

NEWCASTLE FALCONS SUPPORTERS CLUB
15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
THURSDAY, 9th JUNE 2011
MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION: APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

The meeting was opened at 7.10pm by Margaret Smithurst, who thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting; her first as Chairwoman of the Supporters Club (S.C.). Appointment of Harry Sharp as Chairman for the meeting followed; this being proposed by David Hines and seconded by Janet Bailey.

There were 40 members in attendance.

Papers for the meeting, including minutes from the 14th AGM, the Chairwoman's Report, the Treasurer's Report, Coach Fare Record and details of the election candidates were provided for the meeting; it was noted these had also been posted on the website and members notified via email.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Tommy Cleveland, Norma Cleveland, Pauline Rutter, Martin Rutter, June Nattrass, Brian Nattrass, Jane Hanley, Gerry Camozzi, Ann Camozzi, Lynne Crowe, Damian Foggon, Tom Wilson, John Maughan, Audrey Maughan, Tony Benson, Jo Benson, Ian Potts, Yvonne Potts, Helen Roberts, Rachel Roberts, Geraldine Pattman, Richard Pattman, Gary Maines, Emma Peagam, Dan Darbyshire, Louise Herlihy, Les Milne, Graham Pilkington, Adrian Clarke, Rachel Clarke, Liam Clarke, Bill Pearson, Chris Pearson, Bill Bickle, Irene-Ann Gascoigne, Theresa Hines.

3. MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THE 2nd JUNE 2010

The minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting were read and accepted as a correct record with no matters arising (proposed by Barbara Scott; seconded by Joan Milne).

4. CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT FOR 2010/11

Margaret Smithurst presented her report for the 2010/11 season and the key points highlighted as follows:

a. Introduction

This is the first report as Chair, and although having been on the committee for 8 years under a wide remit of titles, including secretary, membership secretary and bus captain, M Smithurst is so glad she decided to stand for election for a further season. This decision was made all the more easier as on the 13th May 2011 at the Falcons Big Bash

the Supporters Club were recognised for all their hard work and won the award of 'Clubman of the Season 2011'. This award stood proudly on the table in front of M Smithurst as she presented her report.

Thanks were expressed to everyone and also to those members who have put their names forward for election onto the committee for the coming season; 9 nominations had been received and this will be decided later in the meeting. At this point the nominees were asked to introduce themselves.

Special thanks were then bestowed to Kevin Nergaard, Treasurer who holds a very important position on the committee and is constantly being asked for balance of accounts! Also to Steve Richardson, for his ideas, commitment and passion for the Club and in particular for organising away travel. To Julia Bradley for her compilation of endless lists of guests for social events. Gratitude was also expressed to Helen Roberts and Stef Walter who have decided to step down from the committee this season.

M Smithurst's message to all was that a team effort is crucial for the Supporters Club; a team of committed volunteers and members along with our team on the pitch both wanting the same results – ***a successful Supporters Club following a successful Team*** – a belief of both our Chairwoman and Club Captain, James Hudson and the rest of our team.

In summary the 2010/11 season was one of the most tense and frustrating season, hanging onto Premiership rugby by our finger nails. The highlight of the season was no doubt the semi-final of the LV Cup at Quins. Both the Supporters Club and the Captain, J Hudson has ardent and high expectations for the coming season so let's keep this aspiration alive.

b. Membership

Membership has dropped this season from 336 to 231 members; believed to be because we didn't insist on S.C. membership for those travelling on the coaches as we had done in previous years although people travelling with the S.C. has increased. It was stressed that once the Committee is at full strength again, it is their responsibility to promote and increase the membership and its benefits of the S.C. and ultimately increase revenue for the Club.

The outgoing Committee felt it appropriate to retain membership fees as those set in the 2010/11 season; thus being £5 for juniors under 16, £10 for adults and £15 family membership (2 adults and 2 children (under 16yrs) living at the same address), however, this could be addressed again in the coming season.

c. Away Travel

We were lucky to secure sponsorship of £2,500 from the Falcons for coach hire and this proved valuable in keeping travel costs down. It is hoped that this will occur in the forthcoming season also. Promotions such as breakfast/lunch bags and 'buy 4 get 5th trip free' worked well and did boost the number of travellers.

In 2010/11 coaches were provided to all Premiership away games including a full bus to Galashiels in horrendous weather conditions – special thanks to Steve for arranging this.

The only game where a bus was not provided was to the LV Cup game in Exeter where a lack of interest made the trip unviable. Only a very small profit has been made on coach travel.

Steve Richardson then provided a résumé for away travel:

- Dave Bell has again pledged to secure funding next season for committed travellers
- 20 travellers got one free game through the promotion of 'buy 4 get 5th free'
- Ticket and travel deals proved popular
- 2 game deals were also well-liked
- It is an aim to receive more feedback from travellers to improve the 'away game experience'
- Raffles on the bus, i.e. for shirts, Big Bash tickets, hospitality tickers, etc were successful
- Expression of thanks to all travellers and special thanks to those who help out on the bus with raffles, etc.
- Some losses could have been avoided if everyone who have booked had actually turned up to travel
- Whilst we have had an increase in travellers we want to continue to raise the figures and continue to support the Club and have fun and laughter on the trips
- Any questions and suggestions would be gratefully received.

d. Talk-Ins

During the 2010/11 season a total of 4 talk-ins were held with players, coaching staff and management and were all well attended:

- Alan Tait/Paul Moriarty/James Hudson/Andy Perry
- Jeremy Manning/Tim Ryan/Joe Graham/Luke Fielden/Ally Hogg/James Fitzpatrick
- Andy Henderson/Darren Fearn/James Hall/Redford Pennycook/Luke Eves/Glen Townson
- Mark Foster (Commercial Director)/Andrew Van Der Heijden/Euan Murray

e. Social Activities

In 2010/11 four social events were organised including an 80's night, a beach party, the Christmas party and 'The Micky's End of Season Awards Night – proceeds of the latter went to Micky Ward's Testimonial. These events were well attended and popular which in the main made a profit, although the talk-ins did make a small loss of £18.

The Hiding Place staff were commended for their excellent buffets and service and continued support of the S.C.; appreciation was expressed to all concerned.

It was noted that a Comedy Night will be held on Friday, 22nd July 2011 in the West Stand. This will be an over-16's function only. More details to follow.

f. Fundraising

In 2010/11 the S.C. handed over £1,291 in charitable donations; being the Community

Foundation, Micky Ward's testimonial, Marie Curie (in memory of S.C. member Terry Pickering) and Clic Sergeant (Redford Pennycook's charity). These donations are down on previous years for various reasons, in particular the recession however this will be addressed once the full committee membership is in place following tonight's elections.

In addition, we managed to raise over £7,500 for the Community Foundation by selling lottery tickets on match days and special thanks were expressed to our fantastic young volunteers.

As a S.C. we have provided members with the opportunity to win Falcons memorabilia, including signed shorts and ball, match tickers, etc.

We have also funded the refurbishment of the Falcons office space (£180), a line-out machine for the gym (£176.25) and sponsored a beer at the Gateshead Beer Festival (£100) – all of these bear the S.C. name providing vital advertising and promotion.

g. Supporting the Players

Due to the generosity of an anonymous sponsor we continue to provide our Player of the Month and Annual Awards to the Players. Framed photographs of the presentation are also given to the presentee. This season we sponsored Grant Shiells, Luke Fielden and Flash the Falcon.

The winners of the Player of the Month award for the 2010/11 season were then listed by M Smithurst. The awards presented at the Micky's were also reported.

The April Player of the Month will be presented at the first game of the next season and there is still an opportunity to vote.

h. Communications

The S.C. website continues to be improved and the online booking facility (PayPal) for away travel and social events is finally catching on. It was emphasised that this is the safest, easiest and preferred method of payment for any event; it provides easier administration as it allows us to know how many people are travelling (and the seat is already paid for should the traveller not turn up for whatever reason), for catering purposes and also will eliminate the need for bus captains to carry large sums of money.

All social events will be advertised with a PayPal link and members will be encouraged to use this method of payment.

Apologies were given as a review has not been provided this year unfortunately due to time restraints however this will be addressed on election of a full committee and a newsletter send to members every couple of months.

That said, the weekly e-zine seems to work effectively and everyone is kept up-to-date with what is being planned and what social events and away travel is coming up.

M Smithurst concluded her report by thanking everyone and has enjoyed her first season as Chairwoman.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2010/11

Unfortunately K Nergaard was unable to attend the meeting although a detailed statement of accounts was provided for attendees and presented by M Smithurst.

Key points of the accounts were highlighted such as membership fees, coach costs and charity donations (again an account of these were provided) and it was noted that an overall loss of -£514.07 was made. It is thought a major factor of this is due to not insisting travellers on away coaches were members.

- Overall loss of £514.07 compared to a profit of £591.81 last year
- Membership fees down from £2451.52 to £1833.18
- Whilst more expenditure was used on coach hire (£12,695.00 as opposed to £6,676.00) an increase in coach fares (from £5,934.04 to £9401.66)
- Fundraising for the 2010/1 season has increased from £853.50 to £977.61
- A generous donation of £400 had been received towards Player of the Month awards

6. MEMBERSHIP FEE

As stated earlier the fees for membership for 2011/12 have already been confirmed.

Some members raised concerns over the fees for non-supporters club members on away travel and queried whether they should become members before travelling. Discussion ensued regarding this with S Richardson providing a rationale for initially not encouraging this, by way of getting the support from travellers initially in the hope that they will become members of the S.C. Other members suggested that a slight increase in membership fees may boost income.

It was agreed to continue to promote and increase the S.C. membership by handing out forms on coaches, at match days and at social events.

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2011/12

Forms for the election of the committee members were handed out during an interval in the meeting. Nine members indicated their desire to stand for election, with only 7 places available. Once nominations were counted and confirmed, the members elected onto the Newcastle Falcons Supporters Club Committee were as follows:

- Margaret Smithurst
- Julia Bradley
- Kevin Nergaard
- Steve Richardson
- Dawn Atkinson
- Keith Evans
- Derek Dargue

One committee member asked that as 2 nominees had been unsuccessful, could they too not

be on the committee? It was confirmed that whilst they could be co-opted they would hold no voting rights, however, their enthusiasm to help would be required where necessary as there is lots of work involved in running the S.C. and helping hands are always appreciated.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a.** It was queried how there has been a loss in income for the talk-ins; it was confirmed that this was due to the hire of microphones, etc in order to ensure good means of communication.
- b.** It was stressed that the Newcastle Falcons support us as we support them. As a S.C. we are here to help and encourage them on and off the field and form good relationships with the management and team of the Falcons.
- c.** One member commented that it was a huge task to encourage supporters on trips and much of that credit went to S Richardson. A particular tribute was also paid to the excellent organisation of the trip to Montpellier.
- d.** Another member stated their thanks to the Treasurer for an excellent, detailed report.

M Smithurst thanked everyone for their attendance and thanked H Sharpe for holding the post of Chair to the meeting. In return, gratitude was expressed to M Smithurst and the committee.

With no further business to report, the meeting closed at 8.35pm.