



NEWSLETTER

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HAPPY CHRISTMAS CUSA MEMBERS

Thank you for all of your support this season so far. Sadly, despite a glorious September, our U's have been struggling again and we find ourselves hoping that a change of management will bring a change of fortune for both our young team and for you good people who, quite simply, just want to see some good and entertaining football

Please enjoy your Christmas and welcome in 2016, and let us see what can be done in terms of our new manager and also what they can bring in during January to help the areas where need the help the most

There are some terrific players at the U's and they need our support now more than ever

COLCHESTER UNITED FC FORMER PLAYERS' DINNER

SATURDAY 30TH JANUARY 2016

7.00PM FOR 7.45PM START

John Schultz is pleased to announce the date for the 2016 Colchester United Former Players Association Dinner, and the CUSA will be hosting at least one table for what is always a very special and hugely enjoyable evening

If you would like to join us or would like further information please contact CUSA Chairman Jon Burns as soon as possible

To help celebrate this year's inductees to the "Hall of Fame and an enjoy a wonderful 3 course dinner at the Weston Homes Community Stadium, the cost is £40 per person

JUST THE TICKET (PART TWO)

Following on from the article in the last newsletter, I thought I would look at some tickets from significant games in the history of the U's. Once again they have no monetary value but do trigger memories of some important matches.

First up is a ticket for a final league game of the season, played on the 2nd May 1992. The opponents were Barrow in a match that saw the U's crowned as League Champions, recording a win by five goals to nil. The scorers on the day being Mike Masters with a hat trick and Nicky Smith plus the Player Manager, Red Card Roy!

The referee that day was a very young Graham Poll. The ticket I have is for the Main Stand at Layer Road. Having had the counterfoil removed is square in shape and has a purple background and lower border. The top border is white with the words Main Stand and Block picked out in blue and all the match details in black. This was one half of a historic double completed!

Next is the ticket from eight days later, for a game played at Wembley. Considering it is a ticket for a Final, it is very nondescript to look at. The oblong shape has a barcode on the right hand side and the match details are black on a white background. The only colour is on the back, where the ground regulations are printed in blue. However a 3-1 victory, despite Jason Cook being sent off, resulted in the trophy returning to Colchester. Goal scorers on that momentous day were Mike Masters, Nicky Smith and Steve McGavin.

Back to Layer Road now, for a rare Sunday game. This was on the 12th May 1996 and the opponents Plymouth in a Play Off Semi Final First Leg match. The ticket is oblong in shape, although not as narrow as the Wembley ticket and is divided into three sections of details. The first section has the club name and address, plus an eagle on what appears to be a pink background. The middle is white in colour with black printing granting admission to terrace three and the bottom section is back to pink with some minute details about taking up your position early. The right hand side has been rubber stamped with match details and the price hand written on. Technology had not arrived at this football club yet! A 1-0 victory resulted, with a goal from Mark Kinsella. However promotion would have to wait, as a Neil Warnock inspired Plymouth were victorious in the second leg.

As this newsletter will be with you around the time of the Third Round of the F A Cup, I thought I would look at two tickets for games played away in this round against teams who have slipped out of the football league and down the non-league pyramid. The first is for a game played in Northamptonshire against Rushden & Diamonds, a team financed by Max Griggs and his Dr Martens boot empire. They had a very modern stadium which still stands to this day, albeit overgrown and vacant. The ticket is blue across the top third in an arc and the rest is white and grey forming part of the club badge. The club name is embossed in gold at the top with the address below it. A tiny team badge is then seen with some red alongside it and red sponsor's logo for Coca Cola bottom right. Match details are printed in black with the game played on 4th December 2004. A 5-2 victory resulted for the U's with a hat-trick for Greg Halford and a pair from Craig Fagan.

The last ticket see's the U's in Wales for a trip to Edgar Street, Hereford. The game was played on 28th November 2009 and bearing in mind the opposition wore white and black these are the dominant colours of the ticket. A club badge is circled in red and sponsors Coca Cola are also picked out in red. Match details are in black on a white background also with a larger size club badge. John-Joe O'Toole scored a late winner in the pouring rain, which made the journey home palatable.

From the previous newsletter the answer to the Football Teaser (if you were watching a game between the Red Lichties and the Bully Wee, who are the teams and what was the name of the ground you were at?" was Arbroath v Clyde played at Gayfield Park.

This time can you name the three current Football League teams who have never made a Wembley appearance?

Malcolm Cole



CUSA AWAY TRAVEL

We are pleased to have engaged the services of Talisman Coachlines again this season, and a massive thank you to them for looking after us so far. We both look forward to another “Chelsea” when fleets of white coaches adorned the A12. If we can get over Charlton, let’s see what the 4th round brings...

Saturday 19 December

Rochdale

Coach leaves the WHCS at 8.30am
Braintree pick up available
Adult Members £30
Concession Members £28

Monday 28 December

Gillingham

Coach leaves the WHCS at 11.30am
Witham pick up available
Adult Members £16
Concession Members £14

Saturday 2 January

Oldham Athletic

Coach leaves the WHCS at 8.30am
Braintree pick up available
Adult Members £30
Concession Members £28

Saturday 23 January

Scunthorpe

Coach leaves the WHCS at 9.00am
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £26
Concession members £24

Saturday 6 February

Southend United

Coach leaves the WHCS at 12.30pm
Witham pick up available
Adult members £15
Concession members £13

Saturday 20 February

Bury

Coach leaves the WHCS at 8.15am
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £30
Concession members £28

Tuesday 1 March

Bradford City

Coach leaves the WHCS at 1.00pm
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £28
Concession members £26

Saturday 5 March Port Vale

Coach leaves the WHCS at 9.00am
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £28
Concession members £26

Saturday 19 March

Walsall

Coach leaves the WHCS at 9.30am
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £24
Concession members £22

Tuesday 29 March

Coventry City

Coach leave the WHCS at 3.00pm
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £22
Concession members £20

Saturday 9 April

Blackpool

Coach leaves the WHCS at 7.00am
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £31
Concession members £29

Tuesday 19 April

Crewe Alexandra

Coach leaves the WHCS at 1.30pm
Braintree pick up available
Adult members £28
Concession members £26

CUSA SEASON BAR 2015-2016

The new CUSA season bar is now available for sale at £3 each

Please contact us if you would like one sent out in the post or would like to collect one from us



Here are a couple of bars that CUSA member Roy Everett is looking to sell.

If you're interested please contact us and we'll put you in touch.

Likewise if you are missing any bars in your impressive link please give us a list and we'll see where we can help.

We do hold a stock of old ones but there are large gaps unfortunately

TEAM SHEETS FOR SALE

Have you ever thought that you would like to enhance your programme collection?

You could add the match day team sheet, an A4 size colour or black and white sheet listing both sides and the officials. The Supporters Association has a vast back catalogue for sale.

The following are league games unless stated and are priced at 30p each. All enquiries may be made either by email or in person on match days at the CUSA outlet in the South Stand.

96/7 Exeter, Swansea, Hereford, Torquay.

97/8 Brighton

00/1 Wrexham, Bristol City.

01/2 Bournemouth, Northampton, Notts. Co., Oldham, Peterborough.
AWAY. Cambridge U.

02/3 Barnsley, Chesterfield, Mansfield, Peterborough, Port Vale, Swindon.

03/4 Blackpool, Bristol City, Sheff Wed., Swindon, Rushden + Diamonds.

04/5 Brentford

06/7 C. Palace, Southampton, Southend, Stoke.

07/8 C. Palace, Norwich, Peterborough (FAC), Preston, Bristol City, Wolves, Cardiff, Hull, Ipswich, Coventry, Stoke (Last game at Layer Rd.)
AWAY. Gillingham (FR).

08/9 Hartlepool, Leicester, Southend.

09/10 Brentford, Norwich, Stockport, Bristol Rovers, Oldham, Wycombe, Millwall, L. Orient, Exeter, Southend, Redbridge (ESC), A. Villa (FR), L. Orient (LC), Gillingham, Yeovil, Hartlepool, Leeds U., Huddersfield, Walsall, Swindon
AWAY. Histon (FR).

10/11 Bristol Rovers, Oldham, Peterborough, Bournemouth, MK Dons, Charlton, Yeovil, Swindon, Walsall, L. Orient, Brentford, Wycombe (JPT), Rochdale, Brighton, Notts Co., Sheff Wed., Carlisle, Plymouth, Swindon Supermarine (FAC), Southampton.
AWAY. Dover (FR).

11/12 Watford (FR), Tranmere, L. Orient, Stevenage, Bury, Swindon (FAC), MK Dons, Yeovil, Bournemouth, Notts Co., Walsall, Barnet (JPT), Wycombe, Charlton, Oldham, Brentford, Chesterfield, Rochdale, Carlisle, Scunthorpe, Exeter, Sheff Wed., Sheff Utd., Hartlepool, Huddersfield.
AWAY. S.D.C. Putten (FR).

12/13 Preston, Portsmouth, Sheff Utd., Stevenage, Carlisle, Oldham, Bury, Brentford, Scunthorpe, Swindon, Walsall, Doncaster, Hartlepool, Bournemouth, Tranmere, Crewe, L. Orient, MK Dons, Yeovil, Crewe, Shrewsbury.
AWAY. Heybridge (FR), Maldon (FR), B. Stortford (FR).

13/14 Carlisle, L. Orient, Crawley, Wolves, Walsall, Peterborough, Swindon, MK Dons, Notts Co., Stevenage, Crewe, Gillingham, Preston, Sheff Utd. (FAC), Rotherham, Coventry, Bradford C., Shrewsbury, Tranmere, Bristol City, Oldham, Brentford, Peterborough (LC), Sheff Utd.
AWAY. B. Stortford (FR), Bradford City (Youth Alliance Cup Final)

14/15 Oldham, Chesterfield, Doncaster, Peterborough, Sheff Utd., Bradford C., Gillingham (JPT), Fleetwood, Coventry, Port Vale, Peterborough (FAC), Rochdale, Gillingham, Walsall, L. Orient, Notts Co., Crewe, MK Dons, Bristol City, Crawley, Yeovil, Barnsley, Scunthorpe, Swindon, Preston, Barnsley (U21), Sheff Wed (U21), Cheltenham (FAYC)
AWAY. MK Dons, Concord R. (ESC), Dagenham (FR), B. Stortford (FR), Heybridge (FR).

The massive stock of programmes that CUSA hold are currently being sorted and go back to the 1960's. These include Home and Away games in league and cup plus friendlies, if you have a "wants" list, please forward it and we will see what we can do to help.



Thank you CUSA Members!

With your support we have been able to donate another two sets of headphones to CUFC so that any partially sighted or blind supporters can still be a part of action provided by the excellent Hospital Radio commentary

And in addition to that, the Committee have agreed to donate a sum of money to Eddie the Eagle this Christmas to help boost the number of presents being taken to the sick and poorly children at Colchester General Hospital. The club have been overwhelmed by the many other donations that our supporters have made to help make Christmas a little bit special for the children unable to be at home this festive period

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S BEYOND

The story of Colchester United's
rise to the second tier of English
football and their momentary
view of the Premier League.

By RICHARD BLYTHE



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Available from:
The Colchester United Shop
or by order from
richard.blythe2@yahoo.co.uk.

All proceeds to the Teenage Cancer Trust and Headway Essex



Stadiumhoppers

FOOTBALL MAP

Display your passion as a Football fan on your wall by scratching off every stadium that you visit on this England and Wales poster map. Whether you have experienced a match or simply visited the stadium, the choice is up to you on how you want to showcase your away day dedication of your local side or your simple love for the beautiful game.

The 2015/16 edition features all the current England and Wales 92 football league clubs, Wembley Stadium, Millennium Stadium as well as several of the most popular grounds that have recently left the football league. Poster measures standard maxi-poster size, 34 inches by 24 inches (91.5cm by 61cm) and is printed on high quality 280gsm gloss paper. All posters are packaged in a gift tube. Made in the UK by football fans, for football fans.

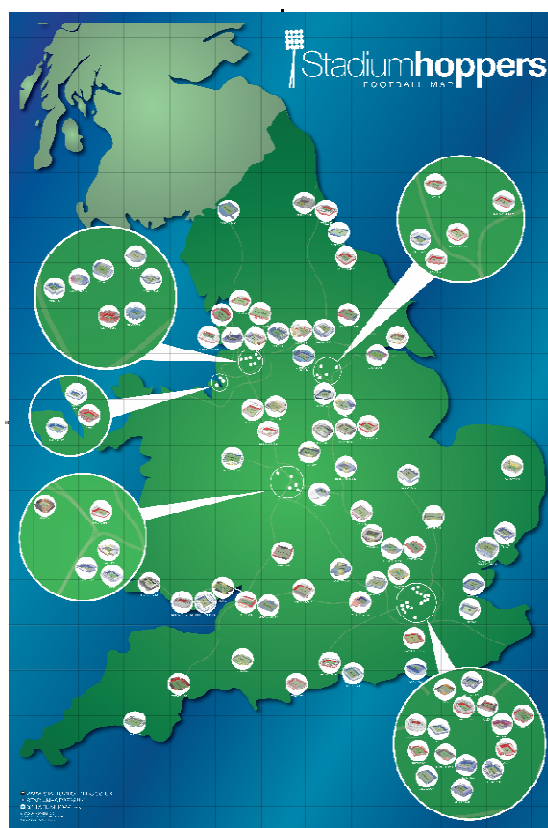
RRP is £19.99

Who is a 'Stadium Hopper' ?

Anyone can be a 'Stadium Hopper' . A hopper may be trying to find the best half-time pie across the nation, chasing membership to the iconic '92' or just a bit of a stadium anorak in general. To reveal your visited grounds we don't expect you to know the exact capacity of somewhere like Deepdale, Preston North End (by the way it's 23,404) you may just be there visiting as part of the 'Cod Army' or as a 'Tractor Boy' !

Who are we?

Stadium Hoppers is owned and run by two passionate football fans, Richard Blaxall and Richard Crick. The pair who, probably like yourselves have spent cold, wet, disappointing Tuesday night's at grounds such as Griffin Park and Bloomfield Road following the perils of their local football club... Colchester United. The map was invented for other football fans who share in their pride of following their team wherever their league and cup competitions took them. This product is designed by football fans, for football fans.



Web: www.stadiumhoppers.co.uk **E-mail:** richard@stadiumhoppers.co.uk
Twitter: @StadiumHoppers **Facebook:** [fb.com/stadiumhoppersuk](https://www.facebook.com/stadiumhoppersuk)

MEMBERS AND LETTERS PAGE

We always have done and we always will encourage contributions from our members for this newsletter. I hope that going forward we will be able to include many more of your own stories, pictures, adverts and letters



Dear Members

I would like to thank John Akker for his letter as published in our previous newsletter. It is important to hear the views of our members and as one of the topics was a proposed change of stance from the CUSA, the Committee agreed that it should be shared with the whole membership to gauge reaction and response.

The feedback that the Committee received was not supportive of a change in the direction of CUSA, and this was in various forms, mainly verbal but also by email or letter, with one such letter copied below.

As a democratically formed organization the Committee are accountable to the members. I should like to take this opportunity to remind our members that we are not a part of Colchester United Football Club and in our current guise we never have been. I believe in fact that our founding came as a proposal from Marie Partner to our former Chairman Chris Hazlehurst, and although I agree that we have always maintained a close relationship with many areas of the football club, we have at times also found ourselves in disagreements that require resolution.

Our rules and constitution state that our objectives include that we should support Colchester United and also promote the interests of the supporters. As elected officials, the Committee strive to achieve both of these objectives, and I could produce an almost endless list of ways we have done this over the years.

Our rules also state that changes to our constitution and rules can only be made at an Annual General Meeting and that a Special General Meeting can be called either by the Committee or by written request from 100 members. It is important I feel that all members are aware of this information.

At this point I need to make it perfectly clear that the CUSA Committee are not going to call an SGM to discuss the current fortunes of Colchester United.

I am in complete agreement that these last few seasons have been very hard for the supporters. Not one of us is immune to the pain of seeing the team lose games and bounce in and out of the relegation zone. Personally though I would rather be supporting my local team through thick and thin, than follow anything from the Premiership or through complete mis-management, any football team where its' future is in constant doubt through the considerable build up of debt.

I believe that we support a very well run football club where the only missing piece of the jigsaw is consistent results on the pitch. Your support of our football club is amazing and without it, in my view, we would all be looking for something else to do on a Saturday afternoon. Please do all that you can to keep it up.

Yours, with thanks

Jon Burns, Chairman

Sir,

I read your letter to CUSA with a considerable amount of horror, it reminded me of an educated but thinly disguised version of the type of rantings often found in the "comments" section of the Gazette newspaper website – manager out, Cowling out - etc. etc. Having looked more closely into your letter perhaps I was ill advised to use the term 'educated'

CUSA was formed to support Colchester United Football club, the players and management - United behind United.

Reference to your LinkedIn web page indicates you have an impressive history and reputation in organisation and education. Rather than impressing me I was left quite bemused. Your letter does not appear to convey any sign of a well thought out 'protest'.

Mr Cowling has been chairman for some time and has always been clear in his understanding of football economics together with the restrictions on the running of clubs imposed by the F.A. He has also been totally open in his concept that the only way forward for a club like Colchester is to build a viable and successful youth policy. He has also often repeated that this will take time. I believe that for you to claim that the youth policy he is following will ruin the club shows either considerable inside knowledge, naivety, or a very disturbing undeclared intention to do as much damage to Colchester United/Mr Cowling as possible. It is interesting that your views have been aired at a time when the youth policy appears to be beginning to show signs of recognition in the wider football arena.

If you have constructive comments to make why not make them known in any letter you forward for 'publication'. I assume your evidence that young members of the team are demoralised by being given an opportunity to prove their worth playing first team football emanates from discussions you have had with those players. I cannot believe a man with your experience in dealing with factual evidence would rely only on his own instincts/imagination.

No, Mr Akker, I am sorry, but you do not convince me you have any real understanding of how to run a football club, I am not convinced you know very much about the history of Colchester United or what it means to be a supporter.

You are probably thinking, poor old soul, he will always be ready to accept second best. Yes that is probably true I can accept that there has to be winners and losers in football, but I am no loser. I do know that no team responds to unrest and discord either from within or from the terraces. I have supported Col.U. all my life and I doubt you will ever experience the highs and lows that I have had the privilege to enjoy, but then that is your loss. I realise that I have neither the financial means nor the time and business acumen to do a better job than the present chairman/manager/staff. I would suggest that unless you do have these and are willing to put them to good use then you reconsider your position (put up or shut up). If you do have the required assets to improve Colchester United then may I suggest you get alongside and do something positive.

You state that CUSA has a great local presence, do you not accept that Colchester United has a greater local presence or have you missed out on Football in the Community, Hospital Visits, Charity Events, (particularly those conceived by our chairman and supported not only financially but at considerable personal time and effort) School visits, Coaching, Awards ...etc All this makes me proud to be a supporter of Colchester United F.C. and a member of CUSA.

Yours very sincerely,

J.E.Foskew
29 September 2015

As a supporter who watches about 40 U's games per season and who has supported the club for 33 years you might like my take on the departure of Tony Humes. Unfortunately it was inevitable. To have shipped 26 goals in their last 8 league games is not good enough and the performances at Millwall last week and the last 30 minutes against Crewe were unacceptable.

Unpleasantness is not acceptable, but frustration in these circumstances is inevitable. Some of us spend hours sitting on coaches to support the U's, it's our choice and we enjoy it, but we expect the players to give 100%. We accept defeats, but it is the manner of those last two defeats, coupled with the second half at Shrewsbury and the first half at Wigan that is difficult to take. George Elokobi has played in the premier league so why was he so off his game at Millwall ? He and Tom Eastman (who has been fantastic for the U's) should be amongst the best centre back pairings in this league, so why aren't they ?

Robbie Cowling is rightly proud of the academy who are producing good young players, yet so far only Alex Gilbey has really come through. Yet by saying that Tony Humes is a Col U legend he risks becoming a laughing stock. Managing Colchester United to even mid table in this league is a tough ask for anyone and I believe we need an experienced manager who understands the division. Look what Justin Edinburgh has done for Gillingham and Phil Brown for Southend.

Up the U's Mike Heaps

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.....

The French have a proverb; “the more things change, the more they stay the same”; meaning that turbulent changes do not affect reality on a deeper level other than to cement the status quo.

I write this at the conclusion of one of the darkest weeks that I can recall as a U's fan. We have just been thrashed by Burton Albion and have now conceded 49 goals in twenty league matches. Earlier this week, Tony Humes resigned after four consecutive league defeats.

We are now seeking our eighth permanent manager in eleven seasons. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

FIRST XI (all)	GAMES	WINS %
Phil Parkinson	187	42.8
Geraint Williams	104	29.8
Kit Symons	5	40.0
Paul Lambert	42	45.2
Joe Dunne	4	25.0
Aidy Boothroyd	44	43.2
John Ward	111	29.7
Joe Dunne	45	28.4
Tony Humes	67	32.8
Hall/McGreal	1	0

Hopefully, by the time you read this we will have a new manager in place; a home draw in the third round of the FA Cup; plus a league win against Barnsley; and an uplifted feeling. However, I fear that we might be no further forward as regards an improvement to our league results until after the transfer window that opens on 1st January. If we deduct cup games from the table shown only four U's managers in the last decade have stayed longer than the equivalent of a 46 match season and two of those were in situ whilst still at Layer Road. I question how this can be enough time for anybody to complete the rebuilding of an obviously ailing team in the modern world of limited transfer windows? It took Phil Parkinson over three seasons.

It's always easy with hindsight for fans to blame “team selection”; “tactics”; “substitutions” or even the sight of a “single magpie” in the car park for a team's sorrow during any bad run of form. Every fan also seems to have a certain ‘silver bullet’ solution. But rarely has anybody convinced me that they could do better than the incumbent manager (past, present or future) who is inevitably “wrong” whenever we lose. But that's the nature of goggle eyed football analysts (especially after multiple pints) and why we are all football fans.

My personal opinion of the current challenge is more simplistic. Last season we were in a worse position. At the start of December the U's were languishing in the relegation zone on 17 points with Magnus Okuonghae and Frankie Kent side-lined for the remainder of the season; whilst David Wright's injury had curtailed his career. Surely nobody can ever forget the makeshift defence that met on the team bus on this corresponding weekend at Milton Keynes Dons; where loanees Elliott Hewitt and Cole Kpekawa lined up alongside loanee debutant Will Packwood, with Tom Eastman as the only Colchester contracted player in the back four. The result was 6-0 thanks to (now) full England International Deli Alli. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose...

One can't argue that there have been no attempts to resolve our defensive problems. First, count up how many players occupied our back four during season 2014-15; no fewer than 18 defenders. But given the severity of the injury crisis there were few other options except emergency loans where often a manager must accept the best available from a narrow selection (and some were awful).

Players used in back four 2014-15	
Wynter	Gordon
Okuonghae	Eastman
Clohessey	Kent
O'Donahue	Harney
Wright (David)	Osborne
Khumalo	Gorkss
Briggs	Brindley
Roofe	Hewitt
Kpekawa	Packwood

Players used in back four 2015-16	
Briggs	Edwards
Wynter	Elokobi
Olufumi	Kent
Eastman	Vincent-Young
Brindley	

In 2015-16 we have already tried 9 different back four defenders in merely 20 league matches which is an even higher ratio of disruption than last season. Surely this ongoing lack of stability in our back four must be having a significant negative impact, notably as some incumbents now appear to be lacking pace, skills and confidence? Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Eventually (in 2014-15), we did secure two experienced international central defenders on loan; Kaspars Gorkss and Bongali Khumalo that (separately) played a primary role in keeping us from relegation; alongside the fans 'Player of the Season' and ever present Tom Eastman. Full backs Richard Brindley and Matthew Briggs also first appeared on loan and added a positive contribution. I reckon that had we been able to permanently sign all four of these and had they stayed fit we would probably not be in our current predicament. But everybody is entitled to their opinion as to why we have been failing, and others will inevitably disagree.

But it is eye-opening to consider how many quality players made their First XI debuts under Tony Humes of which only three are U's Academy products (KVY came from the Spurs Academy). George Moncur also became a permanent signing under Tony. I personally feel that our forwards and midfield have not been in such good shape since 2005-06; and that is evidenced by our 'goals for' tally. Nobody seems to disagree with these statements.

Debuts under Tony Humes	
Lapslie	Semie-Ferris
Wynter	Briggs
Porter	Brindley
Ambrose	Edwards
Garvan	Vincent-Young
Parrish	Lawrence
Sordell	Curtis

But under Financial Fair Play Rules and their playing budget restrictions; first Tony Humes had to remove a similar number of senior players; largely by 'mutual consent'; simply to get them off the wage bill. Here, the usual fan inspired rumour mills worked overtime as regards the reasons for the departure of some, but the fact that only one is currently playing above FLD2 and we profited by selling him to a Championship Club says everything to me.

Exits under Tony Humes	
Vose	Bean
Sears	Thomson
Eastmond	Clohessey
Smith	Okuonghae
Ibrehe	Watt
Fox	Gordon
Lewington	

These transactions required more than the stroke of a pen. In a practical sense; Tony Humes had the benefit of only one January and one summer transfer window, which makes the number of transactions all the more remarkable. The January window came quickly and at a time when we had Okuonghae, Olefumi, O'Donahue and Kent all seriously injured and expectancy then that all would return at the start of 2015-16. With Eastman, Wynter, and Kane Vincent-Young, I suspect that perceptions suggested little need to make more than a single summer defensive signing, George Elokobi. Hence I am not surprised that summer transfer window focus was then on midfield and attack.

Frankly, I would have preferred to have given Tony Humes a further transfer window opportunity to now fix our back four, but I realise that I am in a distinct minority. However well a manager prepares and sets up teams with infinite precision if the incumbent players are not up to the job then only loans or transfers can offer a remedy and the modern transfer window system means that a quick fix is impossible, more especially now that under FFP a football club owner can no longer open his wallet to 'buy' a club out of trouble. Rome wasn't built in a day, nor will Camulodunum United be rebuilt in a single season. Stewardship of the U's will probably remain a poison chalice for some while yet, so how do we avoid being in this same position in another twelve or twenty four months? Surely, the answer must be to constantly improve, maintain and refresh the squad, but how do we fund it? Let's start that train of thought with a question;

Name ANY team that has sustained a continuous presence in ANY division (or above it) for a decade whilst having average gates that are barely half of that of division's average? I don't think there are any except for Colchester United in FLD1/Championship.

So how do we now sustain and improve upon that? To get and retain even better players we inevitably need even more fans paying the extra revenue that we now require under FFP. The Academy will assist, but it will be a source of talent and not experience. Under Boothroyd the fans glib solution was "play better football". But better "Results" is the more likely and obvious answer. But I don't think that is the sole solution. I suspect that there is much correlation between us repeatedly ending up in about 20th place when our average gates rank 20th. Our prevailing average gate is 3,663, whilst the Blades have 19,582 and Bradford, 18,001. It's easy to see why. With a population of 551,800 the City of Sheffield is England's third largest metropolitan authority. Bradford has

a population of 528,155. Intriguingly, the Blades enjoy gates of 3.5% of Sheffield's population and Bradford 3.4%. It is should be little surprise that (in order of average gates) the ratios are not that dissimilar for Colchester, Burton, Scunthorpe, Burton, Fleetwood; all of which are teams punching above their population weighting and in FLD1 under Financial Fair Play. Our natural slot based on gates is FLD2.

I am perhaps being sardonic in a manner that is perhaps more Simpson than Homer; but it seems to me that the more we moan rather than cheer the more that we undermine team confidence and promulgate a prevailing undertone of negativity. That negativity then escapes into the wider town community. Negativity will always become a self-fulfilling prophesy; and I think we have probably hit rock bottom in that respect; eight permanent managers in eleven years. Deeper analysis of our attendances is desirable if we want to find solutions. Of course, if we play Manchester United in the third round of the F.A. Cup over half the town will want to attend. But even in the U's most successful years; we have rarely enjoyed gates much higher than those of today, except when briefly in the Championship, contrary to the anecdotes about the "good old days" typically spouted over a pint or five.

Through most of the 1990's U's gates chugged along at about 3,200. We entered FLD1 in season 2004-5 and our best average at Layer Road in our current division was just 3,843 and that (unsurprisingly) was achieved in our promotion year of 2005-6. The evidence here suggests that even during a promotion season in FLD1; "success" won't guarantee that average Colchester United gates will ever be above 4,000.

When in the Championship; our average gate did leap to 5,466. Then, once relegated back into FLD1 we perhaps surprisingly averaged 5,076 in 2008-09 and 5,437 in 2009-10, well above the prevailing rates of our promotion year. To some extent this might be attributed to the brief promise of two big name managers; Lambert & Boothroyd; that used our beloved club for their own selfish advantage and swiftly went to a higher bidder. One can see the possible attraction of promotion from within if that assists with loyalty, but I digress. Some are suggesting that a similar type of externally sourced manager is what we want today, and to be fair to that particular argument, their respective win rates cannot be bettered in the last decade (see earlier table). But was their 'success' the reason that brought an extra 1,000 fans through the turnstiles?

My perception is that the most credible reason for enhanced gates over that short period was instead the profile of FLD1 which was every current travelling U's fan's dream compared to the monster treks of today. For example; in 2009-10 we entertained Norwich City (record gate); Leeds United (previous record gate); Millwall; Charlton; Brentford; Southampton; Brighton; Southend; Leyton Orient and a host of other (mostly) southern based teams where the away support would comfortably add 500 to 2,500 + to the routine home gate. Now consider today's FLD1 profile that is almost entirely northern centric. Whilst a run of poor form must inevitably have some adverse impact, the absence of these significant numbers of away fans must surely be the principle factor why our average gates have settled back at levels not dissimilar to our promotion year in FD1 at Layer Road. So nobody will convince me that 'success' (other than actual promotion) is the panacea that will guarantee the higher gates that we will need to sustain a continued presence in FL1.

So why do some fans now have an expectation that 5,000 + at WHCS should be normal? Historic and demographic data shows that is patently ridiculous other than in exceptional years, and everybody concerned with the club, and here I mean both fans and management alike, must temper ambition with reality. At least we have been able to pay the players wages, unlike Oldham, once proud founder members of the Premier League. We all must work harder to increase our gates if we want better players as "results" alone won't do it.

In conclusion, we are at the start of yet another new managerial era and it is time for everybody to become better POSITIVE ambassadors for the club. Our best ambassadors as regards encouraging others to attend must be our fans. I then appeal to the NEW team manager (whoever he might be) and to owner Robbie Cowling to cease communication dependence upon the local media and instead come out to physically meet and directly talk to loyal fans. I have attended a number of "exclusive" season ticket holder's events where I have been convinced that our current 'plans' are indeed "taking us in the right direction". But not all U's fans are season ticket holders. CUSA is an association that is far more than a travel club and I am sure it can help facilitate this.

Our football club has some potentially wonderful ambassadors; its fans, its management and past and present players. Please don't reserve the latter only for corporate hospitality suites and school visits. Chris Porter's recent visit to the Victoria Inn was most uplifting to the many ordinary fans that had turned out for the dedication of 'Red Card Roy's' Wembley medal that had been purchased for charitable concerns.

Finally, my recommendation to all fans and club management is to read what it says on the pub wall above Roy's medal, "let's be nice to each other or leave the premises"..... Up the U's!

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1st December 2015.**

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P.S. If have received this newsletter by post and would be happy for it to be emailed in future, please let us know - thanks