

Programme notes v Morecambe

Good afternoon and welcome to this afternoon's match against Morecambe and especially the fans who are making the 330 miles round trip to follow their team. Although today's opponents are probably operating with the lowest budget in the league they should not be underestimated and consistently outperform their relative financial resource and this is confirmed when you look at the current form table (last 6 games) which shows them as 15th in the league compared to ourselves at 17th. As always it will be a very tough game and our support can make a big difference, please get behind the lads even if in parts of the game things are not going to plan.

The away support at Bradford was absolutely amazing, and generally speaking the supporters were a credit to the club, but as often happens with very large followings there is a very small minority that ruin it for others. First of all, there were several instances of smoke bombs being thrown onto the pitch. As we have pointed out on many occasions this is not only illegal but also dangerous for fellow supporters particularly those with asthma or breathing difficulties. It is very likely the club will be warned and possibly fined for this behaviour and this just directly takes away from the resources available to the manager. The last thing we want to do is be kill joys and stop enthusiastic support for the team but there are rules that need to be adhered and there are consequences for both the club and individuals if these rules are broken.

There are also reports of some racial chanting on the day although at the time of writing there is no official report of this from either the police or stewards. Again we can only reiterate what we have previously stated in that we condemn any form of abuse, racial or otherwise, and we would recommend supporters who witness such behaviour report it to the nearest steward or download the Kick It Out app and discreetly report it on there. Related to this we feel supporters need educating on what constitutes racial abuse as we have been reported this season for chants making reference to the travelling community. Many supporters probably do not realise this is an offence, but it is, and we are speaking to the club about the best way of getting this message over to fans. We must emphasise the vast majority of our supporters are an absolute credit to themselves and the club, but we all need to keep trying to improve the behaviour of the very small minority who are letting the rest of us down.

The Bradford game also emphasised to us the need for grounds to have proper standing facilities. Standing during the game is technically illegal but very difficult to steward when everyone is stood up for all of the game. The law actually allows for people to stand during moments of excitement but actually, as Saturday showed, this is the most dangerous time with many examples of supporters falling forward and others injuring themselves while celebrating. Having controlled standing with safe facilities has to be allowed as soon as possible which will also make things better for those who want to or need to sit during the game but are forced to stand because others do. This is a hot topic with government at the moment and hopefully they will honour election promises to bring forward reform on this issue sooner rather than later.

Finally, a reminder about some events coming up:

Next Wednesday, February 19th, we have a charity match in aid of Prostate Cancer against Grimsby Ancient Mariners Walking football team. This is at King George stadium with kick off at 2pm. If anyone fancies trying walking football or having a “normal” game, then please get in touch.

On Friday March 13th we have an exile supporters evening in the Trust Bar which gives those who support the team from afar the chance to meet each other and also have a meet and greet with Ollie. This is ahead of the Carlisle game for which we have arranged special prices for exile supporters coming back home for the match.

Finally, we are delighted to confirm that on Thursday April 9th we will be having a book launch evening in McMenemy’s for the 1979/80 Champions book which celebrates the 40 years anniversary of probably our best post war season to date. Special guest for the evening is Joe Waters who was captain of the team and will be flying over from America for the launch. Ticket and book price details will be issued very shortly.

Enjoy the game.

Mariners Trust Board.