

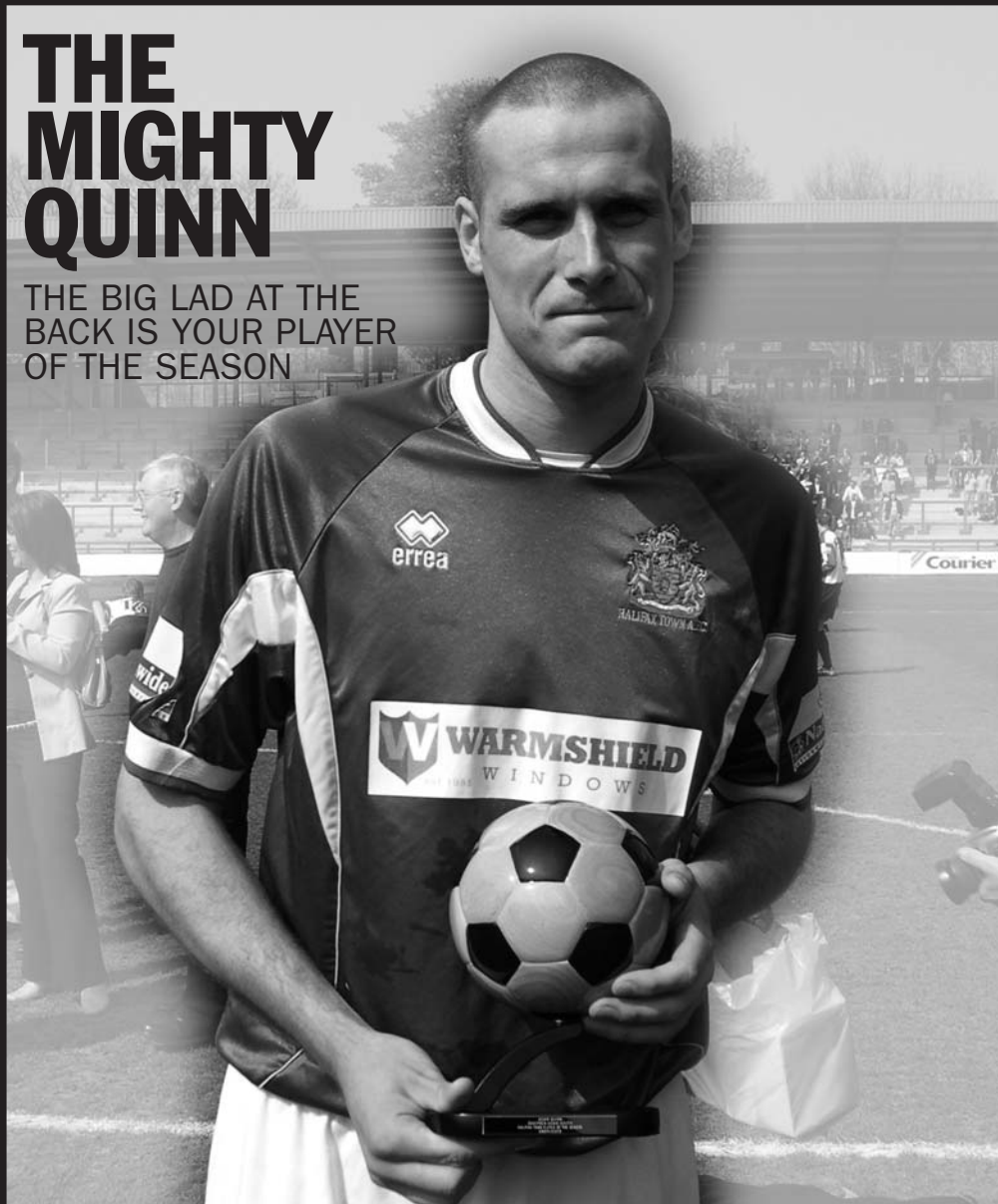
SHAYMEN DOWN SOUTH

ISSUE 58 £1 JUNE – JULY 2005

A HALIFAX TOWN FANZINE

THE MIGHTY QUINN

THE BIG LAD AT THE
BACK IS YOUR PLAYER
OF THE SEASON



THIS IS NOT A MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

IF YOU HAVE BOUGHT THIS BY MISTAKE DON'T WORRY, IT IS PROBABLY THE BEST MISTAKE YOU ARE EVER LIKELY TO MAKE

It would be so easy to toe what is seemingly the party line and go on about how expectations have been exceeded and how most of us at the start of the season would have probably settled for a just above mid table finish. The main reason it would be so easy is because it is true! After the first game of the season at Tamworth I would have probably settled for fourth bottom so to keep the season alive at the top end of the table until the last couple of games was an excellent effort by all involved. However, to leave it at this would be journalistically irresponsible. The end of the season was disappointing and the players blew a fantastic opportunity of making the play-offs. Harsh summation, perhaps, but I challenge anyone to come up with something more appropriate in less than twenty words.

How many teams were better than Halifax Town? Statistically, the answer is eight but was there really any team that looked a class above. Think back to the beginning of the season when we played Barnet off the park for the first 45 minutes. The Bees fans were evidently discontented at this point and it was defensive lapses from Town rather than anything

special from the visitors that gift wrapped the points back to Hertfordshire. Did Carlisle, Aldershot, Hereford or Stevenage look significantly better than Town? Three wins, two draws and three narrow defeats in the eight games would suggest not.

When we left Stonebridge Road after an excellent 3-0 win in early March, the play-offs seemed a formality. So what went wrong? I can't put my finger on the cause but given we will be starting next season with the same management team and the majority of the same players, I would hope those more qualified than me have worked it out. Don't misunderstand me; I am more than happy to keep the continuity as long as both management and players acknowledge that they have signed up for another term with their eyes wide open. We all know that the propensity for things to go wrong at Halifax Town is greater than at most other clubs. If there is another cash crisis, budget cut back, training pitch fiasco, etc I no longer expect it to be rammed down my throat at every opportunity.

The board evidently backed the management with enough funds to make the play-offs. I have no more knowledge of the current financial state of Halifax Town than most other people reading this but I would suspect

that the failure to meet the play-offs has left a bit of a shortfall. Some people have commented that a gamble on the play-offs was not the right thing to do. When backing up such comments, hindsight is a wonderful thing but I would still argue that it was the right thing to do. We all know that a consistently poor Halifax Town side would soon only attract gates of 700 – 800. With a £4,000 a month CVA fixed cost to meet, simple maths would indicate that such average gates would send the club under. Hopefully the failure to make the play-offs won't set the club back too much off the field; we can but wait and see.

Could the club have afforded to go up? Your guess is as good as mine with the mixed messages coming from various quarters. My guess is that it couldn't. If we are not to be in the same situation this time next year, two significant things have to happen. Firstly, the players need to get off to a good start in order to get crowds regularly above the 2,000 mark. Secondly, the commercial side needs to make a significant financial impact. To me we are beyond the planning for survival stage, it is not a viable option. We have to plan for success and then all do our best to achieve it.

Enjoy the summer and thanks for your continued support.

SIMON DENTON

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All published material has a full right of reply. If you would like to comment on any of the contents we will be only too pleased to print your response.

The pre-season issue is due out in late July. Any articles for inclusion need to be received by 23rd July 2005 at the very latest.

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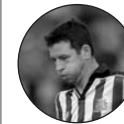


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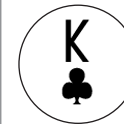


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NEWS REVIEW

Season tickets are now available for the 2005/2006 season. The prices are as follows: adults £230 (£5 increase), concessions £110 (no change) and under 12's £42 (£7 increase). Whilst these prices overall are only marginally up on those charged last season a significant change is that the concession rate now only applies to under 16's and senior citizens. Students will therefore have to pay the full adult rate. Match day prices have increased by £1 to £13 for adults and £3 for under 12's. The concession rate stays at £6.

From an aggregate attendance of 36,099 it can be worked out that an average of 1,719 fans attended each Conference game at the Shay last season. This is a percentage increase of 14% on the previous season when the average was 1,506. The highest Conference Shay attendance was recorded against Carlisle back in August when 2,696 poured through the turnstiles. The lowest attended game was a re-arranged mid week fixture against Burton Albion that attracted just 1,256 fans. Perhaps not surprisingly, Carlisle recorded the highest average Conference gate of

5,512 whilst Leigh RMI recorded the lowest, just 468. To put this into some sort of perspective Carlisle's highest individual gate was 9,215 which was only 619 less than Leigh's aggregate gate for the whole season!

Barnet striker Guiliano Grazioli won the Conference Golden Boot award with an impressive 29 goals. Craig Midgley and Lewis Killeen were Town's joint top Conference scorers with 12 goals each. Midgley, however, was top overall scorer in all major competitions as he also scored three FA Cup goals.

At the End Of Season Awards Night the following player of the season presentations were made:

Shaymen Down South – **Adam Quinn**

Official Website – **Lewis Killeen**

Supporters' Club – **Ryan Sugden**

Supporters' Club Runner-up – **Craig Midgley**

South Stand Bar – **Ryan Sugden**

Evening Courier – **Ryan Sugden**

Youth Team – **Lee Tuck**

Rising Star – **Niall O'Brien**

In addition Paul Stoneman was presented with the HTST Achievement Award.

The Shaymen finished 16th in the Conference fair play league with a total of 74 yellow and 5 red cards. This shows a marginal improvement on the previous season

when the total was 75 yellow and 6 red cards. The Conference bad boys were Leigh RMI with a total of 8 red and 76 yellow cards. The Conference angels were Hereford with just 4 red and 30 yellow cards.

The Supporters' Club have put together a CD-ROM called Through The Years and are selling it as a fundraiser with all proceeds going to Halifax Town. The CD-ROM contains almost 3000 photos spanning 34 years and costs just £7 + £1 p+p. A flyer giving further details should be included with this issue of the SDS fanzine. If the flyer is missing or not to hand, a copy of the CD-ROM can be obtained in the post by sending a letter stating your name, address and number of copies required, along with a cheque payable to Halifax Town AFC, to AP Programmes, 48 New Road, Halifax. HX1 2LH

It hasn't taken long for clubs to find a way to minimise the pain of the ten-point penalty for going into administration. Four clubs opted to go into administration towards the end of last season and take the hit of a points deduction when it didn't really matter. Worksop of the Conference North were the first to take this route once it became clear that they were not going

to get into the play-offs and they were clear of relegation. Hornchurch of the Conference South followed suit but had their application to enter a CVA was turned down by the Inland Revenue. This plunged them into liquidation and automatic relegation from the Conference South. Maidenhead have been reinstated. The best that Hornchurch can now expect, should they survive at all, is an application for Isthmian Division One to be accepted. Both Cambridge United of the Football League and Margate of the Conference South waited until relegation was confirmed before making the decision. The rules state that the ten point penalty is imposed during the season administration is applied for. Clubs going into administration during the close season would start the following season on minus ten points. All four clubs will probably claim that they had no choice but would the same decisions have been made if promotion or the chance of avoiding relegation were still possible?

Carlisle United returned to the Football League at the first attempt courtesy of a 1-0 play-off victory over Stevenage Borough. A healthy crowd of 13,422 witnessed the event at Stoke's Britannia Stadium but one can only surmise how much

bigger the crowd would have been if the kick-off had been at 3.00pm and not 7.30pm. Hopefully, next season both venue and date will be confirmed in good time and the kick-off will be at a time that is both practical and socially acceptable. Altrincham beat Eastbourne 2-1 in front of a crowd of 2,839 to win the Conference North/South play-off final. Val Owen scored the second Altrincham goal that helped ensure the Lancashire sides return to national league football.

Woking won the fiercely contested GLS cup with a 1-0 victory at Bower Fold against Stalybridge Celtic. At least Town had the 'honour' of going out to the eventual winners!

The early odds from the bookies have Town at around 20/1 to win the Conference next season. Hereford look to be the bookies' favourite with most offering around 7/1.

The 2005-06 Conference season is scheduled to start on Saturday August 13th. As part of the build up to Town's 337th Conference game the following pre-season friendlies have been provisionally arranged: 13th July Brighouse Town (a) 7.45pm, 16th July Bradford City (h)

3pm, 21st July Leeds United (h) 7.45pm, 30th July Chesterfield (h) 3pm, 5th August Stocksbridge PS (a) 7.30pm

Steve Haslam was selected to join the England National XI squad for the Four Nations Tournament at the end of May. England finished as unbeaten tournament winners and Haslam played a major part in their success. He was a late substitute in the 1-0 victory against hosts Ireland, but appeared for a full 90 minutes in the 1-0 win over Wales, and in the tournament clinching 3-2 victory over Scotland.

If ever an example of how not to run a league is needed in the future one need look no further than the Northern Premier League (NPL) end of season fiasco. Back in March, it became clear that Spennymoor United were in deep trouble and were unlikely to complete their league programme. Apart from imposing fines that were never realistically going to be paid for each postponed game, the league buried their heads in the sand until the last week or so of the season when it became clear that Spennymoor's non-fulfilment of their remaining fixtures would have a bearing on the promotion and play-off places. To be fair to the ➤

NEWS REVIEW

➤ NPL, a decision was made a week out to expunge Spennymoor's record. However, this meant that long time league leaders Hyde United could lose out to Farsley Celtic, which they did on the last day of the season. Hyde made a complaint to the FA who amazingly overturned the NPL ruling and awarded three points and no goals for each game that Spennymoor had not fulfilled. This put Hyde as champions and relegated Farsley to third. Surely the only fair thing to do was to expunge Spennymoor's record, awarding arbitrary wins is almost beyond belief, although, given other FA decisions over the years, was this really surprising? Legal action from Farsley and Burscough, who lost out on a play-off place, unfortunately came to nothing. Rightful champions Farsley lost on penalties to Workington in the play-off final.

SDS ROUND-UP

Adam Quinn won the SDS Player Of The Season award by two votes from Ryan Sugden. The other players to receive one vote or more were Lewis Killeen, Matt Doughty, Craig Midgley and



Quinn gets his trophy from the SDS

Steve Bushell. Quinn fully deserves his award but from comments made it sounds like Doughty would have run him close if he had played the full season. The presentation of the award was made on the pitch before the Woking game and again at the End Of Season Awards Evening that took place in the Weavers later the same day.

For the umpteenth season in a row SDS membership and subscription prices have been frozen at £8 adults, £10 family/group and £14 overseas. Current membership and subscriptions expire on June 30th except for those who joined late in the season and were informed at the time that their membership would be extended to the end of June 2006. To help with administration it would be greatly appreciated if as many members as possible

could renew during the close season.

Following recent feedback and a bit of a re-think at SDS HQ, we have decided to open up SDS membership to everyone regardless of where they live. In the past we have not accepted membership from people with a Halifax area postcode. However, when we thought about this it didn't make sense, particularly when we were potentially alienating people who supported our ideals and wanted to join. As part of an ongoing re-branding exercise, the supporters' club element of the SDS will be now be branded as Shaymen Down South – A Halifax Town Supporters' Club. This links in with the fanzine which for the last few years has been Shaymen Down South – A Halifax Town Fanzine and the website

which is already branded as Shaymen Down South – A Halifax Town Website. This change should not be seen in any way to be a challenge to the existing Supporters' Club. We also appreciate that some people in the past have wanted to just subscribe to the SDS fanzine and not officially join. This is not a problem and going forward a fanzine subscription option will be available on the SDS application/renewal form. As next season progresses we anticipate that we will be in a position to offer different member and subscriber benefits.

Whilst membership rates have been frozen, we openly admit that we now have many other ways to try and get hold of your hard-earned dosh. We are not expecting members to join all our schemes but by offering an element of choice we hope that at least one will appeal. Last season the Goal-O-Meter raised over £2,000 and this was mainly from SDS members. We will be running it again and making an active effort at the beginning of the season to fill the page. Starting at just 25p a goal, this is a really cost effective way to show your support. For the gamblers amongst you, why not add £5 to your membership (see renewal form), jot down a couple of numbers and look

forward to the possibility of £200 popping through your letterbox? As well as the above, if there is enough interest we will run a 'Sponsor Anything' section where members can sponsor anything that is tangible – the dafter the better. A few examples could be £3 for every yellow card Steve Bushell collects, 10p for every time Darren Mansaram is caught off side, £6 for every penalty save, £100 for every Steve Haslam goal! – the choice is endless. Just send in your sponsorship details and we will print them.

SDS WEBSITE

The Shaymen Down South website, www.shaymendownsouth.co.uk is now almost a year old and has, I think, been generally well received by Town fans. We have had almost 6000 visits in 9 months, with over 1.4Gb of data downloaded. As you have hopefully seen, the site is still being updated over the close season. However, with little happening Halifax Town related for a month or so, this time of year is a good opportunity to update and modernise the site. This is hopefully what will be happening in time for the new season. The website, like the fanzine, is yours as much as anyone else's, and we would

love to hear from you about what your views are about the site – what you like, what you don't, what's not there that should be and vice versa, etc. – and any suggestions for improvements you might have, related to both content or the appearance of the site. For example, would you like to see new sections such as a photo gallery? More links? More competitions? More articles? Do we need to update the site more often? Should we have a guest book? And what about how the site looks... is it a bit plain, old-fashioned, does it need more pictures? Have you had any problems viewing it?

We have not had much communication regarding the site from members and visitors, and in truth we don't really know what we are doing right or doing wrong. So, we would be very grateful, the next time you visit the site, for a few minutes of your time to email me mw0640@bristol.ac.uk with any feedback you might have about the SDS website. We will try our best to accommodate any suggestions you might have. Thank you for your support and visits to the site over the 2004-05 season, and keep checking the site for updates over the summer.

MATT WRIGHT
SDS webmaster

TEAM FAX

The following updates the information given in SDS57:

IN

LEE BUTLER

GOALKEEPER

Chris Wilder moved quickly to re-sign Lee Butler for his third spell with Town. The 39-year-old has been given a playing contract as cover for Ian Dunbavin, but will primarily work as goalkeeping coach.

OUT

PAUL STONEMAN

DEFENDER

After ten years and 319 appearances, during which he scored 23 goals, Stoney has decided to try his luck back in his native northeast, where he now lives. With the likes of Adam Quinn and Denny Ingram now marshalling the defence, opportunities to play in the first team were likely to be limited for Stoney and after recovering from injury he is now looking for a few more years of first team football. Good luck in the future and thanks for the many memories.

GORDON CHIN

MIDFIELDER

Chin put a lot of effort into his game but there was little end product. A useful player



to have on the bench when a game needs spicing up a bit but probably a luxury the club cannot afford at the moment. Made a total of nine appearances for the Shaymen and scored one goal.

ALEX MEECHAN

STRIKER

Seemed to have trouble staying on his feet at vital moments in his first few games and would have done his confidence a power of good if he had put away his guilt edged chance at Forest Green. It feels like he has played more than the nine games he has been credited with but in reality he was never given the opportunity to establish himself. Scored an excellent goal against York and then didn't feature again until the last seven minutes of the final game of the season.

DEAN HOWELL

STRIKER

At the start of the season many of us scoffed at the Morecambe fans who said that Howell was lazy and regularly drifted in and out of games. After a promising

start, the knowledgeable Shrimper's were proved to be correct. There is no doubt Howell has the ability and if he could add a few more tricks to his repertoire, knock it past a player and then run like the wind has its uses but is limited against determined marking, then, combined with a change of attitude, he could probably make the grade that his agent seems to think his talent warrants.

CHRISTIAN LEE

STRIKER

Remember Christian Lee? You should do as you have been paying his wages all season! We never really saw the best of Lee because of injury, a comment that has probably been made by a number of other clubs. His career goals per game ratio is pretty good, just a shame he hasn't had the fitness to feature enough to make a real impact.

RYAN MALLON

STRIKER

After spending much of the season on loan to Alfreton and then Gainsborough it was no real surprise to learn that Mallon had been released.

CHRIS CLARKE

DEFENDER

Not a shadow of the player we had down at the Shay a few years ago. Put in an

excellent performance away at Carlisle but otherwise lacked the composure needed to be a reliable defender. The Farnborough 'strikeforce' ran him ragged which speaks volumes.

HENRY McSTAY

DEFENDER

Seemed an excellent signing with six games to go but strangely only featured three times. Has been offered terms by the club but clearly has the ambition and the ability to make it in the Football League, where his CV is now circulating.

STEVE CROUDSON

GOALKEEPER

Signed as cover for Ian Dunbavin but was not required to make a first team appearance.

NEIL ROSS

STRIKER

Has a wicked dead ball strike but never looked to have the fitness to make a real impact. Scored a creditable six goals in fifteen league and cup appearances.

OFFERED
SHORT-TERM
THREE
MONTH
DEALS

MARK MONINGTON

DEFENDER

Was Town's leading scorer



early on in the season before an injury put a stop to his rediscovered talent for surprising opposition defences. Not sure what Chris Wilder is looking to gain from a short term contract as with Mono what you see is what you get.

JASON BLUNT

MIDFIELDER

Has significantly more support from Chris Wilder than he has from most fans. Can't fault his work rate or commitment but there are better midfielders out there. Three more months to prove CW right and the fans wrong...

JOHN GRANT

STRIKER

Has yet to win most fans over after a number of indifferent performances at a vital point of the season.

INVITED
BACK FOR
PRE-SEASON
TRAINING

DARREN HOCKENHULL

DEFENDER

Received what could have been a career ending injury at Canvey Island last

September but has since had his knee rebuilt and is now heading back towards full fitness. Hockenhull has the option to come back pre-season to prove his fitness before a firm decision on a contract is made.

NOW
CONTRACTED
FOR NEXT
SEASON

IAN DUNBAVIN

GOALKEEPER

LEE BUTLER

GOALKEEPER

MATT DOUGHTY

DEFENDER

GREG YOUNG

DEFENDER

SEAN McAULEY

DEFENDER/ASSISTANT MANAGER

ADAM QUINN

DEFENDER

DENNY INGRAM

DEFENDER

STEVE BUSHELL

MIDFIELDER

STEVE HASLAM

MIDFIELDER

CRAIG MIDGLEY

MIDFIELDER

MARTIN FOSTER

MIDFIELDER

DARREN MANSARAM

STRIKER

LEWIS KILLEEN

STRIKER

RYAN TOULSON

STRIKER

RYAN SUGDEN

STRIKER

MATCH REPORTS

Wednesday 13th April 2005

HALIFAX TOWN 0, GUISELEY 1

WEST RIDING COUNTY CUP, FINAL

A 45th minute penalty, awarded after a short Dean Howell back pass put youth team goalkeeper Adie Gawthorpe in trouble, settled this dour County Cup final at Woodlesford. Our man on the text was less than impressed with the team performance and picked out Alex Meechan and Gordon Chin as the only players who looked interested.

Saturday 16th April 2005

HALIFAX TOWN 0, HEREFORD UNITED 1

NATIONWIDE CONFERENCE

If anyone knows Craig Mawson personally please can you tell him that he has proved his point! When Mawson turned out for the Shaymen a few years ago he seemed to lack the ability to catch a cold, let alone a football. Since then, apart from a festive Boxing Day last minute present that he shared with Jamie Murphy, he has always looked to pull the stops out against Town and today was no exception. Ten shots on target and no goals tells much of the story. A win today would have seen the play-off hopes kept well and truly alive along with the promise from Nick O'Reilly to streak naked round the Shay at some point during the home play-off semi-final! Perhaps we do have something to thank Mawson for after all!!

The only surprise, to me, in the starting line up was the omission of Henry McStay. At Hereford we won by creative attacking play, something that, at the back at least, was evidently lacking as the game went on. Right from the start the players showed that they were still keen to give this last shot at the play-offs a good go. The first chance fell to Greg Young who headed a Steve Haslam cross just over.



This was closely followed by efforts from Lewis Killeen and Ryan Sugden. After 25 minutes, a header by Sugden from a Martin Foster corner had the South Stand rising almost to a man, only to witness the ball bounce back off the crossbar with Mawson well beaten. The woodwork came to Hereford's rescue again as half-time approached when a Sugden header rattled the post. The driving force behind most of Town's efforts was Foster who had one of his most commanding games in a Town shirt. Half-time came with Hereford undeservedly level.

We anticipated Hereford would re-group at half-time and sure enough a more cautious, close knit visiting side emerged for the second period. A fortunate goal from Tamika Mkandawire allowed Hereford to close ranks even further and effectively squeeze the life out of the game. Credit where credit is due, Hereford were a good side and had the players to confidently defend the one goal lead. Chris

Wilder replaced Haslam with Dean Howell after 65 minutes in an attempt to spice things up but Hereford soon sussed out our 'one trick wonder' and he soon faded out of the proceedings. Wilder's final throw of the dice was Mark Monnington up front in place of Craig Midgley. Mono's additional height, along with that of Adam Quinn's, provided Hereford with a few late scares from a succession of corners but in the end it wasn't to be.

ATTENDANCE 2,343

☆ **SDS STARMAN – Martin Foster** ☆

SIMON DENTON

Tuesday 19th April 2005

FARNBOROUGH 3, HALIFAX TOWN 2

NATIONWIDE CONFERENCE

The game started with a tempo and atmosphere more akin to a pre-season friendly than a game that could, mathematically at least, still keep Town's play-off hopes alive.

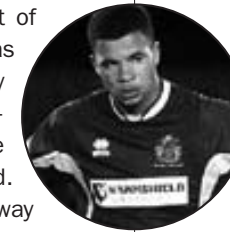
Farnborough were clearly a club resigned to their fate and this should have been a routine three points for the Shaymen against a side that hadn't won at home in the league since beating Dagenham 2-1 back in October.

Early Town pressure led the loyal 70 or so Town fans to believe this could be a profitable evening; indeed when Greg Young stabbed home a loose ball following some good work from Ryan Sugden after just four minutes it looked like the Goal-O-Meter might take a right hammering. However, a minute later Farnborough were level when Tony Taggart superbly connected with a clearance 30 yards out and fired low and hard past Ian Dunbavin. The goal brought generous applause from the Town contingent but this was probably given more out of sympathy than any expectation that it would significantly affect the end result.

Apart from a half-hearted effort from John Grant after about 15 minutes the early confidence seemed to evaporate somewhat and, whilst never really looking in trouble, the performance for much of the rest of the half was well below what was expected against such evidently inferior opposition. With five minutes left of the half, Town upped the tempo and regained the lead. Farnborough keeper Craig Holloway did very well to stop a shot from Ryan Sugden but the ball fell nicely to Grant who avoided the attention of two defenders and prodded home from a couple of yards out.

After finishing the first half on top, we changed ends and expected to see the end of the first half form continue into the second half. How more wrong could we have been? Within eight minutes not only had Farnborough equalised, they had taken the lead courtesy of some very slack defending. This gave the home players a great lift and, if truth be told, a couple more goals before the end of the game would not have been undeserved.

At our end Town did have some good



chances but found Holloway in fine form, particularly when he turned a goal bound Martin Foster pile driver round the post. Further chances for Grant and Sugden came and went before the final whistle brought an end to a most unsatisfactory evening.

For the first time this season no player deserved the starman award. As the Farnborough fans 'poured' on to the pitch asking 'can we play you every week', my closing vocal to the players was 'Do you feel embarrassed – I know I do'. I trust that they did.

ATTENDANCE 469

☆ **SDS STARMAN – Not awarded** ☆

SIMON DENTON

Saturday 23rd April 2005

HALIFAX TOWN 3, WOKING 1

NATIONWIDE CONFERENCE

After witnessing the miracle of a John Grant goal at Farnborough, we were treated to an even greater spectacle – a goal from Jason Blunt! A rare Blunt foray into the Woking area saw him shin the ball to Ryan Sugden, amazingly continue his run forward and receive a pin point return. Five yards out and with no-one to pass back to, Blunt had no option but to go for goal. After a sublime finish, which put Town one-nil up,

I don't know who was more surprised - him or the South Stand regulars. Should we ever get a repeat, a bit of polish to the goal celebration would not go amiss!

Town started well against a Woking side that still had an outside chance of a play-off place. Half chances came and went as the half developed, the best falling to Sugden who was unlucky to see his fine shot cannon off the keeper's legs. Whilst quality chances were at a premium, the build up play showed a confidence that would have knocked six bells out of Farnborough. I particularly liked Lewis Killeen playing just behind the front two.

Woking made a couple of changes at ➤

MATCH REPORTS

< the start of the second half but neither new player made much of an impact. Blunt's 63rd minute strike knocked any remaining stuffing out of the visitors and for the first time in a while the players seized the initiative and killed off the game. On 74 minutes, a quality strike from Sugden put Town two up and two minutes later the points were secure when the same player rose to majestically head home a Martin Foster free kick. A bit more composure with 90 minutes on the clock could have seen Sugden claim a memorable hat-trick; as it was the last real piece of action was at the opposite end when Woking poked home an undeserved consolation goal.

A poignant moment occurred after 88 minutes when Paul Stoneman replaced Denny Ingram and took on the captains arm band. I think we all realised that this was going to be Stoney's last few minutes of an eventful 10 year stretch at Halifax Town.

In closing, I feel I should mention the referee who had an excellent game. We have had R Hewitt four times this season and each time he has let the game flow with common sense decisions. Perhaps we should send Gavin Ward a copy of the match video?

ATTENDANCE 1,398

☆ SDS STARMAN – Ryan Sugden ☆

SIMON DENTON

Saturday May 7th 2005

HALIFAX TOWN X1 4 PAUL STONEMAN X1 5

PAUL STONEMAN TESTIMONIAL GAME

Applause from both teams warmly received Paul Stoneman as he walked on the Shay field for the last time in a Halifax Town shirt. His three boys, Alex, Paul and Joel, joined him pre-match in the centre circle. Stoney had selected Chris Wilder and Sean McAuley - always a

good move to select the opposition's manager and coach. Just over eight years since his last day survival hat-trick, Mick Norbury was a reminder of that great escape. It was fitting that Stoney's partners in the championship defence, Mark Bradshaw, Andy Thackeray and Brian Kilcline, should turn out as did Dave Hanson from that team. Steve Kerrigan and Mark Cartwright were also selected. Local actor Paul Opacic turned out as did former Newcastle United player, Imre Varadi who George Kirby was close to signing as a Town player. It was good to see Matt Doughty and Darren Hockenhull get a run out for the present day team. Town played in a Green and White striped 'Westgrove' edition kit whilst Stoney's team played in the yellow 02-03 away shirts.

Fittingly, Stoney opened the scoring himself in front of the north stand, albeit from a highly dubious penalty award. Dunbavin made a good save from a Kerrigan shot after Norbury had played him in, both strikers wearing no 9 shirts. The equaliser came when a poor goal kick by Cartwright was returned straight past him by Sugden to chants of "dodgy keeper" by the south stand fans. Cartwright made amends with a fine one-on-one save. Meanwhile Dunbavin had abandoned the nets, replaced by Ross, and looked to play the part of a strong running forward player, blasting over when set up on goal and doing the same further out. It was Town who were applying the pressure and should perhaps have gone in at half time in front.

The complexion of the game changed at the start of the second half as Norbury, put clean through, scored a fine finish past new goalkeeper Monington. Stoney tried a chip that was just over. Norbury scored again to make it 3- 1; Foster scored a tap in to reduce the margin to one goal. Stoney restored the two goal advantage, beating Cartwright running side to

side before shooting past two defenders on the goal line. Norbury finished well for a hat-trick, shooting in at the near post after Hanson had put him through. Referee Andy Nicholson then joined Stoney's team being replaced by Norbury. Hockenhull had become Town's fourth goalkeeper of the afternoon before Ross turned in a chance for 5-3. Stoney tried a Beckham- like chip from kick off. Doughty scored a near post header for 5-4. Norbury then booked a player and then sent Nicholson off for pushing him, a clear straight red card, just before the final whistle.

An emotional Stoney said a farewell to the fans as they gathered on the field at the end of the game. Thanks a million Stoney, you've done us proud!

ATTENDANCE – 558

☆ SDS STARMAN – Paul Stoneman ☆

PHILIP ASHWORTH

SDS MATCHDAY HEROES...

Our sincere thanks go to the following members and readers for providing the reports that keep this vital section of the fanzine so interesting and varied.

Roger Botomley, Philip Ashworth, Mike Wilks, Sean Bundy, Matthew Wright, David Marney, Andy Connell, Laurence Ball, Nick O'Reilly, Kelly Hirst and Debra Neatby.

New SDS Matchday Heroes are always welcome. All we ask is that reports are sent in within seven days of a game taking place.



PAUL STONEMAN TEN YEARS A SHAYMAN – THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES



THE VOICE OF REASON

It's always a pleasure to receive a contribution from our 'Voice Of Reason'. So, without further ado here are the thoughts of **Roger Bottomley** on the season past and the season future...

Saturday May 7th – venue Headingley – the sun is shining, I am sat in my usual seat in the members' enclosure and Yorkshire are on top against Northamptonshire. All's well in the world (apart from the fact that David Blunkett is my new boss!) and I am hoping that Stoney's making a few quid in both his testimonial game and subsequent evening function.

I am also contemplating writing this review of the season and struggling, in particular, as to how to 'kick it off'. Enter one of my cricketing colleagues, sadly a Terriers fan, into the football stand at Headingley, immediately launching into an elegant opening gambit of 'Bloody hell Rog, you cocked up in the last few games, didn't you?' Not an easy one to answer that, although a lot of Shay supporters would probably concur with his view. All I could think of as a rejoinder was - and apologies here to my English language teacher of yore – 'sod off, you pillock!'

I suppose, however, that there can be no actual getting away from the fact that the play-offs were there for the taking. When we beat an admittedly average York side 2-0 at the Shay, I was absolutely convinced that the Shaymen would do it even though some difficult matches lay ahead. Well, it just wasn't to be.

There is a clear danger, of course, of over-analysing what caused the ultimate slump in form; the bottom line has to be that we were not quite good enough. Simple really! No-one can dispute the fact that the Conference this

season has been an excellent competition comprising of some very good, improving sides and, on reflection, one has to congratulate Chris Wilder, his management team and players, for keeping the interest going right up until the last two to three games. In this respect, any supporters who are of the view that the playing performances have not improved considerably under Chris Wilder's tenure need either counselling or a season ticket at Cambridge United. The management and playing staff deserve our total respect and continued support. The 100% commitment allied to no lack of skill has been good to watch. Well done to one and all.

One area, however, that must be addressed next season is the discipline. Without going into specifics, there have been three or four obvious examples where this has clearly lost the club points and key players for subsequent games. This is generally my only constructive criticism, although I do also feel a mistake was made in bringing John Grant straight into the team at a vital stage of the season. Killeen and Sugden are the best combination up front and I just think it was a little unrealistic to expect a new recruit to immediately settle and deliver the goods.

From so many points of view, I have always struggled as to why 'supporters' give players a hard time if the side is not playing well. Booing and verbal abuse solves nothing. If for example, all the staff in the office gave me a constant bollocking all morning then, strong char-

acter though I may be, I would not particularly want to return in the afternoon! Using the same analogy, the half-time reaction against Leigh RMI was, to me, dense in the extreme.

Of the games I saw, the vast majority of which I considered entertaining, the most pleasing performance was at Accrington Stanley and, over the whole season, the players who took my eye the most were Sugden, Foster, Killeen, Quinn, Ingram and, until his injury, Doughty. The retained list makes sense and the squad, with, say, three to four carefully thought through additions, should again be there or thereabouts next season. It is sad, although understandable, that Stoney has decided to move on. Here is a player who, over a ten-year period, very rarely had a poor game and fully deserved his testimonial year. Good luck to him.

If we therefore accept, as we must, that the playing side is progressing very well, then the situation off the pitch is clearly in very similar shape.

The development of the Shay remains an understandably very complicated and lengthy process but recent Courier articles would indicate that daylight is appearing – and by that I don't mean literally more daylight in the current state of the East Stand structure! If everyone can continue to pull in the right direction, then there is surely no reason why all the parties involved, eg Council, developers, Trusts, associated businesses, Halifax Town, Halifax RL etc, etc cannot ultimately make money against the background of a fully developed facility. I, for one, am not bothered how long it takes, providing it is subsequently achieved. It

must certainly involve complex legal transactions. The considerable initial efforts of the Supporters' Trust (and I am confident they will bounce back from a recent internal issue – indeed, they must!) and the continuing work of the Stadium Development Trust are to be applauded here. Credit once again is also due to the Supporters' Club who came up with an innovative fund-raising exercise of visiting all Conference grounds within 24 hours. This now reminds me that I have not coughed up as yet – the cheque is on its way, Kit! The Supporters Club and Supporters' Trust both remain vital organisations contributing to the future success of the football club and deserve at least an annual membership subscription from as many Town fans as possible. (As does the ever-flourishing SDS of course, Simon!)

One gripe, however, before I concentrate fully on Northamptonshire's much anticipated demise. Why, oh why, do fans hide behind the internet in carrying out 'assassinations' of certain individuals? How destructive, immature and unprofessional this is. If they genuinely care about the future of our club, then they need to have the decency to air their views in the appropriate manner. We all want the same thing, after all.

Anyway, on to my predictions for next season. Last season I was only 'one' out, predicting tenth as against the final position of ninth. For 2005/06 I am therefore going for sixth which means, by the same yardstick, we should end up fifth. That will do for me...as will promotion for Yorkshire CCC from both leagues this season.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE SDS

We thought we would give you an update on our achievements this year and the reasons behind some of the decisions we have taken.

About this time last year, a decision was taken to amend the SDS membership year so that it started in July and ended in June. This was readily accepted by the membership and by the middle of July most members and subscribers had renewed which helped us with administration and provided us with some up front working capital.

With the membership renewal forms we also sent out a Goal-O-Meter sponsorship form and the opportunity to join the Guess The Away Crowd scheme. The former was well received by the membership with over 40% taking part. The latter did not attract much interest and struggled on to the end of September when we decided to pull the plug on it. Members of the scheme who had paid in advance were offered a full refund or the opportunity to transfer their money to the Goal-O-Meter.

On the merchandise side, we added key rings and fridge magnets to our portfolio of badges. Sales of all three products went well throughout the season. Since we started three years ago, we have covered the cost of all parts and machinery and made a profit of over £450 with enough components currently in stock and paid for to make a further £200 or so.

In October, we hit on the idea of printing the fanzine in-house. We already had a good deal from our printer but thought that we could do better. After undertaking a fair bit of research, we worked out what we required and set about tracking it down. In November we paid £197 for a laser printer. As anyone who has made booklets will know, printing is only half the story; the printed copy also needs to be folded and stapled. We had to bide our time

waiting for the right product to become available at the right price. In early February, our patience paid off and we secured a TakoFold booklet maker for £310. The TakoFold has to be seen to be believed. It's a beast of a machine but it does a great job. It lives with Jim Lockwood in Hadfield along with the printer. As well as the hardware, we also needed to secure economic supplies of paper and toner. The paper proved to be no problem. The toner, however, could have been the Achilles' heel of the project as the high street retail price of the required toner cartridge is over £150. Fortunately, a bit of detective work, combined with a bit of luck, has enabled us to shave off over 70% of this overhead, which effectively means that it should now only take about six issues to recover all the hardware costs.

So what have we done with all this money that we have been making? Well, in January we handed over £1,100 to the club from the Goal-O-Meter and expect to do the same again in early June. In February we handed over £1,265 to pay for an overnight stay for the players before the away game at Crawley. The Stoney merchandise didn't go as well as hoped but we were still able to hand over £210 to Paul's Testimonial Fund which included all monies raised from the sale of badges and fridge magnets plus a significant donation from the SDS.

For the coming season we will look to continue what we do best whilst at the same time always being on the look out for new opportunities. Your trust in the way we run the operation is appreciated and it really helps not being shackled by numerous rules and committees. The main decision-making is by no means a closed shop and both Jim and I are always open to suggestions and any offers of help.

SIMON DENTON

SHAYMEN 2004-05 GOAL-O-METER

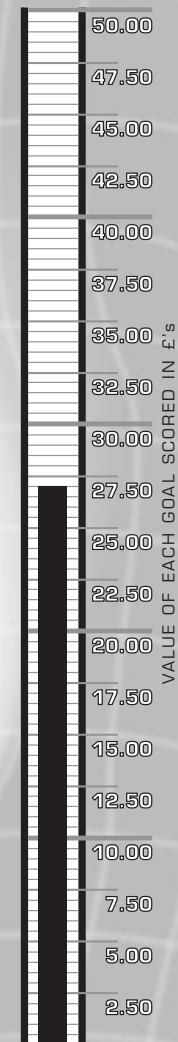
YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SPONSOR EVERY GOAL SCORED BY HALIFAX TOWN THIS SEASON

Goals scored in the following competitions will be included in the total: Nationwide Conference, FA Cup, FA Trophy and County Cup.

THE MINIMUM SPONSORSHIP PER GOAL IS 25p

CURRENT SPONSORS ARE:

Mike Johnson	£1	Stephen Bowman	£1
JS Donohue	50p	Lawrence Short	50p
Gordon Lethbridge	25p	Gavin Butler	50p
Stephen Zera	25p	Paul Robinson	25p
Charlie Adamson	£1	Russell Barrett	50p
Laurence Ball	50p	Neil Stewart	50p
John Zani	50p	Chris Stephenson	£1
David Martin	25p	Derek & Julie Curtis	£1
Mike Wilks	75p	Stuart Jeffreys	£1
Nick O'Reilly	£1	Len Lumb	50p
Steve Higgins	50p	Richard Groves	£1
Allan Coleman	50p	Nigel & Martin	
John Denton	25p	Naylor	50p
Paul Akroyd	25p	David Marney	50p
S Holmes	50p	Lyndon Sutcliffe	50p
Brian Byles	50p		
David Firth	50p		
Matthew Wright	50p		
Steve Lumb	£1		
Chris Haddock	£1		
Dean Albutt	50p		
Jeanne Albutt	50p		
Bob Whiteoak	£1		
Dave Neatby	50p		
Andy Connell	£1		
Ian Whiteley	50p		
Mark Yates	25p		
M Mosselmans	£1		
AFC Wimbledon			
Up North	33.3p		
Simon Denton	£1		



The scheme is being administered by the Shaymen Down South. To join in the Goal-O-Meter please write to:

175 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3XL or e-mail shaymen.downsouth@ntlworld.com

stating your name and the amount of your sponsorship.

To help sponsors spread the cost, and provide the club with a mid-season financial boost, we will be requesting settlement on the goals scored in the first half of the season at the end of December.

Alternatively payments can be made at any time to help spread the cost.

The Ghosts of Conference Past

I was commenting at the Farnborough game (in a rare fit of romanticism, before our abject second half surrender) that I will strangely, somehow, miss going there and other places like it. Because it seems to me, there are fewer and fewer of these well-established but small teams left in the Conference, with their grounds where you can aim a well-timed verbal volley within easy earshot of the intended target, with dodgy views and where you are more than welcome in the clubhouse before and after the match – unlike many clubs.

Think back to our title season. Places like Hayes, Stalybridge and Leek may not be the most glamorous but they give you something the soulless stadia of higher divisions such as Chester, Scunthorpe and so on do not. Even our own stadium is a little bit lacking (and I'm not even talking about the East Stand) despite the cavernous stands behind the goals offering one of the best vantage points for football in the Conference.

But with ever increasing professionalism in the non-league game, the chance for these small clubs to compete with their richer, better-supported rivals may well be slipping away. Leigh, Forest Green and Farnborough had been in the Conference a combined 24 years, an amazing achievement for these small teams given the leaps and bounds the league has made in recent years. However, it is difficult to see how this could happen again, without significant investment in the team a la Grays Athletic. Leigh and Hayes have both finished in the top five in the past decade – can you ever see this happening again? And, without being disrespectful to either, can you imagine how they could possibly have hoped to cope on their crowds as Football League clubs were the play-offs around at the time?

It is testament to how highly the Conference is now regarded by the football supporting pub-

lic that crowds are on the up, not only because of teams like Exeter, Shrewsbury and Carlisle bumping up the average but the run-of-the-mill teams, attendance wise certainly including ourselves, getting much larger gates than 10 years ago. This bodes well for the future of the league but it means that, for Halifax Town, we are no longer any kind of big fish and the pond is getting larger all the time... by which I mean, if we have a bad season and crowds drop, we risk slipping out of mid-attendance-table obscurity and into serious trouble. There is the very real possibility of relegation as the so-called weaker teams go down and are replaced by potentially bigger teams. On the other hand, we only need to look at how Barnet did on mediocre attendances to see what is possible at the top of the table, which just goes to prove crowds mean little when compared to good management, players and team spirit.

So, will we ever see the likes of Forest Green in the Conference again? I for one hope so, because one of the prices paid for increased professionalism (aside from the increased price of admission!) is a lack of closeness and community and Forest Green are a fine example of a true community club. I also hope that their decision to go full time and build a new ground, despite relegation, does not lead them on the road to ruin, either financially or by alienating and distancing the club from its supporters. Unless those clubs receive substantial financial backing (or take substantial financial risks) allowing them to compete, we may not get the chance to visit these places again, which would be a bit of a shame, although I suppose, not being a supporter of one of these teams, it is a somewhat inevitable price to pay for progress towards what is surely the ultimate aim of the Conference – parity with the league divisions and three-up three-down.

MATTHEW WRIGHT

HALIFAX TOWN HISTORIES

5. MULHALL v WILDER

Philip Ashworth compares the Halifax Town's of George Mulhall and Chris Wilder...

The race for Conference honours 2004-2005 was an exciting one which we were right in the midst of and on Sky TV three times! Although we would have preferred to have converted the play off option, a single figure finish and qualification for The LDV Trophy is an outcome to work with. We've been this way before, of course, and won the race. So how did the 1997-1998 Conference championship season (GM) compare with 2004-2005 (CW) and what can be learned to enable the current team to be successful in their quest for promotion?

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

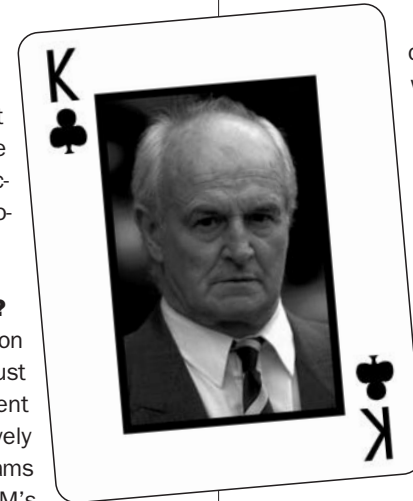
In fairness, any comparison between the two teams must recognise that the current play-off system effectively means that the two teams played in different eras. GM's team gained the most points, eighty-seven, and won the only prize available. CW's team chased one of five prizes, which made the league more competitive, especially so considering the number of teams chasing them.

HOW THEY LINED UP

Player availability is another measure necessary for fair comparison and this is weighted in favour of GM. Of his key players, only Jackson left the club, whilst Brook and Hulme were missing for a significant amount of games. Only Martin, in March, had his season ended prematurely.

CW had to overcome a catalogue of misfortune, which makes this season's play-off bid even more credible. Lee never started, Hockenhull's season ended in September and Munroe didn't play after that month. Bushell missed eight games in September/October and the final three whilst Foster missed all of October. McStay was injured in November and was missing through the winter. Doughty's season ended in February. Mansaram was out of the last ten games.

Suspensions also bring about unavailability. GM had five red cards, CW six, with one absolved on appeal. However, CW had ➤



← four players who received between five and nine yellows and three who had ten or more. GM also had suspensions to contend with, Horsfield and Thackeray being two examples of this. All this leads us to the first major difference between the two seasons. The consistency of the starting line ups. For GM, Bradshaw started every game, Thackeray missed only one and Horsfield two. Four others, Brown, O'Regan, Paterson and Stoneman missed only twenty-one starts between them, none missed more than six. Of the thirty-nine matches it took to win the title, six of the named players, more than half the team, appeared together in thirty-five starting line ups. This consistency was one of the foundations of GM'S success.

For CW only four players missed less the six starts. Dunbavin missed three, Sugden four and Ingram and Quinn five each. CW didn't have a playmaker, or midfield solidity as regularly as GM did. In fairness, CW needs better luck avoiding injuries but the team also need to avoid enforced absence caused by unnecessary bookings to avoid hindering success.

CLEAN SHEETS

GM's team were the epitome of a mean defence. Not only did they concede only forty-three goals all season but the crucial issue was when they conceded them. Nine came after the title was won, when it didn't matter, and a further eight in two "bad days at the office" at Cheltenham and Rushden. In the remaining thirty-seven games, only twenty-six goals were conceded and seventeen clean sheets were kept.

CW's team conceded fifty-six goals and kept twelve clean sheets. The major difference in defensive trends was that GM's team conceded two or more goals in only nine matches, meaning that 79% of the time one goal guaranteed at least a point. CW's did this in seventeen, which meant that 40% of

the time Town had to score at least twice to earn a draw, a much harder attacking task.

IN THE NET

CW's finest comparison to GM's is an identical goal scoring tally of seventy-four. The two teams share the fifth equal place of Town's highest scoring team since being admitted in to the Football League in 1921. They share the same total as Town's highest ever national league finish, third in Division Three in 1971 under George Kirby. Harry Hooper's 1957-1958 team hold the record for goals scored, eighty-three in the last season of Division Three North.

CW's team scored in their first twenty league matches, a superb achievement. That they lacked a prolific striker gives even more credit to the total. CW's scored more away goals, twenty-nine, than GM's, twenty-five. Seven of these at Leigh, Hereford and Canvey Island securing three successive away wins which even GM's didn't do.

The comparison of double figure reaching players is interesting. For GM, Horsfield scored thirty from forty starts and Paterson fourteen from thirty-six starts. For CW, Sugden scored eleven from thirty-eight starts. Killeen scored nine from twenty-eight starts plus three from eleven substitute appearances. Midgley scored eleven from thirty starts and one from nine substitute appearances. It should be taken in to account that four of Midgley's goals were penalties but nonetheless CW's team had their joint top scorers on the bench a total of twenty times, in contrast to GM's whose started permanently. Also had Killeen and Midgley started all the games they appeared in, CW's starting line ups would have had a similar constitution to GM's.

ONE- NIL

CW's scored first in thirty matches, nine times more than GM's. A big secret of GM's suc-

cess, however, was that rarely did points slip away from this position. Only four times from twenty one matches did GM's fail to win having scored first, all ending in draws, only eight points from sixty nine being lost. This was CW's Achilles heel, twelve times first goal leads were lost, of those thirty six points available, from which five were taken, six more would have gained the final play off place and nine more the top one. Had Barnet been defeated at The Shay in August, when Town were two goals in front, then if six more first goal advantages had turned in to wins, CW's team would have been champions. A touch more ruthlessness in killing teams off at home, eg Northwich and Tamworth, and shutting up shop away, eg York and Accrington, and avoiding Mr Gavin Ward, referee at Woking, will bode well for next season.

CHASING THE GAME

Surprisingly, GM's team went behind in seventeen matches, a big potential for an Achilles heel. Nine teams had the temerity to take the lead at the Shay, yet none went away with three points. Perhaps the most memorable example of this was against Southport, when Town were 3-2 down and minus O'Regan who had been sent off. Cue sub Dave Hanson as the now PE teacher gave a lesson in finishing for a brace in a 4-3 win. Of the fifty one points going away when behind, twenty eight were salvaged, the essential quality of champions being hard to beat coming to the fore.

CW's team went behind in eighteen matches but only came back to win once, at home to Leigh RMI. Draws were salvaged at home to Carlisle, Dagenham and Tamworth, but eleven away deficits brought eleven defeats.

Using GM's team as a plumb line for success what can we conclude that will improve CW's chances of success for 2005-2006? In essence CW's team need the championship qualities of both grinding out results and being hard to beat. The defence needs to be tighter. The more goals you concede the harder the task is. Of the play off qualifiers none scored more goals than Town but all conceded less, Hereford fifteen less and Carlisle nineteen less. To illustrate the point, both Accrington and Dagenham who finished below Town also scored as many goals as three of the play off qualifiers, but they conceded more.

The difference between GM's and CW's teams was really in the direction in which they travelled. A defeat didn't stop GM's team marching forward, whilst for the most part being behind or in front was just a position from which a result had to be hewn, whether circumstances were favourable or not. The statistics suggest, however, that CW's team could be blown off course, opponents searching for an equaliser, or taking the lead too often prevailed. Their worst mini run of the season in

March, picking up only one point out of nine was really the catalyst for a downward slide. This, after three straight wins which illustrates the point.

So to next season, we can certainly score goals and we surely can't be as unlucky with injuries. We've good players and a good manager. There's no reason why we can't push on for a play-off place. We've got the ability, what we need to add is a grinding out/ winning habit mentality. The future's bright! The future's blue and White!



REFEREE – YOU'RE A DISGRACE!

Nick O'Reilly (NO) and his guest offer their final batch of criticism of the men in black. The scoring is out of 10 whistles, with 10 being the most disgraceful. SDS 58 guest: Simon Denton (SD)

HEREFORD (h) 16.04.05 – S GATE

🗨️🗨️🗨️🗨️🗨️🗨️ 7

Mr Gate had a poor game, as frustrating for the blatant fouls he did not penalise as for some of the good tackles he did. A ref who should have had little to do in what was a fair game spoil it with his own self importance. I never like to see players booked for scoring goals, especially one so important; sadly a pedantic obedience to petty rules got the better of common sense. (NO)

FARNBOROUGH (a) 19.04.05 – N KINSELEY

🗨️🗨️🗨️🗨️🗨️ 5

Still showed himself to be one of the more fussy referees on the circuit but on the night the disgrace award was never going to go to one of the officials... (SD)

WOKING (h) 23.04.05 – R HEWITT

🗨️ 1

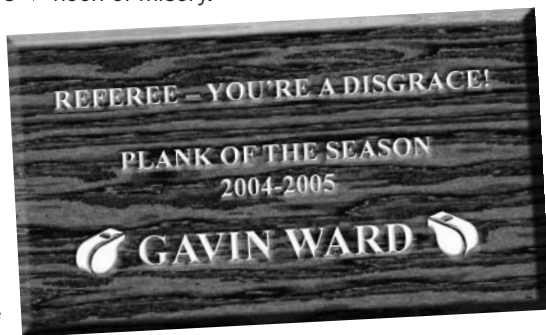
Mr Hewitt once again proved to be one of the better referees, letting the players get on with the game and for the most part keeping his whistle silent and his cards in his pocket. In disgrace terms the season appears to have petered out into an anti climax. (NO)

AND THE 'WINNER' IS...

Scarborough apart, most of the worst displays were before Christmas and all of them were on our travels (or maybe I just get to more away games) starting with Mr Shoebridge at Tamworth, peaking with the schoolboy performance of Mr Ward at Woking and for pure annoyance and a whistle every two minutes Mr Kinseley at Stevenage. Add in Scarborough and Barnet and you will see there is a common thread, Town getting a red card, two of which were an absolute disgrace

with Lewis Killen clearly being felled at Woking only to see the clown give him a second yellow for diving and with Dopey Deadman wrongly dismissing John Grant at Barnet. The sending off at Tamworth was debatable but sadly neither of the other two could be argued with. Both came in games where the referee wanted to be the main attraction but in neither game did they themselves become an extra man in the same way as Gavin the gormless, who surprised no one in the ground when giving a late penalty to ensure Town's defeat at Woking. A booking after 43 seconds, a sending off on the stroke of half time and a late penalty, Woking fans totally bemused by the sending off and wondering how their full back escaped a yellow card and Town fans incensed and irate, even the odd four letter word was heard (or should I say even the odd clean four letter word was heard amongst the tirade of justified abuse).

I was going to name the award for Disgrace Of The Year as the Uriah Rennie Award For Incompetence but, to be honest, not even Mr Rennie is that bad. Anyone who suffered the shambles at Woking will therefore understand why Mr Gavin Ward gets the title Referee You Are A Disgrace and all I can say is I hope not to get the chance to present the award in person as it would mean yet another night/afternoon of misery.



WHEN VIEWED FROM DOWN UNDER

IT'S AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

As we enter the final stages of the Super 12 competition, rugby fever has hit Canterbury in a big way. The Crusaders have finished top of the table after the round robin stage and, by the time you read this, the final will have been played, hopefully here in Christchurch, with The Crusaders crowned champions. I will have attended the semi-final, and hopefully the final, in crowds of over 35,000. Therefore, it is rather difficult to get motivated to consider yet another season of disappointment for Town fans despite the fact that the official website reported a successful season.

As in all things, there are many conflicting perspectives and you might look back on the past season and believe that the club was successful. I can understand where you are coming from if that is your view. No doubt one would have pointed to the very disappointing conclusion to the 2003/2004 campaign and suggested that mid-table mediocrity would be a very welcome position. Thankfully, that objective was well and truly kicked out of the window with a strong first half of the season. Ensuing talk focussed not only on the play-offs but which position we would occupy.

As a result, expectations were heightened only to be dashed by a measly points haul over the last nine or ten games of the season – a slide to also-rans that CW could not halt, just like last season's descent into a relegation dogfight. Those two factors alone should make us question whether CW will have a long-term future in football management. It's easy to manage when things are going well. In reality, we should have sailed into the play-offs but fell apart in convincing fashion.

The lack of additional revenue from at least two more games, which one could suppose

would have attracted larger than average crowds, must have been a desperate disappointment to the Directors. Despite talk of play-offs, attendances at home games have appeared little different from last season. When the team has had the opportunity to impress in front of relatively large crowds it has, by all accounts, failed to deliver the goods – attractive football plus winning ways.

With what should have been a relatively high level of confidence going into the 3rd round cup game, the team failed to progress from a home tie and further silverware eluded us as we failed to retain the West Riding Cup. At least, we can expect to be invited to participate in next season's LDV Trophy. Perhaps that is the success alluded to on the official website.

So, whilst we can be thankful that we were saved from a miserable season of struggle, I believe that we have to view last season as one that provided major disappointment. There is no doubt that, on their day, the squad could match any side in the league. On the other hand, there were too many times when either we sank to the level of our opponents or they rose to the occasion and matched our efforts.

Although it will be some time before HTAFC will be competing in Europe, at least Calderdale can boast about one top ten European listing – Hebden Bridge is a cool town!

Here's to a high level of consistency next season. Make the most of the warm sunny weather and re-charge the batteries as you prepare for the next thrilling instalment in the life and times of Halifax Town Football Club.

DAVID MARTIN

The Railway Hotel

HORTON STREET HALIFAX HX1 1QF

10 Super en-suite bedrooms **£25 B+B (Weekends)**

Worthington, Carling and Golden Pipin real ale at good value prices

Weddings and Party packages arranged

We have a *Piece Hall Marquee* and the *Running Man Function Room* available with Catering, Bars and Entertainment

FOR ENQUIRIES AND RESERVATIONS:

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Thanks go to John Chew and the Railway Hotel for taking out the above advert. To date John is the only person to have responded to our search for advertisers – it would be great if a few more were to follow suit. Our rates are very reasonable and include £50 a season for a full page advert, £25 a season for a half page and £10 for a full page single issue. These rates are subject to change but will be honoured until such point that a revised tariff is issued. For more information use one of the contact addresses on page three.