



## WHERE HAS OUR ARSENAL GONE?

### PRESS RELEASE

25 April 2011

As loyal, long-term supporters of Arsenal Football Club we are disappointed in a number of recent activities at the club. We are concerned that the Board is ignoring the views of its fans, and that the Board is mistreating those who have been loyal to the club for many years.

We therefore call for the Board of Arsenal Football Club to consider the following points:

#### Season Tickets

- Recognise that a large number of long-term season ticket holders are struggling to pay the current high ticket prices charged by the club, especially in the current economic climate.
- Cancel plans to hit season ticket holders with an inflation shattering increase to the cost of their season ticket for the 2011/12 season.
- Allow season ticket holders the ability to downgrade to a cheaper season ticket (if available) – do not only allow upgrades.
- Allow season ticket holders to give up their season tickets and downgrade to Silver membership.
- Allow season ticket holders with financial difficulties to give up their seat for a year, with the option of buying it back the following season.
- Offer season ticket holders the chance to pay for their season tickets in instalments, for example three equal payments (even with an administration fee if it means clawing back lost interest).
- Offer a 'swap shop' where season ticket holders can swap seats with other season ticket holders, should they want to move to another part of the ground.

#### Stadium Seating

- Adopt practices of other Premier League clubs in moving away fans to the upper tiers i.e. more expensive seating, thereby providing more affordable seating for Arsenal supporters. As it stands, away fans have prime positions in the stadium at the lowest cost – to the detriment of Arsenal supporters.
- While we congratulate the club in finally renaming the stands at Emirates Stadium, we must now allow season tickets at the Clock End of the stadium. The Clock End at Highbury was a spiritual home to many long-term supporters, so a move such as this would be welcomed greatly, and would help improve the match day atmosphere within the stadium.
- We feel that an experiment of unreserved seating would allow like-minded supporters to sit together. It would attract supporters to enter the stadium much earlier, and also help to improve match day atmosphere.

## **Commercial activity**

- The Board should look to re-negotiate poorly struck commercial deals which are losing the club millions of pounds in lost revenue; do not simply look to plug gaps by making already hard-pressed supporters pay more.
- Re-consider the current practice of releasing two new kits every year which further punishes the pocket of paying fans.
- Be respectful of club traditions and always look to keep our home kits red and white, and away kits yellow and blue.

## **Ownership and Target Markets**

If the information we've gathered from various media sources is accurate, we welcome reports that the club's new majority Shareholder, Mr Stan Kroenke, will be sympathetic to the concerns of Arsenal supporters and look to preserve the club's traditions. However we are concerned at the overemphasis of the Board in targeting their 'ideal' match day demographic, namely corporate support and/or affluent individuals to which premium priced ticket and dining packages can be sold.

While the corporate pound is currently big in football and helps to increase revenue greatly, the Board needs to recognise that the majority of Arsenal supporters – hundreds of thousands of fans – are part of what the club classes as 'general admission' support: the average football fan who comes to the stadium to support his or her team.

This loyal, long-term support is what the club has been built on, and it's important that our children and their children can grow up supporting Arsenal Football Club and coming to see their team play. By concentrating too much on premium pricing, the Board has already forced out many long-term fans and continues to do so. Therefore when the corporates have gone (and they will be at some point) there could be no more core support left to rely on.

Short-term greed can and will affect the club over the long term. The Board needs to realise the importance of this.

## **The Manager**

We want to see Mr Wenger repeat his early successful years with the club.

While we're appreciative of what Mr Wenger has achieved for Arsenal in the past, we believe that the manager should be held accountable for the success of the team and not the club's balance sheet. It is felt by many fans that since the departure of David Dein, Mr Wenger has taken on too much responsibility at the club to the detriment of his team. As a major football club, Arsenal should be competing for and winning trophies.

Supporters of Arsenal were sold a vision by the Board that we needed to move stadium to move on to the next level, to become a "European Super Club" and that the costs of moving stadium would be "ring-fenced" and not interfere with the playing side. So while we applaud Arsene Wenger and his recent approach of bringing through younger players and achieving Champions League football while turning a profit year on year in the transfer market, the club is here to win things. It's widely reported and felt that one or two world class additions to the squad can help us achieve success and we firmly believe this.

With success and world class players on the pitch, comes the ability for further revenue generation. We will be able to negotiate better sponsorship deals, we'll sell more merchandise, and the increased income means that the hard-pressed support isn't consistently expected to take on the burden of swelling the club's bank balance and profit margin.

## **The Chairman**

We call for the immediate removal of Mr Peter Hill-Wood as Chairman of Arsenal Football Club. While we recognise the traditions of the club and the Hill-Wood family's presence at Arsenal which spans decades, Mr Hill-Wood's recent assertions that the club's supporters are "Silly" and "Stupid" for doing no more than voicing an opinion, is an utter disgrace.

Mr Hill-Wood would do well to realise that without supporters and their funding since the club's inception, Arsenal Football Club would not exist today.

A Chairman of any other company would find his or her position under severe threat for showing such disrespect to those funding his or her company, and Mr Hill-Wood should be treated no differently. By allowing him to remain as Chairman, this gives the message that the Board think it's acceptable to openly criticise and disrespect the club's supporters.

## **"You are my Arsenal"**

We call for all Arsenal fans who agree with our views and who want to see their Arsenal back, to join us on a walk before the match against Aston Villa on Sunday 15 May.

We will meet outside Cannons pub on Blackstock Road at 2.30pm, and set off at 3pm.

Our route will take us along Elwood Street, where we'll turn left into Avenell Road and walk past the East Stand of our beloved Highbury. From there we turn right into Aubert Park, left into Drayton Park, cross the bridge at the Clock End of the stadium, finishing at the roundabout in Hornsey Road outside Emirates Stadium.

**- ENDS -**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Where Has Our Arsenal Gone? is a group formed by a number of like-minded Arsenal fans, concerned that the club they've supported for many years is losing touch with its fans; that the current Board is more interested in making quick money, forgetting the values of the club and not caring that long-term supporters are walking away.

We feel that if the Board continues in this way, it will greatly damage the future of Arsenal Football Club. The club we grew up supporting, and the club we want our future generations to support.