

25) TWTD Issue 84, Nov 2006: "Manager Peters axed"

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Our beloved Malcolm Baggio has been fishing in the River Raydon with his big rod, hoping to hook out some impressive Ramblingsfish from all the sewage and shopping trolleys. He managed to scoop a whole net full of flapping news fish. Some news items were too small and trivial to report on so he threw them back and he’s had to gut and fillet the rest to make them more acceptable to serve to the hungry clientele at the fish restaurant that is TWTD. So here we are with a plate full of football fish news fillets that still have a few bones in that you might choke on.

It has been a fraught and happenings-ridden start to the season at Clockton Park with drama and hullabaloo very much to the fore.

Following Raydon’s relegation to the second tier of the Kaliber 9% Special Brew league, Raydon manager Roland Peters was confident that they would bounce back in spectacular fashion. He even promised the reporter at the Raydon Bugle, “I will sit on the centre circle at half-time on the final day of the season and eat my own shit if we don’t win the league by at least 20 points.” The reporter promptly arranged for a legal document to be prepared which Peters nonchalantly signed, tying him to this promise with his house and wife also being surrendered to the reporter upon non-fulfilment.

However, Raydon’s start has been dismal, awful, poor and bad, not to mention unsatisfactory and downright lacklustre. They kicked off the season at home with a full-strength team against newly promoted Elmsett Jetsetters but slumped to a 4-0 defeat. This was followed by further defeats against Ofton Orient (2-0), Ingatestone Instigators (3-0) and Thetford Foresters (1-0). Following a fifth consecutive defeat against Wickham Skeith Celtic, Chairman Lionel Stubbs summoned Peters to the board shack and had a stern, frank, forthright and blunt conversation with Peters which resulted in fisticuffs, headbutts and some biting.

Eventually the police were called and Peters had to be escorted off the premises. Stubbs hastily called a press conference in the club’s changing shed at which he announced that Peters had been suspended pending his definite permanent dismissal.

It brought the blinds down on a managerial reign that stretched back to the days of Football Crazy Snacks, the old A12 being the actual A12 and Kenny Everett. Peters was appointed back in the early 80s. The 2005-2006 season saw the club’s first ever relegation and their first without silverware of some description during Peters’ tenure*. In the press conference Stubbs, with blood pouring from his nose, his faced badly scratched and his ribs clearly twinging nastily, claimed, “It was an amicable decision. Roland has done a brilliant job for this club over the years and I have every faith that he would have been able to get us promoted this year. However, in the end we agreed that it was probably best that he went before fans started urinating on his lawn and posting grenades through his letterbox and stuff.”

A normal-eyed Peters told the Raydon Bugle, “It’s their loss. I can’t wait to see them slump without me. I’m not being arrogant. In fact, my modesty is perhaps the most prominent of my many qualities. But I think it’s fair to say that I’m irreplaceable. Ok, the team have been poor for a while now but that’s only because I’ve been getting a bit bored and lost a bit of interest. I’d have turned it round in my own time when we got so bad that it would actually have been a challenge to turn things round. Now they’ll be in freefall. You mark my words.”

Stubbs conducted an extensive search for Peters’ replacement, interviewing no fewer than 19 applicants in the first phase of interviews before whittling it down to 18. Such was the interest in the job that the local bookmakers appointed an agency temp to deal with all the bets relating to the appointment. The second phase of interviews saw a further two candidates slashed from the process with only 16 progressing to the third phase. There was a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth phase of interviews before Stubbs had reduced the number of applicants down to just two – Simon Dumpty and Gerald Underflesh. However, they both dropped out of the running before he had a chance to conduct the final interviews – Dumpty accepted the role of Director of Defensive Resilience at Kelvedon Kestrels whilst Underflesh moved to Shoeburyness Shoemsmiths to become Steely Resolve Mastermind.

Under the guidance of Caretaker Manager Saul Quan, Raydon had slumped to a further three defeats and the need to bring some stability to the club with a permanent appointment was becoming desperate. Stubbs duly phoned up ex-defender Jack Crankleshank and after a two-minute chat (which wasn’t just about footballing matters) invited him to take over the managerial tightrope. Crankleshank initially asked for some time to think about it but within 112 seconds of the phone call ceasing, Stubbs received a typed fax from Crankleshank – who doesn’t possess a computer and would have had to nip round his neighbours to type it - accepting the offer. Crankleshank hung up his playing career at the end of the 2004-2005 season after a series of massive heart attacks started to affect his performances.

Stubbs said of the appointment, “We’ve not left a pebble un-scrutinized in the search for the right man to lift this club into the twilight months of 2006 and beyond. Jack is Raydon through and through and through. If you were to take a massive sword and plunge it deep into Jack’s abdomen and perhaps twist it round a few times, he would ooze tangerine and purple blood from the gaping wound before possibly keeling over and dying with a look of bewilderment and shock on his face. But it’s not the dying that I want to focus on now – it’s the Raydon blood that Jack bleeds and we all bleed here at Raydon, and we are all united in our desire to unleash a hellish wave of Raydon blood over our opponents, drowning them in a bloody tidal wave of footballing brilliance.”** Crankleshank was delighted to be given the honour of managing Raydon. He told the Raydon Bugle, “Although it has never even crossed my mind to go back to Clockton Park or speak to any of the players or officials since retiring,

I've always had a special home for Raydon in my heart of hearts and I feel privileged to have been asked to take the role. I'm not too sure how I'll cope. I've never even managed a children's team before, let alone a men's team and I've always been a bit crap with tactics and stuff and have never been a very good manager of people. I mean it! Only a couple of months ago I was sacked as a manager of a plum-packing firm for general lack of leadership skills and competence. However I'll be directing all my energies into thinking about possibly trying to make sure that I do at least a semi-reasonable job at Raydon.

Some Raydon players were bemused at the appointment. "Your joking aren't you?" said Ian Buffalo, who asked to remain anonymous. "He was always a great defender but he was so quiet and he was never one for dishing out instructions. I can't believe it." Striker Dougie McManahammond was similarly shocked and was recorded on a clandestine dictaphone by our under-cover reporter saying, "That's ridiculous. He's not a leader at all. I've had enough of this wanky little club." In full acknowledgement of his personal lack of managerial skills, before his first game in charge, Crankleshank decided he needed to appoint a right-hand-man to support him. Unaware of the nature of Roland Peters' departure (Stubbs had told him that Peters had resigned as he had decided to donate one of his achilles tendons to a distant cousin in Antarctica and would need several months to recover from the operation) Crankleshank duly contacted Peters who accepted the role of Head Coach with Exclusive Responsibility for All Managerial Matters. Crankleshank didn't feel it was necessary to tell Stubbs about Peters re-appointment and arrived at Clockton Park for his first game in charge with Peters in tow. Stubbs was aghast when he eyed a smug looking Peters strutting along the touchline and fell to his knees in anguish holding his hands up to the sky and silently mouthing the word "why?".

Crankleshank's first game at the helm was a daunting encounter at home to top of the table Great Blakenham Old Boys. Crankleshank ordered the players to the ground two hours before kick-off and spent well over an hour locked in the changing rooms trying to psyche them up and instil his ethic of hard work deep into the bowels of their brains.

Unfortunately, after only two minutes it appeared that he may have overdone it somewhat with defender Derek Diffydale appearing a little bit too psyched up. He made a horrendous flying two-footed lunge of a tackle that caught an opposing striker in the throat. The ball fell to a Blakenham player on the edge of the box so the referee played the advantage. Diffydale then made another violent two-footed karate-style tackle, catching a second opponent in the chest sending him flying several metres through the air. When another Blakenham player confronted him, Diffydale punched him in the face with such force that an imprint of his nose became embedded in his knuckle.*** Diffydale became the first player ever to receive three red cards in one match, receiving a 19 game ban as a result. The referee literally held the red card up three times in quick succession. Diffydale took comfort from the fact that the referee looking a bit of a twat in doing so.

Crankleshank and Peters were forced to reshuffle his pack with lanky striker Dave Mackinackie moving to centre back. Raydon's ten men proceeded to give their best performance for over a year. Mackinackie and Keith Heath gave stunning central defensive performances that had Crankleshank literally staring in awesome wander. In a battling display that saw everyone play well, Raydon managed to secure their first point of the season with a goal-less draw. Crankleshank was so pleased with the performance that he was in tears at the final whistle and unable to compose himself sufficiently to give an interview, despite trying really really hard.

Of course this paved the way for Peters to conduct the post match interview with a 14 year-old lad on work experience at the local paper who had been given the task of reporting on the game. Predictably Peters took all the credit for the performance, arrogantly referring to his comeback as the "return of the prodigal calf", despite having been reading a book in the toilet during the pre-match talk. Impressed by the performance, yet still sceptical about Peters' return Lionel Stubbs agreed to let the Crankleshank/Peters partnership continue holding the saddle for the time being.

What's going to happen next in this paraphernalia-ridden season of high-jinx, japes and bollocks? Tune in and read the next exciting instalment in the next edition of TWTD to find out!

* Eagle-memored fans may think "hang-on - Raydon didn't win any silverware in the 1985-86 season." That may be the case but they did acquire silverware when Raydon's duckin' and divin' dodgy geezer-cum-renowned complete arsehole defender, Pedro Shanks broke into the ground of Kia-ora Cup winners Dynamo Barking and stole the trophy which then took pride of place tucked away under the sink in the club bar.

**Lionel Stubbs has asked us to point out that in no way has he ever threatened violence against Jack Crankleshank and that this was only meant to be a metaphor. Jack's blood type is actually O-Negative.

*** Fortunately, none of the injuries Diffydale inflicted on his victims were serious although the player he caught in the throat was unable to speak for two months and as a result lost his job as a railway station announcer which led to him and his family having to move out of their home and into a squalid bedsit whereupon his wife contracted hepatitis B after accidentally stepping on a dirty syringe in the stairwell. Fortunately she has now partially recovered.