



# STOKE CITY

## *Southern Supporters Club*

www.scssc.co.uk

March 2008



### On the cusp?

I'm writing this after the Watford draw on 15th March. I've decided I want to be a time traveller. I want it to be 4 o'clock on 4th May. Now. I want to know whether we blew it completely (unlikely) or whether it is to be the play offs or have we actually reached the promised land after 23 years. I want to save my fingernails; I want to stop tugging my hair; I want to stop blaspheming every time the opposition attack or we hold on for a point. I'm not sure I can go through 7 more games, but one thing I am sure of is that it will come down to the last game.

In the last newsletter we had just done Wolves 4-2 at their place. Ricki's goal at the death was my personal 'goal of the season' so far. Two home midweek games were next on the menu. Struggling Southampton\* were first up and at half time we were 3 goals to the good and cruising. Prospects for the fingernails were good. Not for long. Seconds after the restart they pulled one back and then got another within minutes. We were rocking but somehow withstood the storm and towards the end came back and nearly made it four. Things were looking good and even Mama was scoring. On to the Friday night game against lowly Scunthorpe and what a fright we got. We gifted them 2 goals and at half time we looked out of it. Oh ye of little faith. A storming 2nd half saw a brace from Lawrence either side of Cresswell's tap in and we were top of the league. A week later and we were still top after the home game against Ipswich. A Liam Lawrence special from outside the box sealed the points against the tractor boys, another candidate for goal of the season.

Then we hit the buffers. The following Tuesday Preston raised their game and with the aid of an inexperienced referee they sent us back down the M6 with 2 goals in the 'against' column. Worse was to come on the following Sunday. A 15-minute trip up the road to Shepherds Bush and the chance to maintain bragging rights at work went horribly wrong. The midfield was awful first half and gifted the Hoops 2 goals. Andy D'Urso decided to truly do us and sent off Griffin for lunging in. There was no come back and no hiding at work. We had to get back on track. A tricky home game against Burnley saw us salvage a point at the death. Ade Akinbiyi was kind to us as well, serving up another of his classic 'my mother could have scored that' howlers. On to Norwich and we ground out a win thanks to a Mama header. On to Watford and a real 6 pointer. As soon as we came out it was clear that our aim was not to lose, playing 5 at the back. We didn't change a thing until half time despite Eustace being sent off for slicing Cressie. In the 2nd half were content to let them come at us and never at any stage did we dominate a team with only 10 men. Back to the top of the league with the point we gained but had we thrown away the other 2 points on offer?

I don't know whether we are going to set out to win promotion and go for the wins in our remaining games or are we going to set out not to lose them and see if we can nick them as if we were in a relegation dogfight. All I know is that my fingernails will be done for good by early May. I'll close my eyes now, just wake me up on 4th May please.

*\*Southampton go to the top of my 'must write a thank you letter' list. They are struggling and can't buy a goal. So they take Pericard from us. Bless.*

**John Wood**

### SCSSC News



### John Ritchie tribute - Member donations

The bust of John Ritchie was unveiled by his family in the presence of Stoke City officials and supporters before the Ipswich match. Pictured left, it is located outside Block 23 of the Boothend End, and is well worth a visit.

As noted in our last newsletter, we are one of a number of supporters' clubs that have made a donation towards its costs. We are hoping to cover the £500 that we have initially committed by donations from our individual members. We have already received a good response and are close to that target, but we are still hoping to collect more for the fund.

Please send your donations to: Julia Zuk, 97 Blossom Way, West Drayton, UB7 9HG. Cheques payable to SCSSC.

### SCSSC AGM

The date and venue for our AGM have yet to be confirmed, but it is most likely that it will be held on Friday 6th June, i.e. after the play-offs (heaven forbid we have to endure them!) Confirmation will be posted on our website as soon as details are available. If you have anything you wish to raise, or would like to stand for the committee, then please contact us via email, our website, or contact any committee member.

## Membership News

Due to lack of space in previous editions, it is a belated warm welcome to our newest member: Curtis Bowles from Surrey

Your editor also has some news - I have recently got myself engaged to Kerry. Believe it or not, despite both being football fans we are planning to hold the wedding in the middle of next season!

## Sport and social

### City live on Sky - Dartmouth Arms

If you are like me and can't get the time off work to go our home match against Crystal Palace (despite having already bought a ticket in my case) then why not join me and other London based Stokies watching Sky's live coverage at the Dartmouth Arms on Monday 7th April, KO 8pm. Stokie landlord Nick will be laying on the usual feast of half time Oatcakes. Should be a good turnout for this one!

Our match against Bristol City is also live on Sky (Saturday 19th April, KO 5.20pm) and this will also shown at the Dartmouth.

*Dartmouth Arms: 35 York Rise, London NW5 1SP. Tel: 0207 485 3267. See [www.scssc.co.uk](http://www.scssc.co.uk) for map.*

### Apfscil dinner – Duncan McKenzie

A reminder that 70's legend Duncan McKenzie will be guest speaker at the end-of-season APFSCIL dinner. This event attracts supporters (and their partners) from clubs all over the UK, from Rangers to Cardiff and Sunderland to Exeter. This year's dinner will be held on Friday 16th May at the Victory Services Club in Marble Arch. The cost is a very reasonable £35 per head, including 3 course dinner, speaker and disco. Excellent value for a good night out! Come along and join us - contact John Wood ([apfscil@scssc.co.uk](mailto:apfscil@scssc.co.uk)) to register your interest.

## Club chat

### Player sponsorship presentation

A party of eight Southern Stokies enjoyed hospitality in the Waddington Suite at the Ipswich match. The photos on the right show Ricardo Fuller presenting SCSSC's sponsored shirt to Steve Heath and his mum (who was chuffed to bits I hear). Below Mama Sidebe presents his shirt, sponsored by Jeff Lea, to Norman Croucher.



### Oatcake messageboard 'relocated'

I suspect that most Oatcake messageboard devotees will have sussed this by now but just in case you have not: it can now be found at <http://oatcakefanzine.proboards27.com>. The reason behind this temporary move is that recent changes aimed at 'improving' the Rivals' network have rendered it much worse! All of the regulars have decanted to the new location including the infamous Hudsonsgod, now reincarnated as 'Kinnell'.

### Coachmakers Arms in Hanley - petition

The Coachmakers Arms in Hanley is under the threat of demolition due to development. If you do not know the pub it a cracking, friendly little place with four individual rooms, the way proper pubs used to be before they were "themed". Another bit of how Stoke-on-Trent used to be that will be gone forever. There is an online petition to save it, which you can find at: [www.thecoachmakers.co.uk](http://www.thecoachmakers.co.uk). Alternatively find it via the link from our own website [www.scssc.co.uk](http://www.scssc.co.uk). Garry Zuk



### Play-off dates (not tempting fate - honest!)

I understand that the provisional dates for the semi finals are Sat 10/ Sun 11 May (lunchtime) and Tue 13/Wed 14 May. The final is currently scheduled for on Saturday 24th May, not the usual Monday.

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### SCSSC Sponsored Player

