

26) TWTD Issue 86, Mar 2007: "Raydon and Wenham in fiercely contested local derby."

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Beekeeper Malcolm Baggio has been working with his Raydon bees trying to coax them into making copious amounts of news-honey. Fresh from the hive where he has sustained stings to every part of his anatomy, here he is with a jar full of sweet Ramblings-honey to spread on your toast.

Since the managerial appointment of Jack Crankleshank there has been a significant up-twist in the fortunes of Raydon. Crankleshank had recruited former manager Roland Peters as his right hand man, much to the disgust and tearful regret of Chairman Lionel Stubbs who had violently dismissed Peters just two weeks earlier. However, with a rejuvenated Peters alongside him, Crankleshank has lead Radyon to a series of victories that has seen them scurry and clamber up the table like rabid squirrels up an oak tree.

There have been question marks barked as to the level of contribution that Crankleshank has made to the improved results. He has left training sessions, tactics, team talks and team selection up to Peters but Crankleshank vehemently defends his style to the Raydon Bugle. "Effective delegation is an important part of management. I recognise that I'm no good at the tactical or coaching side of things so I delegate all that to Roland." When asked what his role as manager actually entailed, Crankleshank suddenly complained that he had a stomach ache and disappeared to the toilet where he remained for over 18 hours, just to make certain that the reporter had disappeared. (The reporter had actually left within 10 minutes of Crankleshank going to the toilet.)

Raydon's biggest game of the season so far was a clash away against bitter local rivals, Wenham Wanderers. There were a great deal of provocative comments in the local press from both managers before the game and a special 7-page pull-out supplement in one paper dedicated to the animosity between them. Wenham manager Eric Bunker made the outrageous accusation that Raydon manager Jack Crankleshank contributes nothing to the running of the team and is just a finger puppet. Raydon Coach Roland Peters countered with a below the belt jibe that Bunker is f***wit.

Crankleshank, Peters and his players put all the nastiness behind them and were all focussed on the game when they arrived at Wenham's ground for the encounter. There was unpleasant chanting and jeering from the Wenham players and fans but the Raydon contingent did not react. They were dismayed, however, to discover that the appointed referee for the game was Jeremy Bisadol, a resident of Wenham and ardent fan of his home village club. When briefing the two captains, Bisadol was eager to stress that he would be totally impartial and not let his allegiance effect his judgement.

Raydon's prospects looked like they had improved just before the kick off. The Wenham players were having their usual morale boosting "huddle" when one of the players slipped on the greasy surface and the huddle — very much like a rugby scrum — collapsed with devastating consequences. Both Wenham's centre backs suffered serious injury: Oscar Foxtrot-Pedderson twanged his spinal chord whilst Dimitri Dobson sustained a chronic blemish to his throat due to nearly being garrotted by a team-mates arm. This meant that Wenham were forced to bring two subs on before the kickoff. The pedantic referee insisted that the fourth official create a makeshift minus sign to enable him to signal that the substitution was being made one minute prior to kick off. He did so using a twig.

If Bisadol had intended to be impartial, the unfortunate scrum predicament that had befallen his beloved Wenham team clearly prompted him to change his stance. After just two minutes, he booked Raydon striker Dave Mackinackie — who had had a curry for dinner the night before and the left overs for breakfast — for "persistent trumping." Twenty minutes into the game saw the most bizarre refereeing decision of all time*. Wenham striker Justin Fatherted rifled a twenty yard thunderbolt which bounced down off the Raydon crossbar, bounced up off the ground, hit the crossbar again and bounced down on the ground a second time before keeper Ian Buffalo managed to scoop the ball away. Bisadol adjudged that the ball had crossed the line both times it had bounced down and awarded two goals to Wenham. Raydon midfielder Sid Chopper protested so angrily that he burst a bloody vessel in his face and had to be substituted.

Raydon were knocked for twelve by the ludicrous refereeing decision and Wenham dominated much of the first half without adding to their goal tally. At half time, the team talks were interrupted by the increasingly loud sound of an approaching helicopter. Raydon's millionaire Chairman, Lionel Stubbs, had been at a Training Seminar in Hartlepool entitled "The Environmental Irresponsibility of Private Air Travel" and had rushed back in his private helicopter in time to catch the second half of the match. However, Raydon's players were mystified when Stubbs' helicopter hovered over the pitch for a minute or two before turning round and flying away. It emerged that the Wenham groundsman had cut the grass in such away that the lines on the pitch spelt out "Raydon 4Sheep Anuses" which was only visible when seen from above. A furious Stubbs flew home and, with the help of his young children Emily (5) and Johnny (7) — both of whom had a real flair for art — hastily created a long banner which read "Wenham Suck Arse Wipes." He attached the banner to the underneath of his helicopter and flew back to Wenham with the banner flowing behind the helicopter.

Meanwhile Raydon had started the second half brightly but had struggled against the hideous bias of referee Bisadol. In a further incident of bias, McManahammond was booked for diving when a Wenham player scythed him down in full flight as he ran at goal. One of the opponent's studs were embedded in a deep gash in McManahammond's thigh so he showed it to the referee. The squeamish referee was so horrified by the injury that he booked McManahammond a second time for "being disrespectful to an official" and sent him off.

Raydon continued to battle hard until proceedings were disturbed by the arrival of Stubbs in his helicopter with his offensive banner. The Wenham players stood aghast at the banner whilst the Raydon players broke into uncontrollable

laughter. Things took a somewhat serious turn when the banner became entangled in propeller at the back of the helicopter and it began spinning out of control. Fortunately Stubbs had had an extremely hi-tech ejector seat fitted to the helicopter which, upon activation, propelled him out of the roof of the craft with precision timing to ensure that he flew between the blades as they span relentlessly round. Stubbs ended up unscathed in a conveniently positioned manure heap at the side of the ground. The only sign that Stubbs had encountered a misdemeanour was a strip missing off the soles of his shoes and a large whisp of hair missing from his head – coupled with the fact he was covered in horse shit. The Wenham players watched in horror as Stubbs’ out of control helicopter ploughed into their recently constructed £400,000 club house that they had spent fifteen years raising funds to pay for, and exploded in a massive ball of flames. There was pandemonium as Wenham players, officials and supporters rushed around trying in vain to put the fire out. By the time the fire brigade arrived the clubhouse was a pile of burning rubble.

There was a moment of panic as Dougie McManahammond had returned to the clubhouse after his sending off. However, as luck would have it, he had descended into the cellar of the unattended club bar in search of lager as the barrel had run out. He was understandably a bit shocked when he emerged from the cellar to find himself in the open air surrounded by debris and fire. The fire brigade predicted that had McManahammond been sitting on the bar stool that he had intended occupying he would have received the full force of the explosion in his face and would have had only a 53% chance of emerging unscathed.

Sensing that there was a chance of Wenham personnel getting slightly angry with them, the Raydon contingent bundled into their cars and sped away before any confrontation arose.

There were inevitably enquiries into the day’s events by league officials and the police. Despite accusations from Wenham players, supporters and officials, Raydon pleaded innocence and as there was no evidence of any wrongdoing on their part they were exonerated of any blame. There was no trace of Lionel Stubbs’ offensive banner which had been totally incinerated in the blaze and he claimed that the helicopter had simply malfunctioned. The only evidence that did remain was the offensive message that had been cut into the turf and this resulted in Wenham’s groundsman being charged with incitement to riot.

Wenham have since gone out of business as it emerged that the insurance on the club house was invalid due to the non-disclosure of a £50 claim for damage to a carpet caused by an infestation of badgers at the previous club hut back in 1992. They had to sell their ground to developers in order to pay off debts and there are now plans to build a Lidl on the site. Lionel Stubbs ironically stands to make a substantial amount of cash on the deal after tipping off the supermarket chain as to the availability of the site and sneakily persuading the local council to approve the plans after calling in a favour from a local councillor who he once lent a Russ Abbott DVD to.

With Wenham out of business Raydon were awarded a 8-0 victory for the game and league officials have since gone through past fixtures awarding all Wenham’s past opponents so far this season with 8-0 victories, regardless of the original score.

*Fact courtesy of John Motson