

## THOSE BIAS MEMBERS WHO DON'T LIVE IN THE BRENTFORD AREA MAY NOT KNOW THAT THE COMMITTEE ISSUES REGULAR PRESS RELEASES TO PROMOTE THE WORK OF BIAS. HERE ARE THE LATEST TWO STATEMENTS.

### 12th January 2000

In the light of recent events at Brentford Football Club, BIAS (Brentford Independent Association of Supporters) is disappointed that the club seem to be showing the same lack of regard for its supporters that David Webb demonstrated a few years ago.

BIAS is dedicated to improving communications between the Club and the supporters and felt that genuine headway had been made over the last two years or so. Whilst BIAS recognises that the football club will make decisions they may not agree with, the whole point of setting up an effective communications channel is so that the kind of rumours generated recently no longer occur.

The club has total control over the players it buys and sells and it is quite clearly the job of the club's directors to make good business decisions on behalf of the company they manage. What doesn't make sense is that the club assumes it's not answerable to its customers!

Ron Noades is the Chairman and majority shareholder at Brentford FC, it appears that he believes he also has total control of the club. He couldn't be more wrong, he has temporary charge at Brentford and is looking after it on behalf of both the supporters and the community at large. BIAS appeals to him to give supporters the respect they deserve, especially if he expects them to reciprocate!

John McGlashan, Chairman of BIAS, said, "Many people are absolutely gutted that the club have sold these players without explaining the reasons why. Fans are angry and upset, but with a little more thought the club could have avoided all the stick they've taken. Players come and go all the time and it's not for me to judge the rights or wrongs of that, but to refuse to make any kind of comment when supporters were desperate for information suggests the club doesn't give a damn about its supporters. Crowds are not far off an all time low and this is no way to get them back. However, it would be fantastic if all the

doubters turned up at the next game just to remind the club that we expect success, we've been in the doldrums for far too long! Sadly, I think events of the last few years may have destroyed the passion local people once held for their football club, it would be nice to be proved wrong!"

Edmund Paton Walsh, Secretary of BIAS, said, "Like any football fan would be, I am devastated that the club has sold its leading goalscorer and most dependable midfielder, apparently for a trifling amount. But fans also accept that sometimes these things are necessary and in the best long-term interests of the club they follow. What Brentford fans need to know now is why these players were sold and what the chairman's plans are for the rest of the team, the manager and the coaches and for the club as a whole. The recent silence and these developments have fuelled speculation and only Ron Noades can end that. Supporters will inevitably view silence as contempt and this will lead to a downward spiral. The team is playing well at the moment and BIAS calls on Ron Noades to let us know how he views the future of Brentford Football Club."

### 22nd January 2000

BIAS has spoken to Ron Noades, at great length and discussed with him a number of issues that have been concerning supporters in recent weeks.

Mr Noades admits that the club's operating losses have increased since his arrival, but if the club had suitable facilities for corporate entertainment the losses would be reduced significantly. It is because Griffin Park is unable to offer these facilities that Mr Noades believes it is essential the club moves into a new stadium as soon as possible.

He does not want to move to Woking and is only interested in moving from Griffin Park to a new stadium. He stated that if Hounslow Council were to approve a move to Feltham now, the club would be ready to play there at the start of next season.

He is also quite prepared to put any

money raised from the sale of Griffin Park into a Trust Fund if that would calm the fears of the club's supporters. On the question of closing down the club he said, "I'm not in the business of closing down football clubs, I've saved some but never closed any," and he also repeated the statement he made at the BIAS AGM in 1999 when he said he would support the club's losses up to £500,000 per year.

He dismissed the report of a £500 a week wage cap on the players as absolute nonsense.

BIAS hopes the comments Ron Noades has made to us will restore some confidence to those supporters who feared the worst, and we appeal to Bees fans to continue supporting the club and give the team as much encouragement as they possibly can.

On a separate matter, BIAS wants to make it clear that, contrary to some reports, Trevor Watkins, Chairman of AFC Bournemouth, is not assisting Brentford supporters in mounting a bid to take control of the club. Mr Watkins has been appointed by Supporters Direct, a Government sponsored body, to advise Brentford supporters on setting up a Supporters Trust.

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# Ron Opens Up to Supporters!

Ron Noades is clearly concerned about some of the recent rumours concerning his intentions, as he recently invited representatives of BIAS and the Brentford fanzines to meet him at his house. He wanted to discuss both his position and the club's financial situation, and answer any questions that supporters wished to put to him. At the end of the evening everyone present felt a little more optimistic and relaxed about the future, although the cynics will no doubt claim we've been duped by a man who's a bit more street-wise than us.

## Ron's Future

Ron Noades says he wants to stay at Brentford until the club is established in a new stadium, but he also wants to retire in no more than five years time. Last year he was hopeful that the club would be moving for the start of next season, but it now looks as though the planning process will take longer than expected.

When asked why he chose to buy Brentford he said, "I came to help the club build a new stadium, and that's what I intend to do."

## Stadium Progress

In case anyone misunderstands Ron's intentions, he clarified the position by stating that his aim is a new stadium for Brentford Football Club, not a ground share at Woking, Kingstonian or anywhere else! He repeated his statement of a few weeks ago, saying that he wants the Club to move out of Griffin Park and straight into a new stadium!

However, not everything is going to plan, so enquiries are being made about a short-term move. Although it's the Woking and Kingstonian grounds that newspaper attention has focused on, Brentford has also been in touch with other clubs, including QPR, Fulham and Chelsea.

A short-term ground share was discussed in some depth and the general opinion from the supporters side was that sharing at Woking would result in Brentford's crowds dropping by as much as half. This is obviously something that the directors will need to think about very seriously before making any decision.

As reported in the press (and confirmed by the Council's Chief Executive), a recent Council meeting agreed the stadium plan in principle, but Brentford wants approval for a smaller ground initially, while the Council wants to hold out for a 25,000 capacity straight away. Clearly there must be a compromise, and it must be found quickly or this debate will drag on for many years – at the end of which the Council may well have its new stadium, but no-one to play in it!

It certainly appears that the Stadium Action Group set up by BIAS will be kept busy in the next few months and additional volunteers will be welcome!

## The Financial Position

The current financial problems at the Club are, in the main, the result of two factors. One is the new stadium, the other is the transfer situation.

Taking the transfer situation first, Ron told us that every single player at Brentford was signed with the promise that if

### Ron Opens up to Supporters cont...

they put in the effort they would be well paid and the Club would not stand in their way of progression if other clubs came in for them. The plan, which has already been pretty well documented, was that the Club would operate with a manageable debt which could be offset by incoming transfer fees. The trouble is that the bottom has now fallen out of the transfer market for most clubs, because of its uncertain future.

With the expectation that the team would be playing in a new stadium, the Club was expecting to increase its income within the next year or so as a result of greater marketing opportunities. However, as firm plans are still not in place there is currently no definite idea as to when

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this new source of income can be realised.

So, with reduced income from transfer fees and no realistic prospect of additional income from a new stadium in the near future, the Club is unable to sustain its current level of spending. As Ron pointed out, every additional pound we lose is one pound less to spend on a new stadium. This demonstrates the urgency of resolving the ground move situation.

## Ron the Manager

Ron said he had first considered stepping back from the manager's role last season, in order to be in Spain with his son. In the end he decided to try and combine being manager with spending some of his time in Spain. He acknowledged that this had not worked and he should have handed over the reins earlier. Ron is delighted the team is doing so well under Ray Lewington and has no plans to change things from the way they are at present. Instead he will review the situation at the end of the season.

## Player Transfers

Ron denied there was any deal made prior to Christmas for the sale of either Andy Scott or Robert Quinn. What is true is that the club was not willing to offer either player a new contract (on existing or improved terms) because the Club could no longer afford keep them. It was therefore in their best interests to consider the offers put before them by Oxford United, which of course they both accepted.

## Griffin Park

Over half of the shares in the stadium company are currently held by supporters and directors, with Ron Noades owning the balance. He stressed that whenever Griffin Park is sold, all of his shares will go into the new stadium and if anyone doubts his integrity he will place the funds in trust with the supporters as part of the trustee group. He said, "I have no interest in the money from Griffin Park you can have it all."

## Summary

All in all the meeting gave us a very interesting insight into the problems the Club is having with developing its plans for the future. Our overall impression is that Ron Noades still wants to complete the job he started and is extremely disappointed that things haven't quite gone according to plan.

Some people will obviously be upset to learn how committed Ron is to building a new stadium, and we'll all be sad to leave Griffin Park. As a football stadium it's probably adequate but, like most of us, it needs to work hard for a living and is just not up to the job anymore.

Possibly the most important point to come from the whole evening was Ron's commitment to stop rumours from starting by making sure information is passed on to supporters groups such as BIAS as quickly as possible. A very welcome move indeed!

## SUPPORTERS SAY YES TO TRUST!

At a 1st February meeting in Stripes, arranged by Hey Jude fanzine editor Pete Johnston and attended by over 100 fans, those present gave an emphatic yes to the formation of a supporters trust at Brentford FC.

Following an initial meeting with Supporters Direct, BIAS will now try to arrange further meetings with the Football Club and Local Authorities as quickly

The long-term objectives of any trust will be to gain representation on the Board of Directors of both the Football Club and Stadium Companies.

This can be achieved in several ways, with the purchase of shares being the most obvious, but shareholders present at the meeting indicated their willingness to assign their voting rights to a trust when it is launched.

This is a highly significant development, with the benefit to all shareholders that they would be represented as a group with a single voice - for the first time.

In the short-term the trust will seek to raise funds from all sections of the community with some of those present stating a willingness to invest a regular sum on a monthly basis. In fact, some people actually insisted on making a donation on the night to get the ball rolling as it were!

This is exactly the type of response we were hoping for and demonstrated that there is a real desire to see the Club prosper.

## SURVEY SUGGESTS SUPPORT IN FELTHAM

An informal survey conducted by a Brentford supporter in Feltham has suggested broad support for a new stadium in the area. Local residents are obviously following developments closely, as only 10% of those approached were unaware of the proposals. Bearing in mind that most of those questioned were in favour, it's interesting to note that over half of the survey respondents were female. Here are some sample questions.

Are you aware of Brentford FC's proposed new stadium at Feltham Arenas?

**Yes 90%**

**No 10%**

Are you in favour of the proposals?

**Yes 77%**

**No 16%**

**Don't Know 7%**

What sort of facilities would you like to see?

**Restaurants 40%**

**Cinema 30%**

**Bars/clubs 40%**

**Leisure Centre/Gym 60%**

Would you personally use these facilities?

**Yes 90%**

**No 10%**

How far from the stadium do you live?

**Less than 1/2 mile 67%**

**1/2 - 1 mile 10%**

**1 - 2 miles 23%**

All in all this is cause for some optimism and maybe something for the Club to follow up?

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Free Membership for Children

Membership of BIAS is free for all children, when an adult from the same family joins the Association.

Children taking advantage of this facility will receive their own BIAS membership card and are entitled to all of the preferential club discounts that membership entails.

### BIAS Events

The Committee is currently considering a number of ideas for supporters' events during 2001.

Suggestions made so far include a meet the players evening to raise money for Target 10,000 and a classic Brentford video evening hosted by a local pub.

If you would be interested in attending an event such as this then please let us know.

**Tell us what you think – use the BIAS postbox in the Club Shop.**