



EMIRATES STADIUM ATMOSPHERE

Over 17,000 Arsenal fans have their say on Emirates atmosphere

The matchday atmosphere at Emirates Stadium is a topic which never seems to go away, with many fans crying out for more volume in support of our team. Efforts to improve the atmosphere have been somewhat sporadic, and more than seven years since moving from Highbury we still have a ground that only comes to life every now and then.

At the Black Scarf Movement, our discussions with Arsenal have seen us raise numerous points and put forward suggestions which we feel would benefit the matchgoing Arsenal fan. Some of these suggestions would, we believe, garner momentum in making the Emirates a louder and more enjoyable place to cheer on The Arsenal.

We recently asked our members who are keen on creating some noise in the ground to buy tickets in designated blocks for our Capital One Cup match with Chelsea. However the evening was met with some bizarre stewarding which meant the desired result could not be achieved. [Click here](#) if you want to read more about the events of that night.

What can be done to make the atmosphere better?

That's the question we're always asked by our members and followers. Arsene Wenger and the players are often quoted on the issue, calling for fans to get behind the team and make more noise. The desire is there among the fans, but the club has to meet them halfway.

While we've developed ideas through talks with our members and have some ideas which we feel would make for a better atmosphere, the issues at the Chelsea match and the constant discussion among fans about what can be done, led us to creating a short survey for all Arsenal fans to take part in.

We kept the survey deliberately short – simply focusing on a few key areas – in an attempt to get maximum engagement from supporters. We wanted as many fans as possible to take part, as this helps give a much stronger reflection of feelings among our matchgoing supporters.

Survey results

The survey ran for two weeks, between 31 October 2013 and 14 November 2013, and during that time a total of 17,377 supporters took part. This is a tremendous response and one which demonstrates the passion among Arsenal fans who are interested in having a better, more positive atmosphere at our home matches.

If you took part in the survey, thank you very much for taking the time to have your say.

Overleaf are the results of the survey. We've added comment and suggestions as appropriate to demonstrate how we feel positive results can be achieved.

EMIRATES STADIUM ATMOSPHERE SURVEY 2013-14

1. **What is your view on the general matchday atmosphere at Emirates Stadium, in terms of volume and support for the team?**

Good	5.9%
Average	41.5%
Poor	52.6%

Comment

While it's been generally commented that our atmosphere at home games could be better, it's somewhat surprising that only 5.9% of fans consider it to be 'Good'. Over half of the survey respondents feel that the Emirates atmosphere is 'Poor' which gives a clear indication that action is required.

2. **At Emirates there is already a 'singing' section in blocks 5 and 6 (the 'North Bank' end of the stadium). Do you think this is enough or do you feel the atmosphere would benefit from having another singing section?**

One singing section is enough	4.1%
The atmosphere would benefit from introducing another singing section	95.9%

Comment

When moving to Emirates Stadium, supporters' group REDaction negotiated with the club to secure a section of the ground where more vocal fans could gather, in an attempt to get the atmosphere going inside the ground. Arsenal saw fit to put this area as far away from the away fans as possible, tucked in the opposite corner in blocks 5 and 6. Since then REDaction have generated various atmosphere-boosting initiatives, some of which have worked well while many have been vetoed by the club.

The responses to this question make it abundantly clear that the majority of fans would like another 'singing' section in the stadium, in the belief that it would help improve the atmosphere. We've seen many discussions among matchgoing fans on social media, talking of how it used to work at Highbury with vocal support back and forth between the Clock End and North Bank.

With only one area of Emirates Stadium dedicated to generating noise, this doesn't help certainly when you bear in mind that our stadium covers a much bigger area when compared to Highbury.

3. **Presently there are no season tickets in the lower tier of the 'Clock End' of the ground. Would you back a campaign to have season tickets available here, where a new singing section could be created?**

Yes	87.9%
No	12.1%

Comment

With high demand for a new 'singing' section within the ground and many talks about the old Clock End / North Bank support at Highbury, the logical place for this would be at the southern end of Emirates Stadium.

At present there are no season ticket holders behind the goal in what the club have now called the 'Clock End'. The reason there are no season ticket holders here is because from time to time, we may play a cup game where the opposition are entitled to a larger allocation of tickets and will take up this section of the ground.

Bring Back the Clock End

At the BSM one of our initiatives is to 'Bring Back the Clock End'. We would like to see season ticket holders behind the goal in this part of the stadium... a place for like-minded fans to be together in the ground (together with Red and Silver members) and generate an atmosphere like the one we used to have in the Clock End at Highbury.

We feel that putting a clock on the roof of the stand doesn't make it the Clock End. The Clock End was the people who stood and sat there; it was a state of mind. So if we want a real Clock End at the Emirates, let's do it properly. Allow season tickets in the lower tier and give two blocks behind the goal to people who want to make noise and help generate a positive atmosphere.

But what about the times when we have a cup game, where the opposition take a larger ticket allocation?

Since we moved to Emirates Stadium, this has happened on a handful of occasions so it's not as if this is a regular issue. At Highbury when this happened and the opposition took all of the Clock End, season ticket holders there were provided with a replacement ticket elsewhere in the stadium. This worked perfectly well in a stadium that held 38,000 people so given we now have a 60,000 capacity stadium and given that technology has advanced greatly in the last few years, surely this is achievable?

If not, then another one of our initiatives could be considered...

Season Ticket Lite

This is an idea we put to Arsenal where fans are given the choice of purchasing a season ticket covering league games only. Bearing in mind the financial pressures faced by many fans these days, we feel this will offer a helping hand for those who are struggling to afford their season ticket as the cost would be reduced by nearly 40%.

In our opinion there are numerous benefits in this system. For instance, hard-pressed fans could afford to keep hold of their season ticket, given the lower cost, and for cup games this would mean that more tickets could be made available to Silver and Red members.

Arsenal have told us on more than one occasion that demand for tickets at Emirates is so high, they have absolutely no worries in selling out. Surely in that case, this proposal is worthwhile?

The only concern from Arsenal's point of view is that they may miss out on some initial up-front season ticket income. We say "may" because of course, not all season ticket holders would take up the option of the Lite ticket... and in any case, surely a cash-rich club like Arsenal don't need to be that short-sighted over a few pounds? Of course if demand for tickets is high, that income gap will be filled during the season in any case, as tickets are purchased for cup games.

That said, if the thought of Season Ticket Lite and missing out on a fraction of up-front season ticket money scares Arsenal so much, how about lower tier Clock End season ticket holders only are given a 'Lite' version? A small section of the ground only, and the issue of moving fans for cup games simply goes away.

Naturally there are further considerations in the implementation of such a scheme, but just from the above, it shows that it can work. Of course for it to work, Arsenal have to show commitment to their supporters.

4. **Having seen the success of safe standing in other countries, for example Germany, clubs in the UK are now starting to consider the introduction of this at their grounds.**

Aston Villa and Celtic are just two of a growing number of clubs in the UK now looking at trialling safe standing, with a view to introducing it full time. Other Premier League clubs such as Cardiff City, Crystal Palace, Hull City, Sunderland and Swansea City have all said they would be happy to introduce safe standing if the demand was there from their supporters. Indeed, Arsene Wenger gave his backing to the idea, stating “Yes [I would be in favour], 100 per cent”.

Would you like Arsenal push forward on such an initiative, starting with a trial of safe standing at Emirates Stadium?

Yes	91.5%
No	8.5%

Comment

This is, without any shadow of a doubt, clear indication that Arsenal fans are fully behind the concept of introducing safe standing at Emirates Stadium.

With more fans standing at our home matches, this does present a safety issue so you can appreciate the efforts of the club in trying to get fans sitting down. Having safe standing areas in the stadium removes this concern.

Benefits are there for supporter and club; the option of cheaper tickets for the fan but more fans in the stadium on the ‘terracing’. For domestic games this would work perfectly in our opinion, and when the UEFA competitions come around, revert to seating.

In the past we had talks with the Safe Standing Roadshow and were prepared to arrange a visit to Arsenal so that rail seating could be demonstrated. However, at the time comment from the club was that there were ‘bigger fish to fry’... that safe standing was an issue which needed approval from a higher level so it wasn’t something that they were concerned with investigating – instead preferring to concentrate on day-to-day matters.

Since then, the momentum and support for safe standing at English football grounds has gained pace significantly and continues to do so. The recent successes of German football clubs and the highlighting of how highly fans are considered by Bundesliga clubs has only made the issue in England a lot more visible.

Arsene Wenger gave his backing to the introduction of safe standing, and we understand that Ivan Gazidis is in favour too.

It has been revealed that recently, South Manchester MP John Leech has held talks with the owners of Manchester City concerning implementing safe standing at the Etihad Stadium. Yet another club looking at how this can be achieved.

So the interest is there, and a number of clubs are proactively looking at how they can get such a system trialled in their grounds.

Arsenal’s marketing motto in recent years has been “Always ahead of the game”. In that case we’d like the club to practice what it preaches and be a lot more proactive on this subject, especially considering the support from our Manager and Chief Executive.

Summary

The results of our survey confirm beyond any doubt that that Arsenal fans feel the matchday atmosphere at Emirates Stadium is lacking, and that more needs to be done to improve this.

Of course it's not a quick fix but from some of the comments and suggestions we've outlined, this shows that real progress can be made.

Ultimately to make the matchday experience more enjoyable for Arsenal fans and to help create a loud, positive atmosphere inside the stadium, there has to be total commitment from Arsenal and its stadium management function.

Arsene Wenger has made numerous references about the atmosphere in the stadium, and on countless occasions the players have commented on how they'd like there to be more noise and support.

If stadium management at Arsenal feel there is no action required and that all is fine, this obviously conflicts with what our Manager, players and most importantly our fans are saying.

Reference has been made to our tremendous away support and the noise it generates. Wouldn't it be great to get this kind of crowd together at Emirates Stadium? As it is, these people are spread out across the stadium, mixed in with 'spectators' who aren't very vocal – therefore generating an atmosphere becomes impossible. We need more areas where like-minded fans can be together in the ground, and we need Arsenal to commit fully.

We believe that a quiet, sanitised stadium atmosphere is not what football is all about.

The game is about passion, it's about excitement, it's about the feeling of unity and family among supporters. The players want noise and support, the fans want to be able to show passion in supporting their team. There are ways in which we can help make this happen, so bearing in mind we're more than seven years down the line since moving stadium, it's about time proper action was taken – not half-hearted, over-sanitised gestures which do very little to address the issue.

We will continue to press for improvements to the matchday atmosphere, working with other parties/groups where necessary to make this happen. Our supporters' group is all about getting a better deal for matchgoing Arsenal fans and taking care of our core support. That runs from ticket pricing, to repayment options, to seating, standing, and what goes on inside the ground. Atmosphere is a key element of this.

Football without fans is nothing.

Up The Gunners



**THE BLACK SCARF
MOVEMENT**

WHERE HAS OUR ARSENAL GONE?