

AFC Wimbledon US Dons Newsletter

Issue 4 – September/October 2005

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US Dons – News

Sorry for the delay in getting out the September Newsletter. Due to unforeseen circumstances (Hurricanes Katrina & Rita), my time was somewhat curtailed. So I have combined September's with October.

I am again going to skip the member BIO this month, due to time constraints, and this time I won't promise to get it in for the next newsletter. I am still looking for input from a lot of you out there. Please keep them coming so we can get to know one another. Also you can help me out with some guest columns or anything else of interest to fellow Don's supporters.

This month I do have a guest column, from down under. The Wimbledon Down-Under Supporters Association (WDSA) has been around for a long time and has issued over 150 newsletters to Don's Supporters in the Australasian continent. Many thanks to Robert Smith their founder and long-time Don's supporter.

The Don's season has not begun as we are accustomed to. Defeat to Walton & Hersham in the FA Cup is hard to take after the tussles we had with them last year. But, it doesn't mean our season is through. We still have the league and the FA Trophy to set our sights on. Our early success in the past 3 seasons has brought with it high expectations. But with each rung up the ladder we have to expect tougher opposition. With the injuries to start the season, it has not been easy for the management, but recent results, though only draws, seem to indicate we belong in this division and our hopes for a playoff spot are not unreasonable. We stuck with them through the recent bad years Let's stick with them now and cheer them to even greater heights.

Let's hope it's not an omen of things to come, but our "kit sponsorship" was attached to the away strip of Amadou Kouman. After a bright start, Amo unfortunately suffered an injury. We wish him all the best and a speedy recovery. A special "Thanks" to all of you who contributed to the kit fund, we are now mentioned in each and every home game program, and the club is certainly appreciative of our support.

To give you fair warning the November newsletter, may be a little late also. I will be at the "Meadow" for a few games in late October / early November.

Don't forget, send me your BIO's and any newsworthy items you would like to submit. We are still interested in any ideas you might have to assist in fundraising activities to help the club.

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AFCW News

With almost a dozen games into the season, the team is placed in the top ten. Not all the results have gone our way. Injuries have played a major role in the teams inability to maintain cohesion and gain the results we would like to see. Easy goals have been let in and several chances at the other end have been squandered. However, the last couple of games the team seems to be playing as though they believe they belong. Dave Anderson has talked about strengthening the squad, but that always sounds easier than it is.

We had a good start in the FA Cup with a tough draw at home followed by a good victory away. A tough home defeat against Walton & Hersham followed. Walton played us tough last year and the Surrey Senior Cup Final was an epic battle that could have gone either way. Thankfully, we came out on top of that game. Unfortunately, this time they won and the better team won. Time to move on and focus our attentions on the FA Trophy and the League.

In a recent AFCW program, the US Dons got mentioned, thanks to SoCal, who hosted Barnsley Dave at an Anaheim Angels baseball game. We are getting plenty of plugs.

Don't forget, you can listen to the Home games on the Internet at 'www.wdon.com'.

As you may already know the chat-room 'www.weirdandwonderfulworld.com' has ceased to exist. Some of you already know a new site is available for us to share our views while we listen to the game. The link to it is: '<http://www.afcwgb.co.uk/gb.php>'. Hope to see some of you out there. SoCal, Canadian and myself are some of the regulars out there joining many of the England based supporters.

Some good news posted on the official website a couple of weeks ago, was that the ground fund debt has been reduced to half a million pounds. We have come a long way in the last three years. That is still a big number, but is a huge difference from the 2.5 million it started off as. The whole club and supporter base should feel proud of all that has been accomplished in a very short period of time. Let's keep it going.

Guest Column:

As I promised in an earlier newsletter, I have been teaming up with the WDSA (Wimbledon Down-under Supporters Association). This group has been in existence for over 15 years and published their 150th newsletter earlier this year. Robert Smith started WDSA and has been their driving force. Below is his first offering to us. It is interesting and coincidental that, just today on the AFCW website, they posted an article on the Under 16's team representing Surrey. Based on the results of the youth teams last year, we have a lot to look forward to and grow on.

ALL ON BOARD!

By Wizard of Oz

DAMIEN Francis joined Wigan Athletic this month from Norwich City. *“Francis was one of the stars of Norwich City's brief season in the Premiership in 2004/05. Although the Canaries suffered an immediate relegation, his drive and goal scoring from midfield fired the side to the brink of safety. The player scored seven Premiership goals that term, leading to much speculation over his future at the end of the season. He has a wealth of skill and confidence, his passing ability and willingness to take on defenders offered scope to change the face of games and his ability to find the back of the net from midfield is also proven”*

(ESPN SoccerNet) ‘Damo’ is a former Wimbledon FC player, a fan who made it from the terraces to the first team of the club he supported but then, of course, his club disappeared and he moved on. His transfer got me thinking of some of the other players produced and developed by WFC still playing at the top level and how things could have been so different if only Sam the Sham hadn't sold the club's soul to the Norwegians and how promising the future of the new Wimbledon, AFC Wimbledon, is likely to be.

Probably the most successful and certainly the most popular of the former academy players to still be plying his trade at the highest level is Chris Perry, an AFCW supporter whose Dad is a regular at Kingsmeadow. Perry seems to be ageless and nothing changes about his playing style; still the quietly determined defender, the last-ditch tackle hero, the hate-to-be-beaten mentality and still doing it for Charlton.

Jason Euell is also with Charlton Athletic; in his first season he scored 17 goals but of late the goals have dried up and he is struggling to crack a place in the first team, however he is likely to remain in the Premiership as Birmingham City have expressed an interest in him. Jason, of course, like Damo is a product of the Wimbledon youth academy, which also produced Carl Cort, who is currently in Wolves first team in the Championship, but that is another story.

The old Wimbledon had a reputation for not only producing its own but also buying from the lower divisions and turning uncut stones into polished diamonds. One such is the unflappable Kenny Cunningham, a legend in the annals of Wimbledon FC, a known hater of the Franchise, a supporter of AFCW and, like Perry, still getting the job done, week in, week out, for Birmingham City. Kenny is a remarkable footballer, a player who earned the utmost respect from Wimbledon fans who is now settled so well with Brum that he seems to have been there a lifetime. The consummate professional, he is also the skipper of the resurgent Blues. Back in the heady days of Cunningham and Perry, and Blackwell, there was a young thug of a full back – Ben Thatcher. Thatcher, like Cunningham, was signed from Millwall but is the antithesis of Kenny's playing style as Nicky Summerbee's jaw would attest to – if he can still speak. Astonishingly, Thatcher is also still in the Premier League, with Manchester City. Signed by the flaky Kevin Keegan, his manager now is the doyen of the great hard men full backs – Stu Psycho Pearce. Under such a mentor Thatcher still flourishes.

Now, if you can still have a defence that features Cunningham, Perry and Thatcher, who would be your goalkeeper? Answer – Kelvin Davis - voted the best keeper in the Championship, who signed for

Sunderland in the close season. A team is taking shape... midfield includes Francis but would also now include perhaps the best young prospect from the famous academy – Nigel Reo-Coker. Reo-Coker came to fame in these pages purely by chance. An article written about young players making their way to the top and abandoned by the administrators of Milton Keynes selected his name at random because, simply, it sounded foreign and exotic in keeping with the mercenaries lining up to join Liverpool. But since that time fame has beckoned.

Joining West Ham for a song Reo-Coker has established himself to the point that he skippered the team to promotion to the Premier League via the play-offs and then earned rave reviews as captain of the England Under 21s under Peter Taylor in a tournament this European summer. Reo-Coker is the goods and could easily go all the way to the full England side.

What a legacy Sam threw away! These players could easily be still performing for Wimbledon FC if life had not taken its dramatic turn.

But all is not lost. This summer AFC Wimbledon announced a partnership with NESCOL (Epsom's college of further and higher education) which will see young footballers given the opportunity to benefit from a high quality academic and football education under one roof. Nigel Higgs, the Dons Trust board member responsible for AFC Wimbledon Youth and Community Football said "It's great to be adding another piece of the jigsaw. The programme, on top of our mini-soccer and youth sides running from under-8s to under-16s, puts us another step along the road to our ultimate aim of a youth setup at Wimbledon to rival the professional academies." Kris Stewart added: "The Youth Development Programme is the culmination of several months of planning and hard work by a number of people both within AFC Wimbledon and outside. As we strive to progress higher in the pyramid, we will come to depend more and more on home-grown youth players."

So, the seeds are sown. Somewhere in the myriad of successful teams from Under 8s to Under 18s, and also the junior Ladies teams, the next generation of Wimbledon stars is being groomed. The next Perry, Blackwell, Sullivan, Euell, Francis, Ardley, Cort, Castledine or Reo-Coker is out there. It is only a matter of time. Watch out for the young guns as AFC Wimbledon climb the ladder back to the Football League. Former PM Paul Keating said if you want to complete the journey you have to be on the train when it leaves the station and these youngsters and this club are sure on the train that once led a young Damien Francis from the terraces to the first team and to the Premier League.

Fundraising Activities

To reiterate the ground debt to the Khosla's was reduced again by another 20,000 pounds. This brings the outstanding debt down to 500,000 pounds.

We, as a group, have contributed to this effort with several fundraising activities. Dave Hambly has set up a Pay-Pal account to deposit funds, this account also earns interest.

We are participating as kit sponsor. We sponsor the away kit of Amadou Kouman, who is unfortunately injured at this time. We hope he recovers soon and carries our sponsorship to greater heights.

NOTE: SoCal has noted he has not received all the pledges to the kit sponsorship. If you made a pledge, please follow-up on it. Go to the USDons Web-site, there is a kit sponsorship tab to pay. Thank You all.

Currently not much else is going on over here. No more diets, we should probably wait until the holiday season has passed and we all need to lose a few pounds again.

We need some:

New Ideas

Send us your ideas for other fundraising activities we could embark upon. One thought is to have some US Dons team shirts made up, which we could proudly wear on our trips back to the homeland. Any takers on this?

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.

If any of you have had trouble getting on to this site, they have had a few problems during a system upgrade. Things are back to normal now, so please take a look and feel free to join up for this worthy cause.

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.afcwimbledeon.co.uk

WISA: www.wisa.org.uk

Tony Kempster's site: www.tonykempster.btinternet.co.uk

Paul Raymond - ItmustbeDons: www.itmustbedons.com

Ryman League: www.isthmian.co.uk

DonsOnline: www.donsonline.co.uk

Radio WDON: www.wdon.com

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