

EDMONTON ROVERS CLUB STATEMENT / PRESS RELEASE - March 2021

Following the Government's announcement that football at adults Sunday League level can resume from the 29th March 2021, the Barnet Sunday League (in which we play) have arranged for all remaining League fixtures this season to take place during a three-month period from the 4th or the 11th April until the Football Association's allowed season extension of the 30th June. However, the League are allowing clubs to opt out and concede their remaining matches without financial penalty if they are informed before a deadline of 12th March 2021.

We therefore arranged a club Management Committee Meeting via Zoom on Monday 8th March at which this season's re-start and proposed plans for Season 2021-2022 were discussed, and after a two-hour debate we eventually came to a unanimous decision to **opt out** of competing in the Barnet Sunday League for the remainder of this season.

There are many reasons for our decision, but the main one is financial. Although we now have our long-serving midfielder Daniel Cascoe sponsoring the club through his phdm Solutions plumbing & heating firm and his associates in that industry, that will only be for equipment purchases and the cost of midweek training sessions next season. We feel that allowing all players to play free of charge (*as we have effectively been doing for the past year or so due to a refusal by 90% of them to pay any subs*) is not in our best interests as a Sunday League club. In other words, we have decided that we no longer wish to compete with certain other teams in the top two divisions of the League (and in the London area in general) in having a win-at-all-costs mentality by bringing in Semi-Pro players from Saturday football who in our case are attracted by the free professional filming of our matches but are not prepared to pay to play.

We have therefore turned down offers of coaching, management and player integration from other sources of a higher playing standard that would have allowed us to re-start the current season in April with a semi-professional style squad, and we have now decided to go back to how the club began 45 years ago by starting afresh next season in the lowest division that we are allowed to play in, utilising a new squad of 16-19-year-olds that include the sons of both our all-time record appearance holder Stuart Dorward and our current Team Manager Lexton Harrison. The rest of next season's squad will be long-serving over-35's only, namely goalkeeper Simon Jackson, attacking midfielder Leon McKenzie-McKay, and our club sponsor Daniel Cascoe, who will help out subject to work commitments. Stuart, Lexton and Assistant Manager Daniel Daley will also register as players to play in emergencies, as will other over-35's if their sons are playing for us. 'Jacko' and Leon will both continue the coaching and fitness/pre-match warm-up roles that they undertook at the start of the current season.

As for the League's decision to complete all remaining League matches for this season by forcing teams to play matches (including mass Double-Headers, midweek matches and Sunday afternoon kick-offs) on Away teams' pitches where Home pitches are not available, we felt that would cause too many logistical problems for us bearing in mind that our pitch at the Edmonton Sports & Social Club is unavailable in May & June due to the cricket season. This is another major factor in us opting out for the rest of this season irrespective of the mental health benefits that some players may gain from being able to play again after such a long break.

We know that our decision will upset those of our current under-35 players who had informed Lexton Harrison before the meeting that they **were** prepared to play out the rest of this season in April, May & June on a regular basis, but the simple fact is that we just do not have enough players of our own to field a full team for most of our matches because so many players can only play once or twice a month due to other commitments. In addition to that, the non-payment of subs and the lack of communication from a number of currently-registered players is simply not acceptable.

Another major reason for our decision to go with a new younger squad for next season is the sheer number of players we currently have (or have had in recent seasons) who live nowhere near the Borough of Enfield and therefore cannot attend midweek training sessions. All the 16-19 year-olds who will be playing for us next season live locally and will be able to attend training. That will make a huge difference for us in terms of team spirit and being able to progress with a settled and well-organised side, which is something we have not had for the past four seasons. We are very much aware of how well this has worked for other teams in our League and we do not wish to be continually left behind.

As a softener, we will not be insisting that players we are releasing pay us the outstanding money they owe, even though in some cases it is well over £100. Those players will be free to join other teams for next season. They are welcome to return to us in future seasons if we progress up the divisions and they are still living locally, but they will then need to pay what they currently owe first. We cannot keep players under the age of 35 anyway as the League may not allow us to drop to the lower divisions, which we will need to do for the benefit of the new 16-19 year-olds who will be joining us.

The possibility of the club running two teams next season was discussed at length, but in addition to the problems already mentioned regarding not wishing to go down the Semi-Pro route for our First Team and too many of our current players not being committed enough, we do not have access to another pitch at our Home ground, the Edmonton Sports & Social Club, while there are so many new adult mens' Sunday League teams being formed at the moment in the Enfield area that it will be very difficult to find a suitable spare pitch for a Reserve Team to play on anyway.

Those who attended the 8th March online Management Committee meeting and came to the above decisions were myself Laurence Hughes (Chairman & Secretary), Alan Barnard (Treasurer), Lexton Harrison (Team Manager), Daniel Daley (Assistant Manager) and Stuart Dorward (All-Time Club Record Appearance holder). Stuart's membership of the Management Committee next season will probably be in an Assistant Secretary role, and that will be confirmed at our next Annual General Meeting, which we hope to hold in June, subject to Covid regulations. Simon Jackson (Player Coach/Caretaker Manager for parts of this season) was also invited to the Management Committee meeting but was unable to attend due to work commitments. However, 'Jacko' has also stated his support for the decisions made. Previous Manager Tony McKay and Goalkeeping Coach/Club Linesman Bob Cleary were also consulted before the meeting and both fully supported the proposals.