



## **Sunderland AFC North America Supporters Association**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**

**May 20-21, 2017 - Ireland's Four Courts, Arlington, VA**

#### **Minutes**

Present: Committee Members – (Chair) Derek “Degsy” Aspinall, (Membership Director) Graeme Pritchard; Members/Guests – Alex J Shahin, Andy Cooke, Marci Cooke, Paul Whillians, Todd Jenkins, Annette Jenkins, Zach Jenkins, Tony Norman, Phil Norman, Ian Smith, Stan Borgais, Gavin Frater, George Sunderland, Mrs. Sunderland, Matthew Rice, Gavin Dodd, Rebecca Shaw, Marielle Jackson

#### **Welcome, Introductions & Apologies**

NASA Chair welcomed members and guests to Washington, DC. Committee members and Regional Reps were introduced with notable absentees mentioned. 20 Sunderland fans attended weekend events.

#### **Opening Comments from the Chair**

Chair thanked all in attendance. Additional personal thanks were given to the 2016/17 committee, the Regional Representatives, Honorary Life President (Ritchie Pitt) and SAFC Ambassador (Stephen Jennings), Branch Liaison Officer – Chris Waters, other SAFC employees Andy Jones and Karen Casey.

Chair shared his highlights which included the growth of the association – reaching a record-setting 310 members, launching of our very own fanzine “Fever Pittch”, establishing more structured approach for Regional Reps when helping to provide gathering opportunities, increasing pool to 21 regional reps, continuing sponsorship deal with the Sunderland Ladies – Captain Steph Bannon, as well as now having our very own bank account which shall allow improvements in how merchandise is supported, receive payments etc.

The Chair also covered some of the challenges faced this year including keeping some of the Reps motivated and on point; the changes in personnel and redundancies at the club, and the changes in deliverables from the club – game day experience, no further forward with banner, fan packs died the death (cut backs).

He also shared that the forthcoming season could be a more difficult for the Association based on relegation, reduction in TV coverage (although the club could be striking a deal with iFollow to support all 46 league games next year – this is yet to be confirmed – Aston Villa has pulled out) but will continue to work with the Reps to ensure the association continues to provide the best possible service for Mackems this side of the pond.

## **Membership Director (MD) Updates**

The MD provided greater insight into the record setting year, breaking down where the 310 members are located, highlighting growth areas etc.

## **Secretary Report**

Chair delivered in absence.

It was reported that the Association finished with 310 members for the 2016/17 season – the best yet! This was a massive increase on last year's numbers where SAFC NASA had 245 people sign up. Association has already reached 100 members for the 2017/18 season and can now contact 520+ Sunderland supporters located this side of the pond.

Chair mentioned that the largest recorded fan-base was Region 4C in Philadelphia with 69. Region 7, Ohio, also saw great growth, finishing with 53 members.

For the second season in a row, the most active region was 7 who hosted no fewer than 21 Black Cat Gatherings over the season.

Chair thanked John Ellington (PA), Jim Gardner (OH), Andy Cooke (MD), and Alex Shahin for going above and beyond in their work to promote the association and our beloved club. Also mentioned Graeme Pritchard who hosted Arizona's first ever gathering this season.

He officially welcomed new Reps Adam in Chicago, Brian in Seattle, Joel in Buffalo, Tom in San Francisco, and Allan in San Diego, expanding opportunities in their respective states. Also noted growth in some areas, stability in others, and a decline in what were popular markets. Stated he will continue to partner with the local Reps to ensure responsibilities are being met and that SAFC NASA is delivering what they set out to.

Group celebrated the announcement that SAFC NAS is officially the largest overseas supporter branch in the World.

Chair presented information on a meet and greet with the players in New York City. Mentioned that although this was last minute, the turnout was great. He thanked the club for helping to make this happen, specifically, Karen Casey who coordinated the event.

Discussed the continued sponsorship of the SAFC ladies team captain, Steph Bannon and the benefits presented to NASA which included her supporting narrative for the fanzine [where she provides info on Sunderland Ladies and the Women's Super League] as well as this being a great deal for our association and is a one that breaks even through the sale of reduced price tickets to those members heading to the SoL for Sunderland 1<sup>st</sup> team games.

This year, SAFC NASA was able to facilitate tickets for home and away matches, supporting 15 different SAFC NASA members over the season. Chair reminded members that all requests should be made through the committee.

Chair thanked Graeme Pritchard who has been a wonderful addition to the committee as Membership Director. Removed a great workload off of the association Chair.

The Chair covered the introduction of Fever Pittch which was to provide information to fans new and old. He also mentioned that there may be other opportunities to use said publication to introduce more benefits to fans through discounts for advertised items or revenue for the association.

A bank account has now been established by NASA and they're continuing to look at ways to improve the merchandize aspect and hope to have a new platform announced before the start of next season.

### **Treasurer Report**

Chair delivered in absence. *Available upon request.*

No increase in membership fees. \$10 individual, \$20 family for the third season.

### **Results of 2016/17 Season Awards**

SAFC 1st Team Young Player of the Year – Jordan Pickford

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SAFC Ladies Young Player of the Year – Abbey Joice

SAFC Ladies Player of the Year – Stephanie Bannon

### ***Association awards....***

*SAFC NASA Supporter of the Year*

2016/17 SAFC NASA Supporter of the Year is Zach Lewis (Region 7)

2016/17 SAFC NASA Regional Rep of the Year is Jim Gardner (Region 7)

### **2017/18 Committee Results**

Membership Director	-	Graeme Pritchard
Chair	-	Derek Aspinall
Interim Secretary	-	Matthew Rice (Region 5)
Interim Treasurer	-	Dave Hyre (Region 7)
Interim Merchandise Director	-	Derek Aspinall
Interim Director of Communications	-	Justin Warner

These appointments obviously mean that an EGM is required so that the aforementioned can go through the official voting process and be sworn in where accepted. We can discuss this further under AOB.

Honorary Life President position does not change. SAFC NASA Ambassador remains Stephen Jennings.

Regional Rep positions are non-committee but we know of a couple of changes. Brian is standing down in Seattle. Jesse Burch in Los Angeles is always standing down and will be replaced by Kevin Turnbull. All other Reps are as you were.

Chair personally thanked Jesse for his service over the years and wished him well.

### **2017/18 AGM**

We discussed member expectations for an AGM. This and the venue of the 5<sup>th</sup> AGM shall be reviewed further and decided upon at the EGM (to be confirmed). NASA members can expect to receive a questionnaire which will further gauge wants/need from these events.

### **Any Other Business (AOB)**

EGM venue was discussed and Chicago was proposed as the host city. This will be reviewed further by the new committee prior to an official announcement.

Through the sale of raffle tickets and Tony Norman signed t-shirts, we were able to raise \$120.65 for COCO International.

### **Talk-In w/Tony Norman**

Superb talk-in with Sunderland goalkeeping legend, Tony Norman. Cites Denis Smith as the best manager he ever played for and John Kay as being best player (commitment etc.).

He was an absolute gent and a pleasure to be around. We sincerely appreciate his time and effort (as well as his son Phil).

### **DC United vs. Chicago Fire**

This was by far the worst game we have seen whilst attending these meetings. The Fire won 1-0. Boring. The only highlight was the train ride back to DC where we sang constantly.

Thanks to everyone that made it!