

# LEYTON ORIENT FANS FORUM

## Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Present: Vito Miceli (FC Operations Manager)  
Steve Dixon (FC Commercial Manager)  
Colin Munford (FC Media / Communications)  
Andrea Pressenda (FC Relationships Manager)

Keren Harrison (Leyton Orient SLO)

James Cassidy (LOFT Vice Chair)  
Mike Randall (LOFT Committee Member)  
Steve Dearing (LOSC Committee Member)  
Roy Clifford (LOSC Committee Member)  
Mat Roper (Pandamonium Fanzine)

Apologies: Alessandro Angelieri (FC CEO)  
Tony Roome (LOSC Committee Member)  
Paul Levy (Orient Outlook Podcast)

### 1. **ACKNOWLEDGING SUCCESS**

James offered the Club congratulations on the youth team's excellent performance in the Merit League, winning of the L2 Programme of the Year award and how well the women's team had done in their first season since rebranding.

As a group we also offered our congratulations on the season ticket pricing for children next year and the promised re-vamp of the junior Theo's Gang.

### 2. **COMMUNICATION**

The Club did not comment on non-responses to correspondence from the LOFT chairman, but the meeting praised Mr Becchetti for agreeing to meet with fans at the LOSC in July.

The chairman, following the fans forum, has decided to meet the supporters on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the stadium to give an opportunity for more people to attend the meeting. More information will be communicated by the club in the near future.

The Club can confirm that following a meeting between Alessandro and Vito this morning, an AGM for shareholders of LOFC will take place, with the date to be decided. The Club acknowledged it needed to improve communications with minority shareholders. James noted that minority shareholders could obtain fuller accounts than those shown on the Companies House website by request from the FC secretary.

### 3. **FINANCIAL / ACCOUNTS**

The non-filing of the LOHL (Leyton Orient Holdings Limited) accounts is due to internal review processes and will be filed in the next couple of weeks. There are no financial problems affecting LOFC.

The loss reported in the FC accounts was wholly due to slightly less operating income and increased staff costs. The Club is conducting a savings cost process designed to minimise costs where they can, but the President will continue to support the Club financially.

The outstanding loan of £5m shown in the 14/15 accounts from LOHL to LOFC was due to the longer term plan of the President to make the Club profitable and recoup earlier investments. There are no current loan terms and his investment is proof of his commitment.

The sum paid for LOFC was not recorded in the Club's accounts.

A budget has yet to be set for next season, but the Club respect FL rules on salary capping and, if required to comply with these, the wages of players will always be covered by personal cash injections from the President.

#### **4. OLYMPIC STADIUM / BRISBANE ROAD**

The Club can confirm that their lawyers (Mishcon de Reya) were aware of the recent development regarding the Olympic Stadium and the rental document being published and that they continue to weigh up the best option to defend the interests of LOFC in this regard. The Club will contact Mishcon to see if they would like to speak with the fans coalition of Trusts that have undertaken successful work in this area.

There is no further information on whether Mr Becchetti is exercising his option to purchase Brisbane Road. The Club do not wish to relocate and are currently intending to stay at Brisbane Road and continue to pay rent for the stadium.

#### **5. GROUND ISSUES**

Following concerns regarding overcrowding in the south part of the West Stand refreshment area the club can confirm a large TV monitor was removed and that the clubs safety officer will continue to monitor the situation closely and will liaise with the SLO.

The club have not progressed previous ideas to “re-develop” various parts / rooms of the East Stand to perhaps build an even better matchday experience for younger fans in conjunction with Theo's Gang, mainly due to cost issues. The Club will check why all refreshment outlets are not always open on matchdays with the catering contractor.

The building of a TV studio in the East Stand is still being discussed as an option.

Non-slip paint will be used on the West Stand steps ready for the new season and the club's safety officer will obtain quotes for possible hand rails, however the stand does currently meet with all necessary safety regulations.

Singing section: the Club promised to survey fans appetite for this and gauge how many possible fans would like to be seated in such an area. The Club confirmed they are in favour of such a suggestion and the proposed area would likely be the furthest section West of the South Stand.

The Club unfortunately cannot accommodate a smoking section for fans, including letting supporters leave the stadium to smoke, due to various logistical issues.

## 6. **STAFFING / ROLES**

The Club can confirm that the two directors named on the board (A.Mino & S.Arbara) that supporters may not be that familiar with are close advisors to the chairman and that they have his faith and vice versa.

In terms of other staff appointments Rob Gagliardi remains head of recruitment.

Andrea Pressenda's role is to improve relationships with clubs in the UK (along with Alessandro and Vito) with who they are looking to share and listen to ideas. Andrea also is trying to improve relationships with clubs in European countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany but as he stated this is difficult, but one we can improve.

Vito Miceli provides a link between the administration side of the Club and the football side.

## 7. **TICKETING**

The Club changed online ticketing system suppliers as part of the cost saving exercise. The new supplier already works with a lot of other clubs and it is cheaper than the previous company used. The new system is going through its final phase of testing and should hopefully be up and running in about a week.

The age for senior citizen tickets is 65 and the SLO and the Club will check how long this has been the case.

James will send through to the Club some literature on the "Twenty's Plenty" campaign regarding match day prices for the club to take a look at and any thoughts either the club or fans have on this will be discussed via the SLO as an ongoing process.

## 8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Theo's Gang will now be overseen collectively by various members of staff. The aim is to improve the package and administration from last year. The club would very much like to make the matchday experience even better

for children and families but are limited with space in and around the ground, plus resourcing & cost issues.

The owners' views on the protest before the Dagenham and Redbridge game are that he respects every fans opinion and is working desperately hard to bring success to the club.

The reality TV show obviously ended and with the President's legal problems in Albania and the TV station shut down. The winners were not kept on and there are no plans to resurrect this. The meeting noted the £84k loan to Agonset UK shown as outstanding in the 14/15 accounts.

The Club were surprised and disappointed at Matt Baudry's comments on social media following his departure. The Club offered him a great contract in January but he chose not to sign and the Club would like to place on record that we provide everything from technical training to food to overnight stays in the best hotels so there should be no excuse for a player to be mentally down. The meeting also noted similar recent negative comment in the media from Lloyd James and Hessenthaler's declaration that he'd "never known anything like it" towards the end of the season.

The President remains committed to the Club, along with all LOFC staff and they are working very long hours to get this right.

The Club confirms that there are no contingency plans around the possible extradition of Mr Becchetti and that they and he are very confident of the ruling to go in his favour.

The President doesn't necessarily like to make many managerial changes and no-one wants stability more than Mr Becchetti, especially as changes in manager affect our financial position as well. Ian Hendon was changed because of poor results and the fans complaining, and Kevin Nolan for very much the same reason. Mr Becchetti wanted a reaction from the players but unfortunately it didn't work out and we just missed out on the play-offs.

A new manager will hopefully be appointed in the next few days and announced shortly. The Club could not comment on Kevin Nolan's current individual circumstances.

The President is investing a lot of money and wants to be actively involved with almost every aspect of the Club. The Club would like to confirm that Mr Becchetti did not pick the team or who plays where, but that there are always a number of meetings between all staff to discuss general aspects of all areas of the Club's operations.

The Club have again confirmed they would like to move the youth academy from a tier three to a tier two operation, but that this is not a short term process. There are a number of conditions that have to be met and this will form part of a longer term project beneficial to the future of LOFC.

The Club realises that the new Football League proposals of five divisions of 20 teams is a big change and we will have to study the proposals in full, looking at likely benefits / impacts before deciding how to vote. The Club was urged to survey fans views on the matter before making any decisions.

A retro Somme shirt will be available in the Club shop. Steve Dixon is undertaking some final negotiations with suppliers and First Sport (the Club's shop partner) and more news will follow shortly.

The Club said it was too late to run a poll on this year's shirt but confirmed that they wanted a totally unique design this year (i.e. not the same as any other club who have signed a deal with Nike) and it was for this reason the Club had to make a reasonably quick decision on which design they wanted for 16/17. Theo's Gang members will be receiving a £2.50 voucher of the cost of a replica shirt as part of their membership pack.

The Club has confirmed that they would still be very interested in local satellite supporter groups being set up to help promote LOFC. Further discussions will take place between the LOFC, the Club and the SLO.

Two AOB agenda items were not discussed due to time constraints. These will be followed up by email correspondence.

The SLO will liaise with the club regarding the next meeting, which should be around early to mid September 2016.

----- **ENDS** -----