Chairman's Pre-season message to all OWFC Members 2021/2022

Last season in review

Covid19 restrictions continued in force but we nevertheless completed ***full league programmes for all 8 Saturday teams and both Sunday vets teams***. Indeed, it was one of our most successful ever seasons in the league with 7 out of 8 Saturday teams finishing in the top 4 of their divisions – and with the 1st team achieving the club's best ever finish, being 2nd in the Premier!! They were pipped to the title by just 1 point and we can all be hugely proud of this achievement. The good news is that there is something still better to shoot for this season! The 2nd XI played and came up second in their delayed final of the LOB Intermediate Cup. A great effort by Jack and his team.

We once again fielded two Veterans teams on Sunday mornings; the first team did well in their division but the reserves struggled somewhat.

Our ***disciplinary performance*** was rather disappointing with five reds compared with two the previous year, and forty-one yellows compared with twenty-five. There was also an unwelcome Misconduct Charge for a failure to control our players in one fixture. The club has always prided itself on showing respect for the officials and the opposition so this situation must improve this season. It is up to all of us to show the right attitude – hard but fair – and I know the club committee will come down firmly on stupid offences this season.

We also suffered a slight dip in our Spirit of Football marks ; the key assessment, on Spirit of Football itself, averaged 8.07 compared with an all-time high of 8.46 out of 10 the previous year. Our challenge of course, is to achieve another improvement in this rating.

The annual 6-a-side took place once again this summer and was a great success, largely thanks to the efforts of Matt Lane

The WOPAs were largely thwarted by CV19 this year from their usual place on the touchline and in the bar but we look forward to seeing them at Loop Road this season.

Together with our associated club, Meadow Sports FC, we funded through MSOW a third set of moveable goalposts and also a ***complete refurbishment of the clubhouse interior***. Thanks are due to Andrew Douthwaite who obtained substantial grants from Woking Borough Council to support our joint efforts in dealing with life under Covid19 conditions. Spencer Davern has taken over the chairmanship of MSOW for the next two years.

Looking Ahead

OWFC is determined to build on the successes of recent years. Our higher Saturday teams have consolidated their positions and the lower teams are now much more competitive. We had good numbers at all levels last season, with healthy competition for places. This season's pre-season friendlies have also been well attended and it is particularly good to see a number of youngsters joining us, including from Meadow.

Our skippers for the coming season are Chris North, Jack Farrelly, Toby Godman and Dan Donovan continuing to lead the 1s to the 4s. Martin Meighan steps up to lead the 5s as Chris MacLaughlin has stepped down. Tom Butler moves up from the 7s to the 6s and Steve Pearse steps in to lead the 7s. Andrew Douthwaite continues to lead the 8s. On Sundays Spence leads the first team and James Coote will lead the reserves following in Mike Edis's footsteps. Thanks to all the skippers last season and good luck to the above gents for the new season.

Our playing strength looks good for ten teams but, as always, we welcome with open arms new players.

Covid19

The biggest challenge by far has been, of course, adapting to training and playing under the conditions created by the need to avoid the spread of Covid19. ***Things are now returning to pre-pandemic conditions*** and we expect to have full use of the clubhouse before and after matches. We will be staggering home kick-off times – to spread out the use of the clubhouse facilities and for the first few months at least we will not be serving food to the opposition teams. Masks are fine but not obligatory, as is social distancing, and we must all "self-assess" before coming to a game to ensure we don't have symptoms of CV19.

The clubhouse

The clubhouse has been redecorated and now looks very smart once again. We hope to arrange some social events there, as well as ***the club dinner on November 6th*** at the Hilton in Woking. Please respect the fact that on some social events there will be minors present – and also it goes without saying that we cannot accept excessive bad language, loutish behaviour or substance abuse of any kind.

And Finally

The AGM earlier this year re-elected the club committee except for Matt Lane, who stood down as Tournament secretary – we need a replacement for Matt – volunteers welcome!! Ray Kearney stood down as a trustee of MSOW to make way for Spence as our new chair. June Eke was elected as an Honorary Life Member of OWFC. The AGM voted to keep match fees unchanged (yet again).

***We are stronger than ever before and we continue to move forward*.** Old Wokes is a fantastic club with a great future. Enjoy your football guys!!!

PS – through a sense of unfinished business, and because I'm a glutton for punishment, I am staying on as chair after all.

Come On You Wokes!!!!!!!!

John Stent