

'Stones disown rowdy supporters

REWIND SPECIAL

Stuart Pearce's Stones debut, March 3rd 1979

BY TIM PARKS
(SCANNING BY MARTIN ALLEN)

Saturday March 3rd 1979,
Southern League Premier
Division: Dorchester 5,
Wealdstone 1

A MEMORABLE day in the Stones' past was this trip to Dorset 33 years ago.. though not a good memory at the time!

In fact it was a complete disaster on the day for the mid-table Stones. Not only did Alan Fogarty's injury-hit team crash to its heaviest defeat of the season to bottom-of-the-table Dorchester, but several members of the supporters' club football team got into a bit of hot water by loudly criticising a few of our own board members as four goals flew into debutant keeper Andy Clarke's net in 16 minutes of the first half.

The Stones fans had set off at 6am that morning in order to play a friendly game against Dorchester supporters on an adjacent pitch to the stadium - a team including Messrs Worby, Parks, Taffel, McKay and several Crosses from memory - and the torment of watching the senior side performing with even less ability was too much for a few of the

WEALDSTONE Supporters' Club take "no responsibility" for the conduct of a group of 'Stones fans who travelled to Dorchester on Saturday.

Supporters' Club secretary Miss Barbara Robson said this week that official Wealdstone followers were not involved in the unsavoury incidents at Dorchester.

"It was a splinter group of about 20 who caused the trouble," said Miss Robson, who is also the club's commercial manager.

Abuse

"They hired their own coach and they had nothing to do with the official supporters," added Miss Robson.

The trouble, seemingly, started after half-time when the group of so-called Wealdstone supporters stood in front of the stand where 'Stones manager Alan Fogarty and the club's travelling directors were sitting. They started shouting abuse at Mr. Fogarty.

Injuries forced Fogarty to field a young and inexperienced team. In the end bottom club Dorchester won 5-1 — inflicting Wealdstone's heaviest defeat of the season.

"They started hurling abuse at Mr. Fogarty," added

By
Pat Mooney



Barbara Robson — "I felt ashamed to say I was a member of Wealdstone Football Club"

Miss Robson. "One of the directors, Mr. Brian Bennett, went down and tried to reason with them. But all he got was abuse.

Shield

"I've heard bad language before but this was diabolical. I felt ashamed to say I was a member of Wealdstone Football Club.

"Only a few seasons ago our fans won a shield for being the best supporters in the Southern League. Now, it seems, the club will get a bad name.

"But the annoying thing is they claimed to be official Wealdstone supporters. They even booked the coach in the supporters' club name.

It's so distressing and it's now got out of hand," added Miss Robson.

Mr. Bennett, who is Services Director, said there were only a couple of individuals shouting abuse at Mr. Fogarty.

"He had a word with them but it made no difference. One of them followed him into the stand and continued shouting abuse. He was dragged away by his mates. I went down and tried to talk to them but it was no good," he added.

Mr. Bennett said he didn't know what the club were going to do about the incident and their so-called supporters.

Meeting

"We had it at Finchley and it was so embarrassing for the directors. It was a sad day for Wealdstone."

Miss Robson added: "The supporters' club is holding a meeting at 1 p.m. on Saturday to discuss the situation."

Manager Alan Fogarty said on Wednesday he didn't want to get involved in a slanging match about Wealdstone supporters.

However, he did admit he was upset at barracking. "I was upset for the youngsters in the team. It was not fair having a got at them," he added.

Wealdstone's Southern Premier League match at Redditch on Tuesday was called off because the pitch was water logged.

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travelling fans. The repercussions rumbled on for a few weeks, with supporters' club secretary Barbara Robson (see Harrow Observer story left) even disowning the rowdy few. Happily a young Jon Taffel responded through the same medium (see story right) and the incident eventually blew over.

So why was this awful defeat memorable? Well, among the four reserves making their Southern League debuts that day was 17-year-old left-back Stuart Pearce. "Oh my God, not another blond midget" I recall veteran fan Mick Fishman crying out in frustration as we failed to get to grips with Dorchester's basic lump-it-high-and-get-on-the-end-of-it tactics... but what a blond midget Stuart turned out to be!

By the end of the season he had revealed enough potential to figure in first team plans. And after just a few weeks of the start of the 1979-80 season (the very first Conference season) he was a regular, out-muscling players a dozen years his senior and coming to the attention of professional scouts.

Sadly the other debutants that day disappeared from trace. Defender John Plaskett, midfielder Richard Mount and keeper Clarke barely made a half dozen appearances between them... Clarke was badly at fault for Dorchester's opening goal, fumbling a deep cross from left-back Burley over his own goalline. The home side rattled in three more in the next 15 minutes before the break - including one from a certain Graham Roberts - with Nigel Johnson replying for the Stones. Slim hopes of a comeback were cancelled out when Roberts made it 5-1 on the hour.

Wealdstone: Clarke, McVeigh, Fursdon, Watson, Horgan, Bouyle, Brannigan, Pearce, Johnson, Mount, Plaskett. Sub: Wilkinson

The true blue supporters

AS ONE of those who travelled to Dorchester as an "unofficial Wealdstone supporter", as Supporters' Club secretary Miss Barbara Robson implied on the sports page (March 1) I feel that I must show my extreme discontent at the very one-sided account of the unfortunate incident that took place.

Myself and many others are deeply resentful at being tagged "so-called supporters," as many of us have seen virtually every Wealdstone game, home and away, for many seasons. Three of my fellow travellers went to Italy last summer to see the 'Stones. We were also around when the award for "Best Southern League Supporters' Shield" was won several years ago.

May I also make it clear that the coach hired for the trip was not hired in the name of the Supporters' Club, but in the name of the Supporters' Football Club, which is an entirely different organisation. Indeed, the reason for the separate coach hire, was so that the supporters' football team could play a friendly match against Dorchester's supporters in the morning before the game. Many friends were made, and a skittles match also took place between the supporters. Is this trying to get the club a bad name, I ask?

I would also like to point out that contrary to the belief of some people, the Supporters' Football Club was not formed to act specifically as a rival to the Supporters' Club. As far as I can see, there appears to be a case of "sour grapes" on Miss Robson's part, due to the drop in revenue made by the official Supporters Club coach. Unfortunately this is a problem which cannot be resolved to satisfy all concerned.

young and inexperienced team. Nevertheless, this does seem to invalidate the statement that the likes of Parratt, Lightfoot, Briscoe and Arnold were released due to reserve strength, proved again by the Enfield result on Saturday.

I won't cover up the fact that I don't always see eye to eye with Miss Robson, and it is unfortunate that the incident caused a split within the Supporters' Club. However, the Supporters' Football Club, who incidentally drew 6-6 at Dorchester, will continue to play, and a similar trip will run to Cheltenham at Easter, where hopefully we will not be looked upon as a bunch of rowdies.

Finally, I would like on behalf of the Supporters' F.C. to thank the Wealdstone FC for the use of their shirts, which is greatly appreciated.

J. B. TAFFEL
(Wealdstone FC Supporters' Club Committee and Wealdstone Supporters' Football Club)

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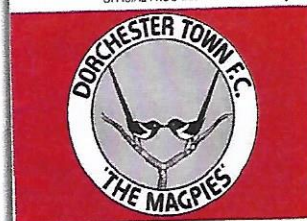
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