

CHAMPIONS AGAIN

The title was won following a tremendous run of results, winning nine out of ten games leading up to the clincher at Banbury. The roll started following two horrible back-to-back one-nil home defeats suffered in mid February, since then however, we were superb and as it turned out unstoppable. The main reason I believe such a run was possible is down to the strength in depth and the character of the squad we have at the Rec. The efforts and lengths Stewart Jones has gone to in getting this lot together has without doubt won the day for us again. When Jimmy Potts joined us back in September we all thought what an acquisition he is, here is a player who could win us the league with his goals alone. However, not prepared to rest on his laurels and with only a few games left Joner goes out and secured the signature of Justin Bishop from Premier side Almondbury. This added even more firepower to an existing lethal attacking force and we now had a 'dream trio' of Justin, Potts and Bourne's resident sharpshooter, Scott Cameron.

Stewart could already rely on a backbone of players that remained from the previous triumph two seasons ago; keeper Tom Sheppard, defenders Neil Ward, Grant Gordon, Ben Rhodes and Dan Luton, midfielders Nick Waters, James Mainstone, Ben Walker with Mark Nash and striker Scott Cameron. Joner and long serving coach Terry Northam, also added Chris Gent, Ricky Hemmings and Mark Totterdell to the mix together with flying winger Toby Vosper, who joined from local neighbours, Ridings Old Boys. We also had the luxury of a number of our U-18 side, also managed by Joner, who started to make their mark in senior football. One to stand out from this bunch is Mitch Tippins who can be very proud of his contribution. It was this group players who Stewart relied on in the early stages of the season with players such as Sean Thompson, Liam Powell, Aaron Lochhead and lately Jack Watts all playing their part.

Everyone knows there are unsung heroes at each and every club, win or lose, but I like to think that the background people at this club are second to none. There are of course the usual candidates in long serving committee members such as secretary Geoff Endicott, treasurer Len Russell, bar steward Geoff Screen and last but not least Dave Broom, without who Winterbourne United could and would not function. The plaudits must be shared around further to include people like Noddy Harris for his turns at the wheel of the minibus. The atmosphere generated win or lose on the bus has to be witnessed to be believed and it definitely does wonders for moral. I have already mentioned Terry Northam who has trained them week in week out and is there in the dressing room geeing them up on match days. We also rely on the skills of physio Kenny Purnell who continually treated players during his spare time as well as Saturdays in attempts to get them back playing. Others I have to mention are the supporters who have followed us throughout, Ollie O'Neil in particular and our own bench dweller Wilf.

It is not just the first team that has grabbed some silverware this season as the Martin 'Matchy' Blake's third team has done tremendously well to win the GFA

Intermediate Cup and have won promotion into Division II of the Bristol and District League as runners up. I know Matchy would like me to mention Stew Watts and Duncan Bisp for their invaluable support over the whole campaign. The Reserves, under Mark Stenner and Kevin Slade are more than holding their own in the Bristol Premier Combination following promotion last year and are now playing at a level the first team were in not so long ago.

The club as a whole is performing at its maximum limit regarding the standard of the leagues we are in. It could be said that we are victims of our own success to the extent that promotion is not possible for either the first team due to our facilities or for the Reserves because the first team are in Hellenic 1. We are trying to alleviate the 'bottleneck' by improving facilities at the Rec to a standard that will allow us at least one more promotion. Negotiations on this front are in the early stages of a very long and delicate process.

Until then we will continue to build a future for the club and we now have six youth teams, one of which, the U-10's won their league this season. As mentioned we have an U-18 side that competes in the Gloucestershire County Youth League. The club has made a decision to commit to a youth policy, as we believe it is the way forward in the light of progressing and maintaining out current playing levels. This means we are always on the look out for new players, teams and coaches to complement the six FA qualified coaches already at the club. The Under 18's are currently recruiting for next season as last year class are now over age, please phone Martin Day on 07736546203 for details if you are interested. We are on the way to gaining 'Development Charter Club' status through the GFA and have in place the essential requirements regarding child protection. The big stumbling block is the lack of playing space we have. The Recreation field is at capacity with no less than five sides needing the one full size pitch we have. The First and Reserves teams need it Saturdays with the U-11, U12 and U-18 sides jostling for position Sundays. The other sides still use the small pitch the other side of the square. Outsourcing is a financial nightmare not only for games but for training facilities too. The head of the youth section is Kevin Slade and he is continuously searching for venues that can cater for the ever-growing demand.

The finance of any club is paramount and dictates how it should operate. I firmly believe you dare not put all your eggs in one basket especially when paying players is concerned, you never know when the basket will break, as a number of clubs can testify. We have never gone down that route and do not intend to, there is nothing to be gained from it yet everything to lose, besides success is still not guaranteed. Winterbourne's finances relies heavily on in house fundraising and on our sponsors most of who have been with us for years. They include all those who take adverts in our match day programme as well as those who make individual donations year after year. Redrow Homes are our first team kit sponsor and we are humble in accepting their support as we are from S M Gauge, Complete Fire Protection Ltd and John Alexander Furnishings who all continue to support us in this way.

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