

**DUGOUT  
NEWS**

ISSUE  
**007**



SUSSEX FOOTBALL

# LICENCE TO THRILL

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DUGOUT NEWS The stories between the scores.

SNLF SHOW Sussex non-league every Wednesday.

IBB10 SHOW Isthmian football every Sunday.

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32 pages · The stories between the scores · Sussex non-league football

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# WHEN FOOTBALL BECOMES MORE T

MM

THE RESULT  
Editor · Dugout Diaries

Issue 007 opens with celebration, concern and one question Sussex football cannot simply scroll past.

## MIKE MCCAFFREY

DUGOUT DIARIES · EDITOR

Another week of non-league football, and another reminder that you never really know what is coming next.

We have plenty to celebrate. Worthing travelled all the way to Hartlepool and came home with a magnificent 3-1 win. Hastings continue to set the pace. Bognor remain unbeaten. Bexhill responded to a difficult couple of weeks by sticking five past Crawley Down Gatwick.

But there is one story this week that I do not think we can simply scroll past.

Midhurst & Easebourne have now failed to raise a side for their last two first-team fixtures.

Their scheduled game at Lingfield in midweek was postponed, and Saturday's trip to Hassocks also did not take place. Whatever eventually emerges from Midhurst, two consecutive games being lost from the calendar because a club cannot field a team should concern anyone who cares about Sussex non-league football.

There will be rumours. There will be screenshots. There will be people claiming to know exactly who promised what, who was being paid what and who is responsible. Dugout News is not going to turn rumour into fact.

What we can do is ask questions. How does a football club go from assembling an ambitious squad to being unable to put eleven players onto a pitch? Who protects a club when circumstances change? And at what point should leagues, governing bodies and the wider game become concerned about whether something is sustainable?

Those questions could not be more relevant this week. Russ Cochran looks at the Independent Football Regulator and asks why greater scrutiny stops where it does. Paul Wise asks an even simpler question: Who protects the club?

Players leave. Managers leave. Chairmen leave. Sponsors leave. The badge is supposed to remain. That is why what happens next at Midhurst matters.

But this issue is not all doom and gloom. Far from it. There is some bloody brilliant football happening across Sussex right now. So grab a coffee - or preferably a DUG OUT 90 - and enjoy Issue 007.

# REBELS RAID THE NORTH

Hartlepool United 1-3 Worthing · Saturday 19 September 2026

## FROM SUSSEX TO HARTLEPOOL - THREE POINTS COMING HOME.

Worthing produced one of the headline results of the Sussex weekend, winning 3-1 away at Hartlepool United.

Cory Adjeteý-Brew opened the scoring on 39 minutes with his first senior goal. Ricky Aguiar doubled the advantage on 59 minutes before Jose Marquez struck in stoppage time at 90+3.

The victory was Worthing's second consecutive National League win and moved the Rebels to 11th after nine matches, on 14 points with a +2 goal difference.

Long trip. Former EFL opposition. Three goals. Three points. Sussex has a Step One club and Worthing are beginning to look increasingly comfortable making noise at this level.

1-3

HARTLEPOOL

WORTHING

ADJETEY-BREW 39

AGUIAR 59

MARQUEZ 90+3

# NATIONAL LEAGUE

Results and table · correct to Saturday evening, 19 September 2026

RESULTS THIS WEEK

|              |     |               |
|--------------|-----|---------------|
| Hornchurch   | 1-0 | Scunthorpe    |
| AFC Fylde    | 1-2 | Altrincham    |
| Barrow       | 1-0 | Aldershot     |
| Boreham Wood | 4-1 | Harrogate     |
| Eastleigh    | 1-0 | Carlisle      |
| FC Halifax   | 1-1 | Sutton        |
| Forest Green | 1-3 | Boston United |
| Gateshead    | 1-6 | Southend      |
| Hartlepool   | 1-3 | Worthing      |
| Woking       | 0-0 | Kidderminster |
| Tamworth     | 2-1 | Wealdstone    |

TABLE

| POS | CLUB            | P | PTS |
|-----|-----------------|---|-----|
| 1   | Boreham Wood    | 9 | 23  |
| 2   | Southend        | 9 | 20  |
| 3   | Kidderminster   | 9 | 18  |
| 4   | AFC Fylde       | 9 | 17  |
| 5   | Harrogate Town  | 9 | 16  |
| 6   | Sutton United   | 9 | 16  |
| 7   | Yeovil          | 9 | 15  |
| 8   | Aldershot       | 9 | 15  |
| 9   | AFC Hornchurch  | 9 | 15  |
| 10  | Altrincham      | 9 | 15  |
| 11  | Worthing        | 9 | 14  |
| 12  | Eastleigh       | 9 | 14  |
| 13  | FC Halifax Town | 9 | 13  |
| 14  | Forest Green    | 9 | 13  |
| 15  | Boston United   | 9 | 11  |
| 16  | Carlisle        | 9 | 10  |
| 17  | Barrow          | 9 | 9   |
| 18  | Woking          | 9 | 9   |
| 19  | Hartlepool      | 9 | 9   |
| 20  | Wealdstone      | 9 | 8   |
| 21  | Tamworth        | 9 | 8   |
| 22  | Scunthorpe      | 9 | 7   |
| 23  | Solihull Moors  | 9 | 4   |
| 24  | Gateshead       | 9 | 4   |

# SNLF

## THE SUSSEX NON-LEAGUE SHOW.

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Results. Stories. Opinions. The conversations that matter.

# CUP WEEKEND

Horsham had no league fixture - and Sussex supplied plenty of knockout drama.

## HORSHAM: P8 · 10 PTS · 15TH

Horsham's league record remains P8, W2, D4, L2, GF9, GA10, GD -1, 10 points. Saturday was about the FA Cup instead.

FA CUP - SUSSEX HEADLINES

|                    |     |                      |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|
| Walton & Hersham   | 0-3 | Horsham              |
| Hampton & Richmond | 3-3 | Crowborough Athletic |
| Chichester City    | 2-3 | SE Dons              |
| Hanwell Town       | 2-1 | Burgess Hill Town    |
| Pagham             | 0-6 | Hanworth Villa       |

### HORSHAM

0-3

HESTER-COOK 82

YILA 85

AJAKAIYE 90+5

THROUGH TO THE NEXT ROUND

# SNLF LIVE

## BAKKUS BAR • LANCING

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Audience Q&A.; Sussex non-league. Proper conversation.

Scan for tickets.



# ISTHMIAN PREMIER

FA Cup weekend reduced the league programme.

## SATURDAY RESULTS

|                  |     |                     |
|------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Cheshunt         | 3-1 | Lewes               |
| Maldon & Tiptree | 2-3 | Carshalton Athletic |
| Dartford         | P-P | Whitehawk           |
| Stanway Rovers   | P-P | Cray Wanderers      |

## COMING UP

TUE 22 SEP

Brentwood Town

v Maldon & Tiptree

Three Bridges v Leatherhead

# ISTHMIAN SOUTH EAST

Hastings lead. Eastbourne Town hit seven.

RESULTS

|                 |     |                |
|-----------------|-----|----------------|
| AFC Croydon     | 3-1 | Ashford United |
| Deal Town       | 6-1 | Punjab United  |
| Eastbourne Town | 7-0 | Horley Town    |
| Faversham Town  | 3-1 | Herne Bay      |
| Hastings United | 3-0 | Merstham       |
| Sevenoaks Town  | 2-1 | Margate        |
| Sittingbourne   | 0-1 | Peacehaven     |
| South Park      | 5-1 | Steyning Town  |
| Whitstable Town | 0-1 | Cray Valley PM |

TABLE

| POS | CLUB                   | P | PTS |
|-----|------------------------|---|-----|
| 1   | Hastings United        | 6 | 15  |
| 2   | Broadbridge Heath      | 6 | 13  |
| 3   | Faversham Town         | 5 | 13  |
| 4   | Sittingbourne          | 6 | 13  |
| 5   | AFC Croydon Athletic   | 6 | 12  |
| 6   | South Park             | 6 | 11  |
| 7   | Erith Town             | 4 | 10  |
| 8   | Margate                | 6 | 10  |
| 9   | Herne Bay              | 4 | 9   |
| 10  | Peacehaven & Telscombe | 6 | 8   |
| 11  | Eastbourne Town        | 6 | 7   |
| 12  | Deal Town              | 6 | 7   |
| 13  | Cray Valley PM         | 7 | 7   |
| 14  | Ashford United         | 5 | 6   |
| 15  | Sevenoaks Town         | 6 | 6   |
| 16  | Horley Town            | 6 | 6   |
| 17  | Merstham               | 6 | 5   |
| 18  | Sheppey United         | 4 | 3   |
| 19  | Crowborough Athletic   | 5 | 3   |
| 20  | Whitstable Town        | 5 | 3   |
| 21  | Steyning Town          | 5 | 3   |
| 22  | Punjab United          | 6 | 2   |

# ISTHMIAN SOUTH CENTRAL

Unbeaten Bognor four clear after six games.

RESULTS

|                 |     |                  |
|-----------------|-----|------------------|
| Bognor Regis    | 3-1 | Harrow Borough   |
| Littlehampton   | 1-8 | Hartley Wintney  |
| Ascot United    | 0-4 | Raynes Park Vale |
| Bedfont Sports  | 0-2 | Moneyfields      |
| Westfield       | 3-0 | Cobham           |
| Winchester City | 0-0 | Jersey Bulls     |

TABLE

| POS | CLUB                 | P | PTS |
|-----|----------------------|---|-----|
| 1   | Bognor Regis Town    | 6 | 16  |
| 2   | Winchester City      | 6 | 12  |
| 3   | AFC Portchester      | 6 | 12  |
| 4   | Hendon               | 5 | 11  |
| 5   | Westfield            | 5 | 10  |
| 6   | Southall             | 5 | 9   |
| 7   | Cobham               | 6 | 9   |
| 8   | Raynes Park Vale     | 6 | 9   |
| 9   | Kingstonian          | 4 | 8   |
| 10  | Jersey Bulls         | 4 | 8   |
| 11  | Bedfont Sports       | 6 | 8   |
| 12  | Hartley Wintney      | 4 | 7   |
| 13  | Ashford Town (Middx) | 5 | 7   |
| 14  | Windsor & Eton       | 4 | 6   |
| 15  | Moneyfields          | 6 | 5   |
| 16  | Harrow Borough       | 7 | 5   |
| 17  | Hayes & Yeading      | 4 | 4   |
| 18  | Ascot United         | 6 | 4   |
| 19  | Egham Town           | 4 | 3   |
| 20  | Littlehampton Town   | 7 | 3   |
| 21  | AFC Stoneham         | 3 | 0   |
| 22  | Binfield             | 5 | 0   |

# DUG OUT 90

## HYDRATION FOR THE FULL 90.

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# SCFL PREMIER

Saturday 19 September · results locked at publication cut-off

|                      |     |                       |
|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| AFC Varndeanians     | 1-0 | Guernsey              |
| Little Common        | 0-0 | Horsham YMCA          |
| Billingshurst        | 0-3 | Wick                  |
| Crawley Down Gatwick | 1-5 | Bexhill United        |
| Eastbourne United    | 0-2 | East Grinstead Town   |
| Hassocks             | P-P | Midhurst & Easebourne |
| Haywards Heath       | P-P | Pagham                |
| Lancing              | 0-3 | Roffey                |
| Lingfield            | 4-1 | Seaford Town          |
| Newhaven             | 2-1 | Forest Row            |

MIDHURST

TWO GAMES.

NO SIDE.

Lingfield: postponed

Hassocks: postponed

NO RUMOURS. JUST THE FACT.

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# REXHILL ON FIRE AS THEY HIT 3 GOALS AT CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK

GM

30/09/2026



PHOTO: SUPPLIED TO DUGOUT NEWS • CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK v BEXHILL UNITED

# BEXHILL 5-STAR RESPONSE

Geoff Marting • Bornatotter



After a disappointing couple of weeks it was important that Bexhill took steps to turn things around and they delivered in bucket loads at Crawley Down Gatwick on Saturday afternoon.

A fair old wind was blowing across the Haven from the airport end and Bexhill had it at their backs in the first half. On just four minutes a brilliant free kick from Ryan Moir was only kept out by the fingertips of Freddie Leather in the Anvils goal.

Pirates boss Jay Skinner-Swain again found his defensive resources stretched with Callum Brand suspended and Harry Marchant the latest on the injury list. It meant moving Kasey Smith into the middle alongside Dale Penn with Richie Welch on the left and Ash Latuske on the right.

Callum Kilkenny reacted fastest to a loose ball in the Bexhill box on the quarter hour mark and whacked it home to break the deadlock. The leveller came at 28 minutes. A ball from Moir split the defensive line, Shonk picked it up and drove forwards, drawing out the keeper and squaring the ball to Charlie Scarles who swept it into the empty net.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED TO DUGOUT NEWS • CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK v BEXHILL UNITED

# BEXHILL 5-STAR RESPONSE

Geoff Marting • Bornatotter



Just before the break a beautiful pass from Kyle Holden released Shonk and he delivered a finish that simply oozed class. Bexhill went in 2-1 up at the break.

Jack Mison, on at the back for the injured Richie Welch, picked up a half-clearance just inside the box and whacked it home on the half-volley. Bexhill were not done. Shonk won the ball deep and set up Scarles for his second with a precision pass.

The second half was lit up by a flurry of Bexhill goals. Ryan Moir drove a low, hard shot in that took a big deflection. Moir deserved a goal for his high-energy performance but the final attribution may yet be an own goal.

So it finished 5-1. Regardless of the score, the result and performance put Bexhill's season back on track after a tricky period. On Tuesday they are back at the Polegrove against Forest Row for a 7.30pm kick-off in the RUR Cup.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED TO DUGOUT NEWS • CRAWLEY DOWN GATWICK v BEXHILL UNITED

# SCFL DIVISION ONE

All ten Saturday results accounted for.

|                  |     |                     |
|------------------|-----|---------------------|
| AFC Walcountians | 5-0 | Mile Oak            |
| Dial Square      | 1-0 | Dorking Wanderers B |
| East Preston     | 0-1 | Jarvis Brook        |
| Guildford City   | 2-0 | Shoreham            |
| Hailsham Town    | 5-2 | Arundel             |
| Infinity         | 2-1 | Saltdean United     |
| Oakwood          | 1-1 | Loxwood             |
| Reigate Priory   | 1-0 | Worthing United     |
| Ringmer AFC      | 0-1 | Selsey              |
| Westfield        | 4-0 | Clanfield           |

## NEXT SATURDAY

- Arundel v Oakwood
- Clanfield v Dorking B
- Dial Square v Ringmer
- East Preston v Guildford
- Infinity v Hailsham
- Loxwood v Saltdean
- Mile Oak v Reigate
- Selsey v Westfield
- Shoreham v Jarvis Brook
- Worthing Utd v Walcountians

# IBB10 THE SHOW.

SUNDAYS • 8PM

YouTube • X • Kick

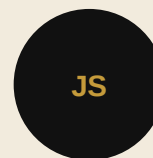
Billy Wood • Dugout Diaries • Lee Penn • Monty

Isthmian football, guests, arguments, laughs and the stories behind the weekend.

“IS HE ON MUTE AGAIN?”

# WESTFIELD HIT FOUR

Westfield 4-0 Clanfield • By Jack Stapley



JACK STAPLEY

Westfield

WESTFIELD

4-0

CLANFIELD

Westies got back to winning ways in spectacular fashion on Saturday with a convincing 4-0 victory over Clanfield, a side they had never previously faced.

The opening 20 minutes were a rather dull stalemate before Michael Rwabigwi, Tewkesbury and Clanfield began trading chances.

A mishit Clanfield goal kick was chested into the path of Tewkesbury by Willett, who was brought down as he raced through. Having missed from the spot last week, Tewkesbury stepped up again and confidently dispatched the penalty into the bottom-left corner.

Things took another turn just before the break when Clanfield were reduced to ten men. Hughes was shown red after being adjudged to have gone over the ball and caught Ward. It was a decision that, had the situation been reversed, Westies would certainly have felt aggrieved about themselves.

Pethig, making his first start since rejoining from Little Common, tapped home the second and later headed in his second from a yard out.

With five minutes remaining, Willett got the final touch to a Saville effort that was already heading goalwards. Four goals, three points and a clean sheet.

# THE WEEK AHEAD

Cup nights, league Saturdays and another busy Sussex programme.

## TUESDAY - RUR CUP

Bexhill United v Forest Row • 19:30

Westfield at East Preston

Seaford Town v Arundel

Billingshurst v Haywards Heath

Eastbourne United v Hassocks

Midhurst & Easebourne v Pagham

Worthing United v Lancing

**WESTFIELD**

**BACK TO  
WINNING WAYS**

Next: East Preston away

then Selsey away

Worthing United at home

# SCFL DIVISION TWO

Verified results only - no guesses at publication cut-off.

|                      |     |                       |
|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| Hurstpierpoint       | 3-0 | Ferring               |
| Bosham               | NR  | Southwater            |
| Copthorne            | NR  | Worthing Town         |
| Rudgwick             | 1-3 | ASC Brighton Rangers  |
| Rustington           | 2-0 | Chichester City B     |
| Upper Beeding        | 0-5 | Storrington Community |
| Brighton Electricity | P-P | Alfold                |

NR

NOT REPORTED

Bosham v Southwater

Copthorne v Worthing Town

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# COMPLY, ADHERE, OBEY, CONFORM

RC

RUSS COCHRAN

Off the Pitch

But who regulates the regulators? And why does the new IFR stop where it does?

Russ Cochran's long-read asks whether the arrival of the Independent Football Regulator should prompt a wider conversation about governance below its statutory boundary.

His argument is not that volunteer-run clubs should be buried in bureaucracy. It is that financial planning, succession, ownership transparency, safeguarding, facilities and long-term sustainability deserve attention before a club reaches crisis point.

The feature contrasts the IFR's developing licensing regime at the top of the men's pyramid with the very different reality farther down, where clubs are often run by small groups of volunteers.

Cochran argues for proportionate safeguards and earlier support rather than intervention only after debts, facility problems or governance failures have become severe.

The article also stresses the danger of over-regulation: the people running small clubs are frequently supporters and volunteers, not professional administrators. The challenge, it argues, is to strengthen resilience without destroying the local character that makes non-league football work.

**"WHAT HAPPENS  
NEXT SEASON?"**

COMMENT: Views are the author's own. Factual claims in any expanded online version should be checked against primary regulatory sources.

# WHO PROTECTS THE CLUB?

People are temporary. The football club is not.



PAUL WISE

Talking Point

A couple of weeks ago I wrote an article asking what actually makes someone a football person.

I talked about the people putting the nets up, making the teas, collecting the corner flags, worrying about whether the electricity bill has been paid and standing behind the same barrier in the pissing rain year after year.

Maybe I should have asked another question.

## Who protects those people?

Because what's happened at Midhurst & Easebourne recently has got me thinking.

And before I go any further, I'm going to make something very clear.

I don't know exactly what has happened behind closed doors at Midhurst.

I don't know what individual players were promised. I don't know what financial agreements were made or who said what to whom.

There are plenty of rumours flying around, as there always are in non-league football, but I'm not interested in presenting rumours as facts.

What I can talk about is what everyone has watched happen from the outside.

Not that long ago Midhurst were struggling towards the bottom end of the Southern Combination Premier Division.

Connor Hoare came in during February with the immediate job of keeping them at Step 5 before what was described at the time as a big rebuilding project.

And then everything seemed to change.

The ambition changed.

The recruitment changed.

The whole image of the club changed.

Fast forward a few months and former Football League striker Brett Pitman is playing for Midhurst & Easebourne alongside a number of other experienced players.

That's some transformation at Step 5.

And this is where I have a problem.

## WHO CHECKS THE PEOPLE MAKING THE PROMISES?

We always hear about the "fit and proper person" test in professional football.

The actual FA version is called the Owners' and Directors' Test and it applies through the professional game and down into the National League System, including the Isthmian, Northern Premier and Southern Leagues.

But apparently not Step 5.

## Why?

### Seriously, what magically changes between Step 4 and Step 5?

Why does somebody involved in running a club one step higher need scrutiny that apparently isn't considered necessary one division below?

I'm not suggesting anybody currently or previously involved at Midhurst would fail one.

I've got absolutely no evidence to say that.

That isn't my point.

### My point is why isn't the protection there in the first place?

And maybe a fit and proper person test isn't even enough.

Maybe at this level there needs to be some sort of financial sustainability check when somebody comes into a club and suddenly wants to massively increase its ambition and spending.

# WHO PROTECTS THE CLUB?

People are temporary. The football club is not.

Because it's very easy to promise the moon.  
It's considerably harder to pay for the rocket.

## THE CHANGES WEREN'T JUST ON THE PITCH

There have also been documented changes around the company associated with the sporting operation at Midhurst.

Public company records show a compulsory strike-off notice in July this year. Accounts were subsequently filed and that strike-off action was discontinued in August.

There were also changes involving directors around the same period.

Now again, before somebody screenshots that paragraph and starts shouting about it on X, I'm not suggesting that proves anything untoward.

It doesn't.

A compulsory strike-off notice can happen for administrative reasons and I have absolutely no evidence that those company filings explain what has happened with the first team.

But they are facts.

And they happened during a period where an awful lot seemed to be changing around the football club.

Which brings me back to the same question.

When a football club changes direction that quickly, who is checking that whatever is being built can actually last?

## A PROMISE WORKS BOTH WAYS

Then we get to the players.

I've seen some of the comments on social media from people who have left the club.

I'm deliberately not naming anybody because this isn't personal.

And I'll be fair to them.

If you agree to play football for a certain amount of money and somebody doesn't pay you what was agreed, I don't expect you to keep turning up for nothing.

If a promise was made, it should be honoured.

Simple.

But here's the bit where I'll probably upset a few people.

A promise works both ways.

If you're going to take to social media and slaughter a football club because it hasn't delivered what you believe you were promised, perhaps you have to ask yourself whether you delivered what was expected of you.

This wasn't a squad put together just to survive.

Look at the calibre of player recruited.

Look at the experience.

Look at the expectations that naturally came with it.

Yet for all that, Midhurst weren't exactly ripping the league apart.

That doesn't mean somebody should accept not being paid.

Of course it doesn't.

But if we're going to have a public conversation about people failing to deliver their side of a bargain, I think it's fair that conversation works both ways.

And what I particularly don't like is seeing the club itself getting slaughtered.

# WHO PROTECTS THE CLUB?

People are temporary. The football club is not.

Because Midhurst & Easebourne Football Club didn't personally make anyone a promise.

The badge didn't.

The supporters didn't.

The bloke putting the nets up didn't.

Yet they'll still be there after everyone else has gone.

## WE'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE

You don't have to travel very far around Sussex to see what can happen when things go wrong at football clubs.

Look at Southwick.

Founded in 1882.

A founder member of the Sussex County League.

Six-time County League champions.

That's not some football club somebody invented five minutes ago because they fancied having a go at being a chairman.

That's generations of Sussex football history.

Yet they lost their historic Old Barn Way home and people associated with Southwick have spent years trying to preserve and rebuild something that existed long before any of the people involved in its problems came along.

Then you've got Montpelier Villa.

Almost the complete opposite story.

A club that climbed quickly into senior football before, in 2025, withdrawing its first team, U23s and U18s from the Southern Combination after the club itself identified financial irregularities within its men's section and a significant financial shortfall.

They ended up dropping back into the Mid-Sussex League because continuing at that level could have threatened the wider club.

Southwick and Montpelier Villa couldn't be more different.

One absolutely dripping in history.

The other trying to establish itself and climb the pyramid quickly.

Different clubs.

Different circumstances.

Same lesson.

Football clubs aren't indestructible.

And before anyone gets carried away, I'm absolutely NOT saying Midhurst are about to disappear.

I don't know that and there is no evidence for me to suggest it.

What's happened there has simply made me ask a bigger question.

## PEOPLE ARE TEMPORARY

Managers come and go.

I know that better than most.

Players come and go.

# WHO PROTECTS THE CLUB?

People are temporary. The football club is not.

Chairmen come and go.

Directors come and go.

People with money come and go.

However important you think you are while you're there, eventually somebody else will be sitting in your seat.

A player can be at another club next Saturday.

A manager can get another job.

Somebody putting money into a club can decide tomorrow that they've had enough.

The football club can't.

And neither can the people who've supported it for 20, 30, 40 or 50 years.

That's why I think the FA seriously needs to look at whether the protections higher up the pyramid should exist further down.

I'm not against money in non-league football.

Far from it.

If somebody wants to put their own money into a Step 5 club, improve the ground, sign better players and have a proper crack at going up, brilliant.

That's ambition.

And football needs ambitious people.

But there's a massive difference between ambition and fantasy.

If someone is going to come into a community football club and dramatically change what that club is spending and promising, surely somebody somewhere should be asking whether it's sustainable.

## Where's the money coming from?

## Can these commitments actually be met?

And most importantly...

## What happens to the football club if that person suddenly walks away?

Because a football club is worth a lot more than whatever number somebody has written on a spreadsheet.

Which takes me back to my article from a couple of weeks ago.

## What is a football person?

It's the volunteer.

The supporter.

The bloke putting the nets up.

The person making the coffees.

The treasurer worrying about the electricity bill.

The person still standing behind that barrier in the pissing rain long after the exciting new signing, ambitious manager and bloke with the big chequebook have moved on to something else.

Those people don't want to be promised the moon.

They just want their football club to still be there next Saturday.

## So who protects them?

# SIX HURTS. THE JOURNEY SHOULD

MM

MIKE MCCAFFREY

Dugout Diaries

Pagham 0-6 Hanworth Villa · Second Qualifying Round

PAGHAM

0-6

HANWORTH VILLA

Football can be a right bastard sometimes.

You spend weeks building towards something. You win games you're not supposed to win. You start looking at the FA Cup draw with one eye closed. People around the club start whispering, 'Imagine if...'

And then somebody turns up and sticks six past you.

Pagham 0. Hanworth Villa 6.

There isn't really a clever way of dressing that scoreline up. Pagham were beaten. Properly beaten. Hanworth Villa were ruthless, clinical and, on the day, simply too good.

But if the only thing you take from Pagham's FA Cup run is the number six, then you've completely missed the bloody point.

Because Saturday wasn't really about how the journey ended. It was about the fact Pagham got there in the first place.

Hanworth arrived at the Covers playing two levels above Pagham. Unfortunately, it did not take long for the gap to show. Billy Nutbeam scored after two minutes. Nikolay Zlatev struck twice and Michael Harding made it four before half-time. Haydon Vaughan added two after the break.

That's the FA Cup for you. For every afternoon when David finds the stone and twats Goliath between the eyes, there's another when Goliath takes the slingshot off him and beats him around the head with it. Saturday was the latter.

# LOOK HOW FAR YOU CAME

Pagham 0-6 Hanworth Villa · Second Qualifying Round

And yes, it'll hurt. Players don't walk off after losing six and start congratulating themselves on what a lovely cup run they've had. That's bollocks. They're competitors.

By Sunday morning, somebody needs to remind them what they've actually achieved.

Pagham started this FA Cup journey as a Step 5 football club. No television cameras. No millionaire substitutes. No enormous squad of analysts. Just a Sussex non-league football club having a crack at the greatest domestic cup competition in the world.

And they kept surviving until they found themselves in the Second Qualifying Round, equalling the best FA Cup run in the club's history.

That matters. It matters to the volunteers, the supporters, the people behind the bar, the people selling programmes, the committee, the sponsors and the people putting the ground together on a Saturday morning.

Nobody can delete the rounds that came before it. Nobody can take away the wins, the excitement or the fact this group equalled Pagham's best-ever FA Cup run.

So there'll be no piss-taking from Dugout Diaries about the six. Not this time.

Pagham 0-6 Hanworth Villa. That's the result. But it isn't the story.

Hold your heads up, Lions. You did Pagham proud. You did the SCFL proud. And you gave Sussex another little FA Cup journey to remember.

## THE RESULT IS NOT THE STORY.

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