

Programme notes v Yeovil

Good Afternoon and welcome to today's game against our visitors from Somerset. As someone who has travelled to our away fixtures at Yeovil I have nothing but admiration for the supporters who are making the 570mile round trip today. The welcome we receive down there is one of the friendliest in the league and hopefully we can make reciprocate that today but not to the extent of letting them take 3 points back with them.

Our next game up is in the Checktrade trophy against Notts County which again raises the debate about the supporters' attitude to these fixtures. Our view on this is the same as it has always been in that it is just not right to include Premiership representation in a tournament that's purpose was always to give lower league clubs the chance to play at Wembley. The EFL have been very lucky so far in that the two finals since its introduction have not contained a premiership club but it could easily happen and Chelsea came very close last season. Historically this tournament in former guises has been very kind to us and gave many of us one of the greatest moments in the club's history when Wayne Burnett scored that golden goal against Bournemouth. As we know our friends down the road took the competition very seriously last season and made a great deal of money from it which has now gone towards their push for promotion. What price principles?

The other argument people had against the tournament is that it is the thin end of the wedge and the next step will be to include premiership team representation in the league structure. This wasn't helped when Shaun Harvey from the EFL issued a whole game solution discussion document which included introduction of more

teams and a new league 3. Thankfully the proposal was thrown out by the clubs and is not being pursued.

When the tournament was first introduced the disagreement we had with the club was not so much the way the club voted but more the fact that we didn't know the item was on the EFL AGM agenda and therefore we had no chance to put forward our view in advance. This was acknowledged, and the communication process is now much better. Although the club voted in favour of the format they were clearly misled by the EFL with talk of the possibility of big named players (they even mentioned Wayne Rooney) taking part and that the teams would be U23. Also they implied all the big club's had signed up to take part which of course they had not. They obviously also sold the potential financial benefits very hard. With no other alternative on the table and having sought reassurance about no further plans to include premier ship clubs in the league they decided to vote in favour.

At a recent meeting with the club they have made it very clear that under no circumstances would they vote for premier ship inclusion in the league structure and have guaranteed fan involvement should the issue ever arise again.

From the managers point of view we would expect he sees the competition as a good way of giving games to some of the fringe and younger players and quite rightly he will be looking to win every game the team plays regardless of the circumstances.

Ultimately our overriding belief is freedom of choice and we fully support individual choices whether you attend the games or not. We would also encourage those who would normally attend these games but choose not to in this format to show your support for the

club by buying merchandise or perhaps make a donation to youth development.

The subject about individual choice came upon again last week with the fixture at MK Dons. Many will never forget how they came to be a league club and made the choice not to go but others (like myself) took the view that despite what happened the best way of influencing the present day was to get behind the team and try and take something from the game. The comments from the players after the game basically endorsed the fact that the magnificent fans were a major factor in achieving the point. There will be a similar dilemma in a few weeks when we play Stevenage away. Our disgust at the way our fans were treated last season is well documented, made worse by the lack of apology from them, but is the best way of responding not to go or alternatively go and get behind the lads and help them get something from the game?

The one thing there will hopefully be a unanimous view on is that we need to get behind the team today and cheer the guys on to our first home win of the season. Enjoy the game.