

## **CHAMPIONS!!**

Yes! At the first time of asking, Brentford Football Club, under the direction of Ron Noades and Ray Lewington, ably assisted by Terry Bullivant and Brian Sparrow, bounced back to the 2nd Division having won the 3rd Division Championship decider at the Abbey Stadium, Cambridge. 2,500 Bees fans witnessed captain Paul Evans lift the Championship Trophy after a hard fought 1-0 win, thanks to Lloyd Owusu's goal on the hour.

On behalf of all BIAS members and Bees fans everywhere, may we take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the players, management and staff at Brentford FC for a superb football season. May this success continue next season into Division 2 and beyond.

## **Ground Share Survey**

The first survey of members of the Brentford Independent Association of Supporters (B.I.A.S.) has revealed overwhelming support for a new stadium for Brentford Football Club. Over 80% of BIAS members favour the idea, with fewer than one in six opposed to it.

Two alternative sites for a new ground emerged from the first phase of the feasibility investigation funded jointly by the club and Hounslow Council. Opinion is evenly split on which of these would be better - slightly less than two in five favouring each, with a quarter having no preference. However 58% would be less favourable if the new stadium was shared with another football club. Top of the list for clubs members do not want to share with is Fulham, with over half of BIAS members naming them as the club they would least like to share with. Just over a quarter of members named traditional rivals Queens Park Rangers.

At present most BIAS members drive to see Brentford at Griffin Park (59%). If the club moves to Western International Market, this is likely to increase to 70%. However a move to Chiswick Bus Works would see a small reduction in the numbers driving (to 53%).

BIAS members were asked whether they expected to attend more, the same, or fewer games if Brentford moved to either location. In most cases the move will make no difference, although the Chiswick site is slightly favoured in this regard. Around one in six members would make fewer trips to Western International than they do to Griffin Park.

A critical and topical issue is that of temporary ground sharing before a new stadium is ready. The club has suggested that this is very likely to happen, if they can secure agreement with a landlord club in West London. A large number of BIAS members have expressed very grave reservations and opposition to such a move, due to the inherent risks of ending up homeless like Wimbledon or Brighton. However, if such a move does happen, the ground with most support from BIAS members is Loftus Road, home of Queens Park Rangers.

Over half of members believe that Loftus Road is a good or OK option, with only one in eight saying they wouldn't watch Brentford there. Craven Cottage is felt to be good or OK by just under a third of BIAS members and one in five would not go to watch Brentford at Fulham's ground. Even Hayes' ground was more popular than Craven Cottage. Other alternatives considered were Adams Park (Wycombe Wanderers), which was very unpopular - demonstrating the importance of Brentford staying in West London - and the Stoop (Harlequins Rugby Football Club), which nearly half see as good or OK, although nearly one in five wouldn't go there to watch the Bees. It is worth noting that very few BIAS members rated any of these venues as a good option - with most ratings for all grounds being either "OK" or "Bad".

BIAS members were asked to rate the importance of various facilities at the new stadium. The most important (in order of preference) are adequate toilets, good public transport, no restricted views, large car parks with quick exits, a club shop and snack bars.

A large number of BIAS members mentioned unprompted the importance of easy access and facilities for disabled supporters.

Further information on the survey can be obtained from Edmund Paton Walsh, Secretary of BIAS. All BIAS members were sent the questionnaire in April. The response rate was 68%.

## Ground move update

Following the last issue of "The Bee", the question of a move from Griffin Park has been answered - for at least the next season. It was however, left to QPR to announce that Brentford FC had made an approach to share Rangers Stadium, but that after due consideration, our west London neighbours had declined the offer. Though this confirms Bees will play its First Team games at Griffin Park next season, Brentford will continue to pursue alternatives and just because QPR have rejected one offer does not mean they would reject further approaches from Ron Noades.

With the playing season now over, hopefully Ron will turn his attention to progress the feasibility study and bring us closer to a new stadium. So far as the existing facilities are concerned, the Board has now approved work to start on improving the toilets and food bars behind the New Road stand and work should start early in June.

## Season Ticket Prices

By now you should have received the Club's ticket pricing for season 1999/2000. Bearing in mind we have just seen a Championship winning season, most of these prices are extremely favourable, particularly the Season Ticket reductions compared to last year, but this assumes you are able to buy your ticket before the end of May. From June, there are price rises across the board particularly for those who wish to watch matches from the Ealing Road terrace.

Gary Hargraves explained this lack of concessions "to encourage fans to move to the New Road or Braemar Road areas of Griffin Park and help create a better atmosphere. You can see the fans chanting but you can't hear them!"

On the down side, prices for adult match day entrance to the New Road have been increased to £13, which is a 30% increase on last term. Whether the "casual" supporter will return with these prices remains to be seen.

All in all, there are good deals to be had - especially if you invest in a season ticket before the end of May. Thereafter, the price rises made inevitable by the signing of quality players have to be paid for by us the fans. No other business runs without its customers paying for the service provided and this includes Brentford.

## End of year? But May!

Although operations only began early 1999, the financial year of BIAS ends on 31st May and therefore year-end is almost upon us. David Merritt has been preparing the accounts for BIAS on a monthly basis and the Committee has reviewed them, but at year-end the rules require a more stringent audit.

The rules state the year-end accounts must be audited by two auditors, one of which must be a professional accountant. In future auditors will be elected at the AGM, but since this is the first year of operation we will select the auditors from a shortlist and our decision will be ratified at the AGM. This is not a perfect solution, but any other method will mean we have no accounts to present at the AGM!

We are therefore looking for nominations - you can nominate yourself if you are interested - and will select two. If we fail to find a professional accountant internally we will look outside BIAS. If you know of an accountant prepared to accept non-financial reimbursement (for example, free advertising in this newsletter) then get in touch. A local sole practitioner who would benefit from such local advertising would be perfect.

If you have any suggestions which we should consider please contact us as soon as possible detailing all relevant experience at the BIAS PO Box or email address, marking all correspondence for the attention of David Merritt, Financial Officer.

## **BIAS Prize Draw**

The second prize draw took place at Griffin Park during the half-time break of the Leyton Orient match. Former Bees centre-half Keith Lawrence was on hand to pick the ticket, the lucky winner being

Mr D S Wilcox

Congratulations go to Mr Wilcox, who wins a £40 voucher to spend at the Brentford club shop. The prize draw for May is scheduled to take place at the Club's Fun Day on 23rd May, and the winner will be notified in due course.

## **Thanks for your support!**

Though BIAS is still very much in its infancy, we hope that you are satisfied with the way in which we are representing your views to the Club. It is very important that Brentford supporters continue to have a voice and that their opinions are heard. Suggestions and help are always welcome, and should you have any ideas during the coming football-free months, please get in touch.

Finally, we thank you for your continued support of BIAS and look forward to another successful season both on and of the pitch.