

Programme Notes v Scunthorpe

Good afternoon and welcome to today's eagerly anticipated derby against our neighbours from Scunthorpe. We extend a particularly warm welcome to our friends from Iron Trust and all other supporters of the Iron and hope you have a safe journey back down the M180.

The reason this fixture has seen more interest than usual is that it is actually the first time we have played each other in the league since 2004/5 and before that it was 1989/90. The reason for this of course is that our neighbours have played at a higher level than us for most of this time but of course that has not always been the case and in terms of head to head in all competitions we have the upper hand with 25 victories compared to 16 losses and 17 draws. The fixture is relatively new because despite being formed in 1899 the Iron didn't enter the league structure until 1950 and our first league meeting was Christmas Day 1951 at Blundell Park which Town won 3-2 and then we played them again the very next day at the Old Show Ground when Town won again, this time 3-1. The respective crowds were 19,351 and 15,734, a far cry from the level of support we both receive now.

Recent weeks have been problematical for the club both on and off the pitch which once again has raised the issue of the desire from some supporters for change of ownership at the club. To be clear, our position on this is that we would very much welcome this, particularly if it can unlock the new stadium project, but it needs to be to people who genuinely want to take the club forward and in no way put the long term future of the club in any danger whatsoever. As frustrating as it is, we should be proud that the club is continually run on a self-sustainable basis and if we can get the new stadium on the right terms this will unlock new revenue streams which in turn will make us more competitive. If, to supplement this, we had investors who were prepared to add to this then great, but we do not believe that being beholden to one or two individuals is the good for the long term. This is of the course the position Scunthorpe find themselves in and is a key reason they have performed at a higher level than us over recent years and even though we understand the investment has been reigned in compared to previous levels we would still estimate their playing budget will be considerably higher than ours despite lower gates. The financial commitment shown by their chairman has been amazing but is that a position we would want to be in? If it was guaranteed for the long term then great, but if at some point it ceases the transition to self-sustainability would be very painful indeed.

Although the takeover talks have stalled, we remain very confident that at some point in the not too distant future it will happen and when it does Jon and Dave will be fully involved to ensure the best interest of the fans.

On the pitch we have been struggling to score goals but apart from Swindon, who were a very good team, the performances have deserved much more reward than we have got and hopefully the chances that we have been creating will start to turn into goals, what better day than today to start!

To add even more interest to today's game we do of course welcome back Paul Hurst and Chris Doig and we must say they during their time here they were nothing but supportive to us and we will be eternally grateful for what they did for the club. We won't however wish them good luck today because we wouldn't mean it.

We would normally sign off with a plea for fans to get behind the team but we know that is not necessary for today, the atmosphere will be electric, let's all be loud and proud but also respectful.

Up the Mariners and Merry Christmas

Mariners Trust Board