



THAT'S THE MERTON WAY

The Official Newsletter
of Merton Football Club

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Number of teams and postponement

We have had to postpone a number of games because we have not had enough players available to fulfil the fixtures. This is really disappointing for members who don't get the football they want and a matter of deep regret for the club management.

In the summer, we had a number of potential members for the new season. Balanced against this was the fact that Lee Wilkinson, manager of the 3s last season, was moving to Raynes Park Vale and encouraging a number of our players to go with him. We thought that we would be able to maintain our current six teams in the SAL. We were keen to do this because it has implications for our club revenues, pitch bookings and our ability to obtain grants with our development plan.

On this basis, we entered six teams despite concern that early season might be a struggle. Such was our concern that we opened tentative discussions with the SAL to see what their attitude would be to Merton dropping one of its teams (most likely the 4s). This was not at all appealing to the SAL, who maintained that if we were going to drop a side it had to be from the bottom up, and that would mean us losing the 6s – which was one of the last things we wanted to do.

We were beginning to understand that **our problem was not one of absolute numbers – we have 108 players, which should be enough on any given Saturday to field six teams – but one of availability, lack of commitment and injuries.**

In November we applied to the SAL to withdraw our 4th team making a reasoned application (available for anyone to read). This was rejected.

What the League and the rules say

After the rejection of our application, we hoped to be able to muddle through till Christmas with weather cancellations, cup matches and the rainy season at the Hood. That is what we've been doing.

SAL rules are clear about what should happen if a club does not have enough players available to fulfil its fixtures: **games should be cancelled from the lowest team upwards with players moving up to the higher game**, with the exception that AFA cup games take precedence. We put this to the test in a 4s SAL cup game. We asked if we could forfeit that game at Old Finchleas and let the 5s and 6s play their scheduled league fixtures. The SAL rejected this out of hand.

As a result, **a committed band of 5s and 6s supported the integrity of the SAL and Merton's reputation**: they played that fixture and lost 11-0. The 5s had to forfeit their cup match at OWCs, but were reinstated on appeal. A few weeks later, the 5s played as the 4s and lost 13-0 to BB Eagles; the 6s played as the 5s, losing 6-0 to West Wickham.



What we have been trying to do

We have tried to drop a team but the SAL would not allow us to do that if it was not the 6s. So we have been trying to manage the situation and **Mark Chappell and Simon Clapperton have spent an enormous amount of time juggling players and trying to get sides out to play.** But it's not easy.

We have also done our own thing and ridden in the face of the SAL with the support of our opposition. This past weekend is a good example: we cancelled our 4s game and played the 5s game against Old Wilsonians, but we had to cancel our 6s game because Old Blues did not want to confront the SAL administration (or could not get a team out themselves). Old Wilsonians took up the cudgels with the SAL and argued our corner: **what is to be served by cancelling three matches when people want to play?** The outcome of this is awaited, but the SAL are displaying an element of intellectual dishonesty here and it is not serving our club and members very well.

What we can do now

The situation is not improving enough with unavailability to give us enough confidence that things will be better after Christmas.

We are having a recruitment drive next season, with an **attractive membership package for under-21s**. We will continue to develop our youth scheme, but the oldest team we have for 2015/16 is the under-13s. Our options this season are:

1) Muddle on, cancelling games when we have to.

2) Pull the 4s, 5s and 6s from the league and arrange friendlies for the 5s and 6s. The hope is if we do this, the league might change their minds.

3) Pull 5s and 6s, with their better players supporting the 4s, and arrange friendlies for the lowest team at home every week.

We welcome your views on the best course of action, so please let us know by emailing Mike Reed at mertonfc.secretary@gmail.com. We are also holding a meeting of members to discuss this on Tuesday 6th January at 8pm.

Max Herbert, chairman

Youth Christmas party

Great fun down at the Hood on Sunday afternoon as the Youth Section got together for their Christmas party, with much to celebrate.

All the teams have done so well to start the season. None better than the U8s, beating AFC Wimbledon's academy U8s in a mini tournament. (see picture over leaf).

Then, to celebrate the continued sponsorship from Wimbledon estate agents Andrew Purnell's, every player has been given a sponsored training kit (see above).

The party was a great success. Thanks to Howard and Michelle for the catering and all our coaches and parents who have made this all possible. ➡

Morden Park: update on a potential new ground

We have received some exciting news about Morden Park. At last the council have climbed down from the fence (on the correct side) and decided that they will build a **new leisure complex with swimming pool at Morden Park**.

This is planned to be pretty much on the site where we were hoping to build the pavilion and changing rooms for the new football pitches.

Our scheme can be incorporated within their scheme, with a massive cost saving. There is an ambitious target programme that could see Merton Football Club relocating to start the 2017/18 season with new state-of-the-art facilities.

There is a lot to be done. We need revised planning permission, but the council are promoting this scheme. The trust, with our support, will need to raise a lot of money – possibly just over £2m, but this is much more achievable than the previous £4m-plus for the stand-alone scheme.

The **new scheme will still have all the necessary elements for Merton FC**, namely: four grass pitches; two 4G floodlit pitches, state-of-the-art changing rooms; bar and restaurant and a host of other facilities for other sporting activities.

This is very exciting and we will be putting a lot of effort into this to support the The Morden Park Community, who will be promoting the scheme with the Council. **Thanks to Terry Baker**, our president, who has stayed with this scheme during some difficult days.

Max Herbert, chairman

That's the Merton Calendar

Dec 27th – Traditional President's Cup match versus Old Ruts (away). Come down and support the boys at **Poplar Road, Morden, SW19 3JS**.

It is a great event and a very good event at a very hospitable and friendly club.

Jan 1st – New Year's Day (Club Match + Sky Match: Stoke City v Manchester United, 12.45pm)

Jan 24th – Quiz night + Raffle (TBC)

April 3rd – Long Good Friday (Matches + Bar = TV Football)

May 30th – Bar opens for FA Cup final day

June 6th – Champions League Final (Derby day)

Club availability

Special mention to Ivan Gladkow, Graham Willgoss, Ricardo Iglasias Dias, Chris Outred, Dulanie Richards, Ed Plaistow and Nuno Jesus – all of whom have a 100 per cent availability record so far this season. **#committed**

New website

If you haven't already, check out mertonfc.co.uk to see the club's new website. It's regularly updated with club news, events and important things such as the race for the Merton Golden Boot and the Merton Golden Gloves.

That's the Merton Quiz

1. Why do the 5s get so many spectators turning up to watch their games?

- (i) All their suspended players come to watch
- (ii) They play the most attractive passing football with impeccable behaviour
- (iii) Curiosity - you never know what is going to happen.
- (iv) It is the best way of getting out of playing for the 4s.

2. When you sink down in the changing room what should you do with the kit?

- (i) Take it off roughly and throw it in to the pile at the end of the room
- (ii) Take it off carefully, brushing off excess mud and putting it all the right way round in
- (iii) Make sure that it is mixed in with the remaining unused kit

3. How many players in a Merton Team?

- (i) 13 on Monday evening
- (ii) A worrying 11 on Thursday morning
- (iii) An even more worrying 10 on Friday night
- (iv) 10, five minutes before kick off
- (v) 11 or more by half time, but not all on the pitch

4. After a match, you clean your boots where?

- (i) In the shower!!
- (ii) Give McKenzie £1 to do it for you
- (iii) I didn't know there was a shower
- (iv) I scored a hat-trick, so I am not washing this magic off

5. Having attended to your ablutions, should you:

- (i) Dive off to the bar immediately to buy the referee/teammates/opposition a drink?
- (ii) When the manager asks, keep your availability for next week a closely guarded secret?
- (iii) Pay your match fee/arrears and fines and tell him you are available for CEV?
- (iv) Immediately disappear with the old 'off to find a cash machine' excuse?

6. What is the most popular excuse for unavailability?

- (i) The games in North London and a journey there invalidates my life assurance
- (ii) I've got a family event/the photographer is going to be late for the family portrait
- (iii) RPV have promised me £50 a week, all I can drink and all sorts of unprintable things
- (iv) Done a 'hammy'



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