

# AFC Wimbledon US Dons Newsletter

Issue 18 – December 2006

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## *US Dons – News*

Well the Christmas season is upon us and it is time to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas. May Santa bring you all you want and make it a joyous time. Hopefully Santa will find a few extra points for the Don's during the holiday season schedule.

Good to see so many of you on the Old Centrals chat room for the various matches. Nice to let the folks on the other side of the pond know we are behind our team.

If any of you have any old memorabilia, that may interest your fellow Dons supporters, or any other tidbit that might interest your fellow supporters, please send them to me and I will get it published.

E-mail your responses to me at: [davgarlinge@aol.com](mailto:davgarlinge@aol.com).

Don't forget to check out the club news on the official website. Also Paul Raymond's "Itmustbedons" website is a great source for Wimbledon news. For home games you can dial up "Radio Wdon" and listen to some interesting commentary as well as some interesting and little known statistics. The web-sites are listed at the end of the newsletter.

As always, any news items, comments or ideas are welcome.

We have a contacts page attached, and anyone who doesn't mind sharing their information, let Dave Hambly (SoCal) or myself know. I try and send the newsletter to your e-mail as well as have SoCal post it on the website.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all.

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David Garlinge  
(Limeydg).

## *AFCW News*

Well it has certainly been an up and down month for the team. Some poor results in the league, with most fans calling for DA to resign after the dreadful performance in the 3 – 0 loss to Billericay. Then the next weekend the Don's pull out a massive victory in the FA Trophy game against Aldershot. After going 1 – 0 down at the end of the first half who would have thought a victory was possible? But a spirited Don's team came out in the second half and took the game to Aldershot, scoring two goals and resolutely hanging on to get in the draw for the next round. The draw could have been kinder to us, but we find ourselves going to Gravesend and Northfleet in the next round, scheduled for the middle of January. Gravesend and Northfleet are also a conference side (like Aldershot) and are currently a few places higher in the table. Another strong performance and a victory would put us in the last 16 of the Trophy.

Hopefully, this magnificent win in the Trophy will propel the team into the Holiday season fixture list, with some added confidence and bring some much needed wins in the Ryman Premier League. We currently sit in 11<sup>th</sup> position in the league, but with games in hand of all the clubs above us. The division is still a tight affair, with 14 of the 22 clubs in with a shot for the title and playoff spots. After the holiday program, it will be interesting to see how many clubs are left with playoff aspirations. No team has really pulled away from the pack and we are still well in the mix.

Injuries continue to plague the club, and we are seeing the value of having a strong and deep squad. Sometimes the team on the pitch has a difficult time getting in sync, but when they get it going they can be awesome. We still need to attain some consistent strike power, our goals for tally remains one of the lowest in the league, and we have had a couple of slips in defense, though we still have the lowest goals scored against in the league. Let's keep the faith and cheer them on.

COME ON YOU DON'S

## *Guest Column:*

A Christmas Special this month, two Guest columns, which hopefully you will find interesting.

### **HAYDON'S POWER TO MAKE PEOPLE SMILE**

**SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAPPENED THE DAY DEAN 'TINTIN' PARSONS BECAME HAYDON THE WOMBLE.**

SO how did I become Haydon?

The *Womble Underground Press* (WUP) fanzine asked its readers they wanted to put the publication's funds towards and quite a few suggested a Womble mascot.

As soon as I heard that it was to become a reality I made my intentions clear. They decided to run a mascot idol, a mascot version of Pop Idol, so I sent in my CV with the reasons why I felt I would be the ideal candidate, (that is, full of energy, hypo, crazy... just for starters).

I actually applied to be the Womble for Wimbledon FC back in 2000/01, only to get a letter from Charles Koppel saying they were looking for someone in a professional capacity... well, that just did it all for me! And when I saw Wandle trying to get the crowd going I couldn't believe they were so "professional" (!!)

When the day of mascot idol arrived I was told there were NO other applicants, or at least no serious ones. Obviously they were frightened of me!

So after being measured for the Womble suit it wasn't until the day of my debut that I finally saw it, and it looked better than any of the drawings I had seen.

With my faithful helper Brazilian Don (Wagner Gimenes) we slowly worked out how to put the suit on, it took about 20 minutes, and I slowly sensed how hot it was inside!

I wasn't prepared in any way for the sauna conditions, to put it mildly it was bloody hot! And the viewing through it wasn't the greatest, either!

So I was presented to the crowd, still not aware of my chosen name. It took me 15 minutes to get into the ground because everyone wanted a cuddle or a photo with AFC Wimbledon's first official mascot.

I was led out to the centre of the pitch with Ivor Heller, where the name was announced to the crowd as Haydon The Womble. I was thrilled about it. I walked down Haydons Road over the weak bridge, with my Dad and Grandad from the age of nine back in 1983, so it conjured a lot of happy memories, and I am proud whenever I hear people shouting out the name, Haydon.

Now a couple of months on and I am much better prepared as are my helpers (yes, helpers ...I now have Wagner and Rob alternating to assist me). I now have wrap-around ice packs, a camel backpack full of water, a towel to wipe my brow when I get a chance to take off Haydon's head, and despite all that I have still lost half a stone since climbing into the suit (it sure beats the gym any day).

I am now more confident in the suit, I have got used to the lack of vision, I've become accustomed to the big heavy boots. I can now do a few tricks with a football, I can dance a little bit, I have mastered how to do a 'moonwalk', and a Roger Milla corner flag

celebration routine, not to mention banging on the garbage bins to get the main stand singing (and that's not always easy!!). But most of all I have mastered the art of cuddles and handshakes for children and adults alike!

With all this confidence, I entered the Mascot Grand National at Huntingdon racecourse with 70 other mascots recently. Well, I say mascots because some of them just had tights on for legs!

It was conducted like a proper race meeting. We had to sign in, and then go to the parade ring, where it was announced I was the top fundraiser of all the counties which entered a mascot. This made me very proud as it was for a good cause, the Children's Trust, which has many children's hospitals mainly for Multiple Sclerosis helping the little ones to live as normal lives as possible, taking them to Disneyland, football matches, to things we take for granted like a trip to the shops.

As for the race, I finished, erm, 58th out of 70, but I blame the already finished mascots. As I said earlier my sight isn't the best, you either have to look through the eyes to see upwards or through the neck to glance below, so I was looking through the eyes watching the finished mascots cheering us on to the finish with them and the crowd cheering me on.

I found a turn of pace, only to not miss the last hurdle (sorry, I forgot to mention we had 6 hurdles to jump over a furlong) and I went flying over it head first.

I slowly -- well as quickly as a Womble can — got up and rushed to the finish-line where I belly-flopped on Captain Blade of Sheffield United. This was my final mistake as the remaining mascots all jumped on top of us both. Do you realise how heavy a bunch of mascots are?

Well, since that day I have visited the Children's Trust hospital wards spending three hours going around cuddling and dancing with the children in the wards from as young as two to 19. I feel I couldn't have chosen a more worthy cause for fund-raising.

I am really grateful to the WUP team and its readers for making it possible for me to be Haydon the Womble.

It is a great feeling entertaining the fans at our games, but it wasn't until I went to the mascot national and the hospital that I realised how much power a big furry Womble has at making people of all ages smile.

I would like to say thanks to my helpers who make it all possible and to my long-suffering fiancée and daughter, who are so proud of me and just let me get on with it! Make sure when you WDSA readers get over to a game at Kingsmeadow that you give 'Haydon' a cuddle.

## **VARIETY NEEDED TO IMPROVE OUR 'GOALS FOR' TERRY MCFADDEN**

WE'RE a difficult bunch to please, us Dons.

The facts are that the Wombles have won 11 matches out of 17 in all competitions at the time of writing. Add 5 draws and a single defeat and you are looking at their entire record for the 2006/7 season so far. Most fans in most leagues – be they pub side or Premiership — would be delighted with that. Throw in an FA Cup tie with Exeter City for a place in the first round proper, including another chance to make history, and we

should all be dancing on the ceiling... Hell, we even have the country's best mascot! So, what is our problem?

Well, glance along from the 5 wins, 5 draws and 1 defeat on the league table and it becomes all too apparent what is ailing our faithful followers. A paltry 14 goals in 11 league games does not look like the form of champions-elect. Only seven other sides in the Ryman Premier have scored less.

Of course, we can offset goals scored against our magnificent defensive record, unmatched by our rivals, but somehow it still doesn't seem right. The fans want 'sexy' football with lots of goals. Is it sexy to win a title with a super-mean defence and a bunch of guys up front who win a penalty every other week? Certainly, Braintree with their namby-pamby title and their record of 74 scored, 32 shipped would and did happily take something along those lines. But what the hell! Somebody asked me recently why our strikers lack confidence in front of goal, so bear with me while I think out loud...

Roscoe D'sane stands head and shoulders above other Wombles as the man who creates opportunities – he has 5 assists. He's also the Dons' top scorer to date with 8 goals. Yet, 5 of D'sane's tally have come from the penalty spot and he should have converted two more. He is comfortable on the ball, loves to run at defenders, links up well with the midfield and can hit one from distance - note his cracker at Aldershot in pre-season. He's the only ever-present striker and, subsequently, is perceived on the terraces as the 'main man'. So why, like our rivals' key strikers, isn't our main man in double figures?

My suspicion is that Roscoe is more of a Shane Smeltz than a Richard Butler. In other words he's not an out- and-out striker. He doesn't play on the shoulder of the last man as a rule - although this observation is belied by the number of times he's flagged offside. Roscoe's strength is running past defenders to shoot or whip the ball across the goal. He has nearly as many assists as Byron Bubb, which should give us a clue about the sort of player he is. I'd suggest that D'sane needs an out and out striker alongside him and that he should play a free role. Why not knock the ball into his feet and run off him to draw defenders or offer a return pass option? Perhaps give him license to drop off, receive the ball in space, turn and run at opponents. Thread the ball into the channels between centre-half and full-back. And for goodness sake get someone in the box to finish off all the hard work he's done. Blimey, Steve Butler managed it against Oxhey Jets, why can't the midfield?

Now, if Roscoe is not the main man, do we have one? Yep. In fact, we have two.

Richard Butler and Paul Barnes are classic 'off the shoulder' numbers. Pace and work-rate define their game and both can keep their head in a one-on-one. Butler is more grit and strength than Barnes, but the former Barton Rovers man has springs in his heels and can offer an aerial option if a more direct style is employed.

Butler has been a mere shadow of the man who scored 23 goals in all competitions last season. The only player who could make 'long balls to midgets' a virtue, 'Little Butts' has struggled with form, temperament and injury this campaign. But he will hit form and fitness soon enough. And when he does, well we already know what works for him.

In the meantime, 'Barney' is back. He's looking sharp and he's already scoring goals again. Like Butler he loves something to run after, but he'll also score a header or two and has an uncanny knack of turning up in the six-yard box when crosses arrive – from Dsane, remember? Barnes is a goal-machine-in-waiting and should thrive in a partnership with Roscoe. And, if all else fails, just put the ball into space for him. When

the Dons need to ask more questions of their opponents, this player's pace is the definitive quizmaster.

Ok, so just when we thought that we had nothing different up front, along comes Darren Grieves. The fans were baying for a big lump last season, one who could win headers and hold the ball up. Grieves turned up at KM and showed us exactly how it should be done... playing for East Thurrock United. He has done exactly what it said on the tin. He's got 4 goals and 3 assists and has been largely limited to subs appearances and cup matches. All of his goals were bullet headers inside the penalty area, so it shouldn't be rocket science to work out what service 'Grievesey' thrives on.

Ultimately, the Dons need some attacking variety. Sometimes when I watch the Dons it seems a bit one dimensional – like we've identified a weakness and that's the only one the team is willing to tap. There are plenty of players at the club – not just these strikers – who have the ability to carve open opposing back-lines with a fine cross, a telling pass or some good old-fashioned running off the ball. I'd like to see coaching staff encouraging players who try things out, even if it doesn't come off the first few times. Football is an ideas game as much as anything. Simple variety, some practice and a bit of support could be the way to breed confidence in front of goal and improve on our 1.27 goals per league game. It's worth a shot!

**Thanks as always to WDSA for their input and support of this newsletter.**

## *Fundraising Activities*

With the Barclay's loan now being in effect, regular monthly payments are being paid, unlike the irregular payments we made to pay the Khosla loan.

It is time for us to stand up and do our part in helping to reduce this debt.

With the holiday season beginning, it may be time to re-invent the US Don's diet, or at least prepare for it in the New Year. The two that have run previously were well received and contributed greatly to the fundraising effort. What do you say to another one?

There have been a couple of E-Bay auctions of Don's memorabilia, courtesy of SoCalDon. Does anyone have some interesting memorabilia that could induce some big spenders to help the cause?

Last year we sponsored a kit, this year we didn't. Let's get our heads together and set about sponsoring a kit for next year. With 50+ members, it would be less than \$10 per head to do.

These are just a few ideas, does anyone have any other ideas of how we can show support of our club?

Send in your suggestions and let's show the club they have our support.

Anyone with ideas to help us show support for our club is encouraged to send their ideas to us. E-mail them to Dave Hambly or myself.

AFCW and Cancer Research:

***OK ... I'm still plugging the cancer research – It does not impact you while you are on the computer and it does not cause you or your computer harm. Give it a try! If it doesn't work for you, then remove the driver.***

AFC Wimbledon has always had an affiliation with supporting Cancer research (it has been one of the recipients of the Walk(s) for Wimbledon sponsorships). There is a program that has been in operation for some time, whereby, you can link your home computers to a Grid supporting cures for cancer. The program runs in the background of your PC and will not inhibit your use of the computer, but will run programs when your computer is idle and utilise any free CPU time. A couple of us have set up an AFC Wimbledon team on the grid and are donating our free CPU time to the cause. If you would like to join, I have attached a link to the team below. Click to this site, download the driver and join the team. Each participant and team gain points. It is a good way to advertise and promote the club. Later on we may be able to gain some sponsorships, based on points earned, that could be shared amongst the club and cancer research.

**'<http://www.grid.org/services/teams/team.htm?id=C89CDDA3-BE3D-4D7B-8601-87BB77C8329A>'**

There are at least 16 football clubs with 'teams' associated with this research, the largest being Liverpool. We are working on a table that will rank the football club teams, by points, by members, etc. Obviously the more team members you have the more points you can accumulate. We can make this a fun thing that can derive great benefits for everyone. So come on all of you, go out to the above link and join the fight against cancer.

## *Contacts*

Here we will list contact information for those of you who want to share. Who knows, in our travels we may be in a fellow supporters area and get together for a beer and chat. Sign up is optional.

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## *Websites of interest*

Official Website - contains schedule, results and game reports:

[www.afcwimbldeon.co.uk](http://www.afcwimbldeon.co.uk)

WISA: [www.wisa.org.uk](http://www.wisa.org.uk)

Tony Kempster's site: [www.tonykempster.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.tonykempster.btinternet.co.uk)

Paul Raymond - ItmustbeDons: [www.itmustbedons.com](http://www.itmustbedons.com)

Ryman League: [www.isthmian.co.uk](http://www.isthmian.co.uk)

DonsOnline: [www.donsonline.co.uk](http://www.donsonline.co.uk)

Radio WDON: [www.wdon.com](http://www.wdon.com)

NEW chat-room (Old Centrals): <http://www.afcwgb.co.uk/gb.php>