

The trials and tribulations of a Non-League programme editor by Stuart Fuller

Today marks my third month in the hardest job in football. Managers have an easy job turning up for 3 hours on a Saturday to watch a game for free. Directors? Well that's just sitting round a table eating biscuits and talking about building new toilet blocks (well, to an extent). I'm talking about one where you need to be available 24 x 7 yet your work often ends up being discarded in the bin. I am a (co) Football Programme Editor.



In the past three months, Barry Collins and myself have put together ten editions of the Lewes matchday programme. Programmes that every week we think are getting better and better. It does help that Barry has had some experience in the editing game (Anyone heard of PC Pro magazine by any chance?), we have a brilliant team of designers over at East-Web (thanks Jack and Lee) who lay it all out and some excellent pictures from the shutter finger of James Boyes. But it is the bits in between that cause us to burn the midnight oil.

When we took over the role in the summer, Barry and I had grand plans for the programme. Who wanted to read dull boring bits about the away team when they only bring two fans? Adverts? Seriously...one or two at best. People flocked to us promising us Pulitzer quality articles. But when the chips have been down and we needed to do three programmes in a little more than five days where were they? Exactly. We were on our own.

The problem for Non-League clubs, as Glenn Wilson pointed out in a recent When Saturday Comes article is that the job is the one nobody wants to do. The role is one of those that if we do a good job, no one notices, but if it goes wrong, everyone tells us. Whilst we have "editorial" control, our audience doesn't really care. We currently have 12 pages of adverts in a 32 page programme. That in my honest opinion is too many. We have no choice but to carry FIVE from the Ryman League because of a deal they did. It is arguable we get the value of any commercial arrangement even if one of the ads is for a lingerie shop called Boux Avenue. So each week we have to come up with something new.

So far, so good. I have no idea if sales are up or down, but two weeks ago we sold out (and long before kick off) for the first time in years. In fact the silent majority were soon quick to voice their disapproval of the fact, telling us we should have printed more. Well, perhaps if those same voices would have given us some feedback when we asked earlier in the season perhaps we may have. We are still trying to put our own stamp of individuality on each edition. Our offering today against Margate included an article on the real founding fathers of Football, an interview with one of our oldest and most loyal fans, a piece on our

opponents written by one of their more well-known fans and a "last word" from Barry about his Geoff Shreeves moment last week.

Come matchday and you would think we could relax, our work finished for the week and people enjoying the fruits of our labours. But you would be wrong. We have to be on the look out for the next story. Jack Walder's Captain's Notes don't just write themselves you know, and we still have the match report to worry about. No wonder we start on the Harvey's at 2pm!