



Supporters' Club meeting report

18/12/2012

Venue: Wast Hills training facility

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1.0 Stadium & Security: Dave Houlton (Deputy Safety Officer)

(i) Are there any plans for safe standing? If not, what would it take for this to happen at St. Andrews?

There are at present no plans to introduce safe standing as it requires a change in legislation; however the club remains open to the idea should this change. St. Andrews is currently designed as an all-seater stadium and any introduction of a safe standing system means stand redesigns may need to be considered.

(ii) Can the club enforce a no right turn out of the Kop car park, or potentially widen the Kop gates as the traffic is an accident waiting to happen?

This has previously been tried before but was ignored, with motorists taking no notice of stewards. To enforce this effectively, it would require police presence. Other alternatives have been considered, including utilisation of the pedestrian gates located next to the club superstore. The club would however need permission from the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) to do so as it is a potential health and safety issue.

Other traffic and people flow on Cattell Road and Garrison Lane were also raised. The club will be addressing these issues at the next SAG meeting.

(iii) People in many areas of the ground struggle to hear the PA system.

This problem has been frequently acknowledged by the club and there are engineers working to rectify the issue. Worries about potential evacuation messages via the PA system are part of a separate system which functions off pre-recorded messages; this system overrides all other systems and can be clearly heard throughout the ground.

To identify where PA issues are most frequent, the club is considering a notice in the match day programme advising all fans to notify the club (specifically Sarah Gould) of problems in their area. This is also likely to be announced via the club's social media feeds, however the suggestion of handing out flyers before the game was deemed not viable.

(iv) Update on illuminated sign at the back of the GM stand.

The construction of an illuminated sign in the area suggested would mean contracts with Network Rail would have to be secured with regards to access; construction work would mean that the railway line would have to be closed overnight. Other stumbling blocks such as costs and planning permission are prohibitive and therefore the club cannot pursue the idea any further at present. Alternatives had been considered, such as a projected image on

the back of the stand, however the projection was not strong enough for it to be visible from a considerable distance.

(v) SAG – who are they made up of and what do they do?

The Safety Advisory Group, abbreviated SAG, is comprised of local police, fire, council and club staff members. Their primary role is to ensure that safety regulations are being followed. The club must seek the SAG's approval for anything that requires change to the current health and safety provisions currently in place.

(vi) Musical instruments within the stadium.

The use of musical instruments within St. Andrews was banned by SAG, although the club accepted that the use of musical instruments at football matches is entirely subjective and was intent on allowing them.

(vii) Ladies toilets; extra hand dryers in the Kop by entrance 5. More bins needed in the Kop/Tilton corner.

Both issues will be addressed following the Christmas period. Again, due to SAG, the club are not allowed to place anymore bins within the concourse area so are considering alternatives such as hoops, which allow for a bin bag to be hooked around it whilst fixated to a wall.

2.0 Marketing: Alexa Stockham (Head of Marketing)

(i) Loyalty card – balances; can they be added online and viewed when logging in?

A new system is scheduled to be introduced for the 2013/14 season where balances can be checked and viewed online using a client reference number.

(ii) The match day experience

The club are actively identifying ways to enhance fans' match day experience, i.e. chip and win, pre and post-match entertainment and music from bands. Festive initiatives are also in place for the Burnley match; an inflatable Santa's grotto will be located in the main Kop car park and ginger bread men will also be being handed out in the Garrison Lane stand for children. Plans to place this closer to the Garrison Lane stand were discussed but were deemed unviable due to several safety concerns.

Suggestions such as player and ex-player signing opportunities were also discussed so that kids feel more a part of and get more out of the wider match day experience. Other

suggestions included half time mini-matches between home and away kid's supporters and bringing the Academy onto the pitch during the interval; both of which are being considered.

(iii) Chip and win – why does it not always take place at the Tilton Road end?

Chip and win cannot always take place at the Tilton Road end due to groundsmans' orders so that pitch watering can take place, however the club always aim to deliver the competition at the Tilton Road end. The chip and win competition has an over-18's only policy as it involves gambling of some sort; the kids' version is made smaller and all prizes are won.

The club will also consider the suggestion of switching chip and win prizes, i.e. having the signed football first, followed by a pair of match tickets, so that more people gamble for higher valued prizes.

3.0 Ticketing: Wendy Monks (Head of Ticketing)

(i) Ticket pricing

Outlining their ticket pricing strategy, the club confirmed that season ticket prices are established first, followed by grading's and subsequent prices. Season ticket prices must remain cheaper than purchasing tickets on a match-by-match basis as the attractiveness of buying a season ticket then becomes obsolete.

The club are considering scrapping the grading system, replacing it with a flat fee system for the 2013/14 season, conceding that a grading system whilst in the Championship may not be the best ticketing policy.

Match day pricing structure remains of high priority for the club. With only four internal promotions per season (offered to home supporters only), the club is very limited with what it can offer. For example, the "Christmas cracker" initiative whereby fans can purchase two match tickets for £20 counts for two internal promotions.

Other initiatives such as kids for a quid are not classed as an internal promotion and therefore must also be offered to travelling away fans. Kids for a quid has been widely proven to boost gate receipts by figures of 2,500.

Attendances are not calculated simply by how many individuals enter through the turnstiles at each game. Instead, they are worked out by how many season ticket holders there are added to the number of tickets sold and the number of commercial individuals in attendance.

The club confirmed that, since dropping the £5 match day price increase, there has been no increase in the number of pay-on-the-day sales. Since dropping the charge, pay-on-the-day sales have in fact fallen by 3%.

Purchasing tickets for matches either by phone or in person at the ticket office remains the best course of action as the club's online system only offers a range of "best available seats"; the club is aware that the online system delivered by Ticketmaster is not very user friendly, and provisions are being considered on how to best to tackle this.

4.0 Retail Catering: Sharon Byrne (Head of Catering)

(i) Limited choice of catering in the Kop stand – less choice than in the Tilton but higher priced tickets. Are there any plans to put more lines in?

The only difference in kiosks between the Tilton and the Kop stands is chips; all other food is offered throughout the ground. While the club will look into engineering space for fryers in the Kop, it may not be possible.

(ii) The Cookhouse – are there any plans to extend it to other areas of the ground?

A Cookhouse Christmas menu will be available for the Burnley game available throughout the ground as much as possible and are currently working on offering one Cookhouse kiosk in every stand in January.

(iii) Queues – can anything be done?

The club is aware of queues for refreshments throughout the ground, notably in the Kop, and are looking into the possibility of offering beer-only kiosks to keep queuing times to a minimum. Mobile beer sellers are also being considered, although hiring extra kiosk staff is not an option due to a lack of space behind the counters. Other potential alternatives include a token or voucher only kiosk whereby no cash is involved, thus speeding up service times.

(iv) Catering supplies

Concerns were raised regarding the Gil Merrick Lower stand and catering supplies; many fans have reported that they have ran out of hot food and beer. This issue will be looked into.

5.0 PR & Communications: Andy Walker (Head of PR/Social Media)

(i) Higher levels of PR / substantial presence / social media

While the club would love to offer higher levels of PR and substantial media presence, staffing and resources both fundamental issues. The club's strategy at present is to do what they can do well rather than focus on their limitations in this area.

Issues surrounding the website following its recent update are not just at Blues, with widespread problems being reported by many of the clubs who are tied into a Football League contract until 2017. Improvements have been slow and the club is hopeful that further enhancements will be forthcoming in the near future.

6.0 AV Department: Chris Alcock

(i) Blues Player

Birmingham City produce the content for Blues Player but have no say in offering discounts for members as it is simply not their product. There have been widespread issues reported surrounding the quality of live audio commentary dropping out for long periods of time following a recent update; an option to switch back to the old player has now been added which has proved to be a temporary fix.

(ii) Big screen

To avoid complications, the club is not allowed to show replays of contentious issues on the big screen. They are also not allowed to show added time, which is why the clock stops at 45 and 90 minutes.

The club cannot simply show the team line-ups on the big screen at all times. As two different software packages are currently being used (one for the team line-up, stats etc. and one for the live score) it is impossible to do so. Other software packages that will provide a simpler user experience may be considered in the near future.

(iii) Match day announcer

The club is aware of issues such as the speed at which the announcer talks. They will be addressing this issue along with numerous others.

7.0 Board message

While Peter Pannu was keen to be a part of the supporters' club meeting, his schedule made it impossible for him to attend in person. He accepts that there are many things that fans wish to know and that a message/update in the match day programme is being considered subject to confidentiality and legislation rules and regulations. Attendees were asked to

compile a list of questions to be answered and email them to the club for this particular purpose.