

## Stock United F.C. End of Season Report May 2008

Following relegation from division one of the Mid Essex League Stock Utd were desperate to try and return straight back in their centenary season, which meant aiming to finish in the top two places. In the end a credible sixth was achieved following an up and down season which saw Stock beat the strongest teams in the division, but lose to some of the weakest.

The team exited all the cup competitions in the first round which meant the league could be given 100% attention and effort. Despite a poor start to the season with defeats to both Epping and Ravens Reserves, by Christmas Stock were in top spot having beaten early season front runners Essex Police 2-0 away from home along the way, whilst at home Harold Wood were defeated 2-1 and a strong Byfleet side succumbed 1-0. January and February though saw a number of tough fixtures in quick succession and coupled with the usual post Christmas injury problems Stock slipped off the pace, although a fine win was recorded 3-1 away from home against Byfleet.

When goalkeeper Richard Eaton tore ligaments in his ankle in November the prospect of a promotion challenge looked unlikely, but the efforts in goal of Mark Bland and new signing Alex (Sandy) Grant ensured a credible second half to the season. Last season's player of the year Marc Howell missed most of the campaign after picking up a knee injury in October, as did centre back Chris Smith with a serious head injury. On the plus side new signings Alex Grant, Jon Sullivan and Stuart Pepper all proved to be valuable additions whilst midfield dynamo Steve Gotobe returned following an operation to repair his cruciate ligament. A further boost was given with the resigning of Roy Gilbey following a spell with Outwood Common and Old Chelmsfordians.

With regard to the boy's teams the club's under 10's side finally won their first matches in the Chelmsford league they play in and in their first season playing in the Blackwater & Dengie league the under 13 side formed by Jon Prior and Freddie Tully finished a credible third in their division.

Off the pitch, the club raised nearly £1,800 from a race night at the village hall and a quiz night in the Rectory hall which has been put into an account to be used solely to assist with the purchase one day hopefully, of a field which the club can call its own. Other centenary events still to come this summer include a match at the pitch in Mill Lane on Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup> at midday which sees the current men's side take on an allcomers eleven and we will be running a beat the keeper competition at the flower festival on June 21<sup>st</sup>. It is also hoped to produce a history of the club's first 100 years before the year end.

The club is always on the lookout for new players to strengthen both the senior and junior teams. Anyone who is interested in playing for the club should either contact me on (01277) 632301 or Jon Prior on (01245) 601096.

Keith Howell  
Secretary, Stock Utd F.C.