



2023/24 Club Secretary's Report

If I'm honest, I'm not quite sure how I got here... I never set out to be a coach, let alone the manager of a team (and now two) and most definitely not to be Club Secretary, but I'd like to start with a big thank you to everyone for their support this season since stepping into the role. Trying to step into Nicky's shoes has been no mean feat and I'm certain I've got a long way to go before I know exactly what I'm doing, so at times you will have to bear with me...

It's been a bit of a whirlwind since joining the Management Committee, initially as Boys Secretary and more recently as Club Secretary, and if I'm honest, I'm still working out exactly what the role entails. The short version I guess, is to try and ensure the Club abides by all the various FA and league rules, the truth however, is that it involves an awful lot more...

But, with the season now over for most, save for the odd tournament and end of season parties, it's perhaps a good time to reflect on how the season has gone, what went well, and what could have gone better. So, here's a flavour of what's been keeping me busy and what I've learned along the way.

Training & Qualifications

With nearly 70 teams, c.850 players and c.180 managers and coaches, the club is roughly triple the size of the average primary school in pure numbers. So while the players might only spend a few hours with us each week, there is no getting away from the fact that this comes with some responsibilities - so making sure everyone has the required training is incredibly important. Put simply, it helps to keep the players, you and the Club safe.

When I volunteered to be Boys Secretary last May, I was shocked to find that only 30% of our coaches had all of the required qualifications and that we were completely ill-prepared for the upcoming change to team based affiliations. I'm pretty sure all of you will have experienced being chased by me to do one bit of training or another in the last 12 months and this is the reason why!

It's been a massive effort (not least because there are c.180 of you and only one of me) but I'm pleased to say that the percentage is now approaching 90% and I'd like to keep it that way (in fact I'd like to get to 100%). So please, if I do ask you to do some training, get it done as soon as possible.

Accreditation

I applied to renew the Club's FA Accreditation at 9am on the day the window opened on 1st November and I'm pleased to say we were re-accredited as a 2* FA Charter Club at 11:15 following day - If we weren't the first club in West Riding to be accredited, we were certainly in the first handful! For context, I'd naively assumed this was a mere formality, so I was a bit surprised to see lots of other club's celebrating the achievement on social media just before the March deadline... There is absolutely no doubt our quickfire accreditation was linked to our great levels of training compliance.

We did lose our 3* accreditation status though - this follows a decision by the Management Committee to stop supporting a historic veterans team, but I'm confident we'll get this back in due course with the plans to establish open age teams for both the Girls and Boys, something I think would be a brilliant step for the Club if we can make it work.

Affiliation

Last year our poor training compliance made affiliations far more painful and slow than it should have been. We had to do it in several batches as teams got to a position to be affiliated and it ended up running into August. This year's team affiliations have already started and I'll be completing them, with Andy Craddock's help, in the coming weeks alongside individual team entry into respective leagues and cups ready for the start of 2024-25 season.



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As with last year, team affiliations can only happen if managers and coaches have all the required qualifications so, without wanting to sound like a broken record, get your training done as soon as possible when I tell you about it. If you don't, you risk not having a team come September....

Club Simplification

Since joining the Management Committee, I've been really keen to look at everything we do, how we do it and to challenge ourselves on whether there is a quicker, easier, or better way of doing things - not because the Club has been poorly run, far from it in fact, but simply because there is so much that needs doing and saving a couple of minutes here and there will quickly add up and made a big difference.

Some of the changes you'll have seen, others perhaps you won't, but in pulling together the Club's Development Plan, it's clear that while we've done a lot - in fact it's easy to forget what's been accomplished in the last 12 months - but there are plenty more things to go at.

Things like the Managers Location Guides seem to have gone down well, guidance for new coaches at the mini soccer level and new process and guidance on applying for DBS checks both seem to have made bringing new coaches in a little easier, and John Standhaven's excellent work on the Boys pitch allocations has been a big success and enabled teams to plan further ahead (Thank you John!).

However, we can't pull the Club Development Plan together in isolation, so it's really important that you have your say on the things we're working on to ensure it's aligned to what's important to all our members - so please tell us what you'd like us to be doing.

Health & Safety

With Ruth McGahan having stepped down in her role as Club Health & Safety Officer at the end of 2023, responsibility for health and safety has fallen to me. We've only had one Accident Form submitted in the year which does suggest that accidents aren't being reported as they should be. Clearly you don't need to report every bump and knock received at training and matches, but please make sure you report anything which requires treatment using the new electronic Accident Report Form - there is a link to the form in the Group Description of the respective Managers WhatsApp groups.

Head injuries continue to be a bit of a concern, and I've seen several instances of Managers looking for guidance on concussion. As a reminder, we follow the FA's concussion guidelines and we'll make a copy available either on the website or via the managers groups.

Lastly, I suspect you will all have seen the news regarding the phasing out of intentional heading in mini soccer, if not, I'll make sure it's shared so everyone is clear on the new rules. In short it starts with the U7-U9 age groups from next season, extending to the U10's the season after and the U11's in 2026-27.

Social Events and Meetings

We've made a concerted effort to have more face to face meetings with managers and coaches, and we also saw the return of the Christmas Party. For the most part they seem to have gone down well and we'll try and do more going forward. End of season events for players and also one for managers and coaches will be an area of focus next season - from the conversations I've had with some of you, we seem to have lost a bit of a sense of community since COVID - I think a big part of this is the loss of some of the regular events - so this is definitely something for us to look at.

Social Media

In March I created the Club's Instagram account, and by May it overtook the Club's Facebook page in number of followers. The Facebook and Instagram pages are really useful, not just for celebrating successes, but as a tool for finding new players when teams are short and we've exhausted the waiting list



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- I think it's fair to say that we've saved one team from folding this season with a bit of focus. But there are more opportunities and it would be really great to see more content from across all age groups, so please share things with Andy Craddock or myself so we can post them - and equally importantly give us a follow and encourage your teams to do the same please!

Everybody's Cards

We've been able to add a few more member offers to the Everybody's Card scheme through the addition of the Granary Restaurant at Cragg House Farm and Yazz, but I'm keen that we do more. Each time we add something new we see a big uptick in the number of people wanting a card - numbers are up 70% since January. Please let me know if you have any ideas or even own a business and are interested in joining! And also if you want a card!

Fines & Suspensions

This season we have seen an uptick in the number of fines for teams not submitting scores, stats, lineups and due to unauthorised postponements. But on the plus side, we've seen significantly fewer fines and suspensions for players. I appreciate that things can get forgotten and that it's never intentional, but fines can quickly build up and I can certainly think of better ways for the Club to spend what could easily end up being a couple of thousand pounds a year, so please try to keep on top of it!

Departing Managers

As the season draws to a close, we sadly have a small number of managers and other volunteers stepping down from their roles, so I would like to say big thank you to Phil and Ollie Clarkson, Chris Tomlinson, Anthony Dutton, James Todd, Chris Brewis, Daniel Fletcher and Wayne Lusted for all their efforts - I don't know all of you as well as I should, but there is no doubting the brilliant contribution you've all made to the Club over multiple years. And apologies if I've missed anyone off the list.

The Management Committee

In my role I get to see the Club for what it is - a brilliant Club, full of wonderful volunteers, all of whom are passionate about providing opportunities for kids to play football - none more so than the other members of the Management Committee who spend an untold number of hours not only keeping everything ticking over but striving to help everyone and improve the Club.

In signing off for 2023/24, I'd like to take the opportunity to give my particular thanks to Mark Stitson and Kevin Harrison for all your help, for putting up with my stupid questions, and for listening to my often slightly crazy ideas.

Here's to a successful 2023/24 and hopefully even more in 2024/25.

Many thanks,

Sam