKFPU (United Kingdom Football Policing Unit)
- attend regional and/or national intelligence workshops and conferences hosted by the UKFPU. These enable DFOs to remain up to date on current issues and share good practice and leads to the promotion of consistency and national standards
 - ensure FBO applications are made at all appropriate court hearings and court hearings
- develop and maintain positive working relationships with stakeholders and supporters that should enhance spectator safety and minimise the risk of crime and disorder during football policing operations

The above DFO definition applies to all Football clubs from the Premier League down to the National League. I'm lucky enough to be the DFO for my local club and I'll admit there are DFO's out there at more 'glamorous' clubs. DFO's at clubs in the Champions League will have to deploy at these fixtures the same way they do for League games so they will deploy to Madrid, Barcelona and Milan. But they will of course miss out on a Tuesday night in Grimsby!

As you'll have seen earlier the DFO definition makes reference to Football Spotters. Those are the officers who deploy with me on matchday wearing the distinctive Yellow with Blue chest and shoulders vest/jackets. That colour coding identifies us as Football Officers and although it varies slightly around the country by each Police forces uniform design, you will see that colour combination at every fixture from ours in League Two to the big Premier League games on Sky. The Football Spotters who work with me are in the vast majority, shift officers by day and Football Spotters on a Saturday when required. Some of you may have got to know one or two of my Spotters and I'm sure the majority of you will have noticed one particularly familiar face amongst them in Nicky Smith! It was a rather strange situation for me recruiting him to the Spotter team having cheered him on at Layer Road, and of course Wembley; all those years earlier.

The Football Spotter role is also defined by the College of Policing and can be summarised by the following two key roles –

1 – Information and intelligence – to provide a football policing operation with live and relevant information and intelligence on supporters, ensuring appropriate resource deployments by POPS commanders. On occasions it may also be appropriate to deploy them to gather evidence in support of FBO applications.

2 – Community engagement – to act as a link between the police and a club's supporter community, with a view to achieving increased trust and confidence between the football operation and supporter community.

These two roles complement each other, eg, a spotter is required to communicate to commanders both positive and negative information and intelligence associated with supporters during an operation.

Personally, I am really keen on increasing our Community Engagement as described above. The club already try their very best at engaging with supporters and I'm keen to do the same. I am interested in the club and how they do on the pitch and I also want to the club to be successful off the pitch. By this I mean I want all the clubs supporters to present a good image of the club home and away and leave visiting or host club supporters thinking you are an enthusiastic and passionate supporter group but also a well behaved one. I know the vast majority of you are that; and I will continue to focus my efforts on those few who may 'let the side down' and occasionally embarrass themselves.

As the DFO and alongside my Spotters we will continue to attend home and away fixtures wherever we can to try and minimise anti-social behaviour and criminality. That is our core function when we deploy but we're also always happy to chat to supporters about on and off pitch matters. Whether that's how the Chairman runs the club, the manager's tactics, the latest player signing (or sale), the new solid blue home kits (I quite like them if I'm honest) and which games you're looking forward to over the coming season; we might not always agree but I think that's the joy of Football!

Although this 2019/20 season was cut short and ultimately ended without promotion, I think it can be considered a success all round. It was great to see the Community Stadium full and buzzing for the visit of Spurs and of course the trips to Crystal Palace, Crawley and Manchester United in the Carabao Cup will live long in the memory...and were well overdue! 2020/21 when it gets underway, is another season in League 2 but is it not better to have a successful season in a lower league than a struggling season in a higher league that you can't quite compete in...?? (bracing myself for the backlash on that!!)

On that note, I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all the CUSA supporters and those wider U's supporters who make my job interesting, sometimes challenging but most of all an enjoyable experience. For those who travel up and down the country every other week to support their team I applaud you.

Until the season begins, stay safe and look after each other.

Hopefully I'll get to catch up with you at a game soon.

Nik
@CUFCPolice
Up the U's

CUSA Membership 2020 - 2021

At this time of year, we would normally have sent out renewals for membership and would meet many of you at the Open Day. This of course has not been possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic and as I write these notes, there is no clear indication when we may all return safely to attending football matches both home and away.

With this in mind, CUSA would like to offer our own version of "Bounce Back" to all our members.

For season 2020/2021 all members registered for 2019/2020, will automatically have membership renewed at no cost.

Current membership cards remain valid for another twelve months expiring 31/07/2021.

If you have changed any of your contact details such as address, phone or email, would you please forward details to membership@cusa.co.uk

Any new members will be charged the current rates which can be found on the membership page of the website or by contacting us via the above email address.

Badges and Year Bars

Continuing our series of members displaying their collection of Year Bars, we have Robin Hoare a U's fan and CUSA member based in Devon. He first became a member of the Supporters Club in 1971 following the Leeds United FAC match and has bars from 1971-72 to 2019-20.

Robin has a brother Carl, who did his National Service (ask your grandparents) with Brian Hall in 1966-67.

The attached picture shows Robin at home in Newton Abbott with his collection of bars.

If you would like to be featured in a future newsletter, then please forward a picture and brief details to the email address previously stated.

We will have Year Bars available for season 2020-2021, these can be obtained for £3-50 each plus postage at £1-00.

To place an order, email badges@cusa.co.uk or text 07901 612063.



A home for programmes

An appeal of sorts for help please

With grateful thanks for all of the so generous and gracious donations of football programmes over the years, both U's and otherwise, the CUSA now has a collection that probably exceeds five figures

Whilst we are always open for business and keen to bridge the gap in any U's supporters own collection, and don't forget that our catalogue can be found on our website, we do have somewhat of a storage dilemma

At present they are safe, all boxed up in a kind committee members garage, which needless to say means that he has little room for anything else, especially his automobile, so our appeal is to ask that if any member has or knows of a reasonably local empty place of storage which is safe and waterproof that we could use, for maybe even a minimal cost, please could you contact Malcolm Cole, CUSA Vice Chairman and Membership Secretary

Many thanks

CUSA Contact Points

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Email: enquiries@cusa.co.uk

CUSA Away Travel: phone (7-9pm and please leave messages) or text
Jon 07752 531600 and Jackie 07873 294146 during the day

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Twitter - [@CUSAsupporters](https://twitter.com/CUSAsupporters)