

When the money runs out by Stuart Fuller

Irrespective of how much you love your team, if you won the lottery, would you invest in the club? The beauty of our community ownership model is that everyone regardless of their investment in the club owns an equal share. That means it becomes incredibly difficult for anyone coming along with a big cheque to take over the club.

Time and time again we see the euphoria of the fans of a club, especially at Non-League level, who all of a sudden gain a rich benefactor. In most cases the relationship ends in tears and a sinking feeling as the finances unwind at a rapid rate, whilst the investor makes a sharp exit, badly burnt and their dreams of hosting Chelsea, Man Utd and Barcelona in tatters on the boardroom floor. Whilst you can argue that both Manchester City and Chelsea bought their way to the Premier League title, they did so from a position of power and potential. No team has ever bought their way into the Premier League in such circumstances.

In Non-League football it's all too common. Initial success in the lower steps of the pyramid aren't that uncommon but reach the National Premier and it becomes a different story where there is already a graveyard of ex-Football League clubs with million pound budgets. One look at this season's line up confirms this. Wrexham, Kidderminster Harriers, Grimsby Town, Halifax, Lincoln City and now Tranmere Rovers and Cheltenham Town. With just two promotion spots clubs who fall out of the league often face a long, hard slog to return. One other name on the Conference roster this season who are further than they've ever been from a return to the Football League is Torquay United.

They've now got to try to bring back those glory days without the lottery cash of Thea Bristow. THEA and her husband Paul win £15 on the lottery in 2004 and took control of the club in 2007 who were in dire financial problems. In 2010 Paul died suddenly, leaving Thea with sole control of the club that she wasn't prepared for. Although her involvement kept the initial wolves from the door, the club are a long way from where they thought they'd be.

Across the Welsh border there's also another former lottery winner who is turning his back on football. Les Scadding took over Newport County in the wake of his £45.5m EuroMillions win in 2009, taking control of the club in August 2012. Nine months later the club won the Conference Premier Play-off final against Wrexham to return to the Football League 25 years since they reformed in 1987. Scadding's investment in County is unclear but he was rumoured to be covering a monthly deficit running into tens of thousands of pounds.

On 18 June 2015 Scadding resigned as Chairman and as a Director of Newport County. Scadding's departure raises some pressing questions about the future of Newport County and how they can continue to compete as a Football League club.

"I leave... in the knowledge that I have contributed to [Newport's] promotion and development," he said on announcing he was stepping down. Only the future will tell whether his withdrawal of funding will reverse the upward trajectory. We hope not - nobody likes to see any club in crisis but it does beg the question when some will heed the lessons from history and not just grab the cash today and have no plan B for the future.

Non-League football shouldn't just be about the money. Alas some clubs, managers, players and dare I say it, agents believe it is and in their wake lay the heritage, history and hopes of the innocent - the lifelong fans.