



THMT NEWS

Issue 3
May 2011

Exciting? You bet!

What a few days it has been. On the field, Brian Reid's men put in their best performance of the season to ensure we go into the second-leg of the play-off semi-final with Forfar in a great position to reach the final. Off the field, the Club have just announced the most intriguing sponsorship deal in its history. We don't know much about the deal – described by Commercial Director Hugh Cameron as a “substantial financial agreement” – that will see the Bodog Brand on Ayr United shirts next season, but the news seems to have captured the imagination of United supporters. Bodog's flamboyant Caribbean-based owner Calvin Ayre's comments have made for interesting reading: “I hope that between the Bodog Brand and myself we can bring some more good times to Ayr United. We have plans to really get behind the team, not just hand over a cheque.”



Could Paris be on her way to Somerset?!

Mr Cameron also commented: “we were aware from our negotiations with the company that we were signing an agreement with a business that has people with a real desire and intention to engage with the club, our supporters and the wider community, and I'm sure in time this will become apparent”.

So it appears that this is not just your standard sponsorship deal and – on the face of it – it looks like Mr Ayre is looking to develop a genuine working relationship with the Club, using the business acumen that made him the 746th richest person the world in 2006. If that is how this new relationship develops, then the Club deserve

genuine credit for clinching a deal with a global brand.

More immediately, however, it's the play-offs and our bid for an immediate return to the First Division. There can be no doubt how vital this is to the Club in terms of income, especially if the end result is promotion to the First Division. Attendances at Somerset Park in recent weeks have been really disappointing as fans have stayed away from what have been perceived meaningless games but these games are far from meaningless so please encourage all your friends to get along and back the team.

Say NO to the SPL

The Honest Men Trust (THMT) are asking fans to back their campaign against Scottish Premier League (SPL) proposals for Scottish Football at this weekend's semi final play-off against Forfar.

The campaign, organised by Supporters Direct, the governing body for Supporters Trusts is seeking to highlight the fact that the vast majority of football fans are against the SPL plans which include the reduction of the number of teams in the top flight from 12 to 10 and could see 'Colt' teams from SPL clubs playing in the lower leagues.

THMT Director Neil Bone, who is an elected member to Supporters Direct's Scottish Council urged United fans to show their backing for the campaign: "In a recent survey, 88% of football fans in Scotland stated that they were against SPL plans for a 10 team league but such is their dogma that they are pressing on regardless, despite the fact fans want bigger leagues, not smaller. In any other business, ignoring the views of your customers like this would be unheard of but nonetheless the SPL plan to press ahead and risk driving supporters further away from our national game."

Neil added that Ayr fans had already made their voices heard and he is now asking them to do so again.

"In that survey, the response from the Ayr United supporters was magnificent. Indeed of the 5000 fans who participated in the survey, the response from Ayr fans was the second highest of all the clubs. Now we need supporters to make their feelings known again by supporting the postcard campaign."



Look out for the campaign postcard on Saturday

Make no mistake. The SPL plans would be detrimental to Ayr United and clubs like us: "The plans being proposed by the SPL are frightening and could be the death knell for many clubs. I'm sure that United fans don't want to see the Club playing in minor Community Leagues, playing against youth teams from SPL clubs. That is just one of the many proposals being put forward by the SPL."

"Now all Ayr fans will have the chance to express their views by signing our postcard campaign in a bid to save Scottish football."

Members from THMT will ask fans at Saturday's match to put their name on a postcard that will be sent to the SPL in an attempt to show the extent of fans anger at these proposals.

Meanwhile in the last edition of *THMT News* we advised you of the Ayr United board's views on the SPL plans and that we had written to both

Neil Doncaster, Chief Executive of the SPL and his counterpart at the SFL, David Longmuir. Whilst we have had no contact from Mr Doncaster to date, we did receive a positive response initially from Mr Longmuir. However unfortunately, Mr Longmuir withdrew his offer to meet when the SPL appeared to change their proposals again but has promised to respond once the SPL finally announce their plans.

Whilst THMT can understand his position, we do believe that any opposition to the SPL plans has to be proactive rather than reactive and that any delay in organising opposition could result in the plans being imposed by SPL, making the stance of any opposition irrelevant.

Player of the Year



Many congratulations to skipper Mark Roberts who has won THMT Player of the Year award for 2010/11. Marko was the overwhelming nomination from Trust members, gaining more than 50% of the vote from THMT members.

With 26 goals (not all of them from the penalty spot!) there is no doubt that Mark has had a very successful season individually but has also been a vital part of the team this season and we will be making arrangements to present him with the Ally McLeod Memorial Trophy in the near future.

Scottish Parliament

Whilst offering congratulations, we extend those sentiments to THMT member John Scott and Adam Ingram who were elected last week as the Members of the Scottish Parliament for Ayr and the Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley

Constituencies respectively. THMT look forward to working with both elected members to achieve our 'goals' over the next five years.

The future's bright...

Mark Shankland and Gareth Armstrong became the latest Academy youngsters to make their Ayr United debut, both coming off the bench in last weekend's defeat at Brechin. Indeed, the fans who travelled to see The Honest Men at Glebe Park witnessed a piece of history. Mark's appearance meant that at the age of 15 years, 300 days, he is the second youngest player ever to play for the Club. Only another Mauchline man, Sam McMillan was younger, by 88 days, when he made his first team appearance as a trialist 62 years ago!



Mark Shankland in action at Brechin

The youngster has been attracting a lot of interest from clubs both north and south of the border and clearly, like a number of others in the Academy sides, has a real chance to make a mark in the game. An incredible **eight** AUFA players (past and present) have featured under Brian Reid this season: Alastair Woodburn, Jonathon Tiffoney, Ross Robertson, Sean Kelly, Aaron Connolly and Roddy Paterson, and a number of others have been involved in the first team squad.

Meanwhile THMT were unable to carry out our intention at the Airdrie match to raise money for our Quid for the Kids initiative. We did not receive a response to our approach to the Club requesting permission for the venture but this is an initiative that we'd like to take forward with the Club for next season.

Vics plan for next season

Although Vics form in recent weeks has dipped and their promotion aspirations now look remote, off the park things have pressed ahead and THMT have played their part. We have assisted the Club with the process of developing a new constitution, thanks in a large part to THMT member Bob Baillie who volunteered his expertise in this field.

Next week, Whitletts Victoria Football Club will have its 'inaugural' meeting at which they will formally adopt the new constitution that will see them incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The new not for profit company will be a membership based organisation. The Board of Directors will be elected at the meeting from their members. Part of their constitution will also allow community organisations to become members and if adopted, THMT will become a member of the new Club.

Having secured the use of Dam Park for home matches next season, the Club are now seeking to put together the plans to raise the extensive amount of money it takes to run a junior football club and are holding a Sponsors Raffle. For £100 per ticket, an individual or company could have their name emblazoned on the team shirts, either front or back, have the company logo on a trackside advertising board or advert in the match programme plus much, much more.

For full details, contact:

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THMT's first priority is and always will be Ayr United but we will encourage members to 'Back the Vic's' if United are away from home and members are not travelling to the match. It is an exciting time for Whitlets Victoria and it will help raise the profile of the town if its' junior football club can be successful.



Catch the Vics at Dam Park

Friday 13th May, Kick-off 7.15 pm

Vs. Girvan

Friday 20th May, Kick-off TBC

Vs. Cumbernauld United

Admission: Adults £5, Concessions £2.50

United Futures update

In the first edition of THMT News back in March, we announced proposals from a project that will be designed to raise money for not only THMT but the Ayr United Football Academy as well as local charities. We have had two charities nominated to us for us to support, the National Autistic Society and the South Ayrshire Young Carers Project. Do we support one charity or both? If so, how do we achieve this? Or do we have a charitable fund to which we can support charitable projects? Those are the decision we have still to make but we will be ready to launch the project in time for the start of the 2011/12 season and hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Ronnie Coyle & Dougie McCracken

We finish on a sombre note. In recent weeks we have seen the premature passing of two former Honest Men in Ronnie Coyle and Dougie McCracken.

Although Ronnie was only at the Club for a short spell, he captained the Club to the Second Division championship in 1996/97, building the platform for the following six seasons when we became the scourge of SPL clubs in the Cup competitions. Sadly, Ronnie lost his fight with cancer last month.

The loss of Big Dougie was unexpected and to fans of that era when he played for the Club, we have lost a real character. A player who, whether playing in his usual central defensive role or as an emergency striker, a role he carried out with some success, Dougie gave more to the team than just his ability and to fans of that era will have their own stories of the Big Man that they will recall. Both former players were only 46, far too young, and our thoughts are with their families as they come to terms with their loss.



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