

27) TWTD Issue 87, May 2007: "Raydon forced to play four games in one day"

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Our local sports reporter and resident DJ Malcolm Baggio has been hard at work on his decks in his Surrey studio laying down some "happin'"; Raydon mixes for you to "shake yo booty"; to. Here he is with his new CD "Now that's what I call Ramblings"; full of fresh footballing sounds put together for your audio delectation. Actually you have to read it but you get the gist;

Raydon manager Jack Crankleshank has taken an increasingly hands-off approach to management - so hands off that he doesn't attend training or games anymore. When confronted on the topic by TWTD, Crankleshank said, "My role is more Director of Football. I'm on the phone to Roland Peters (coach) every day discussing tactics, team selections, possible transfers and all sorts of stuff. Roland is the expert when it comes to actually doing things." TWTD bugged Crankleshank's phone calls for two weeks following the conversation during which he only called Peters once and that was to ask him if his wife could borrow a soda stream. We did intercept quite a few other strange calls though, but after consulting with our legal team have decided not to publish the details.

Under the rejuvenated guidance of Peters, Raydon managed to turn their season round after an horrendous start to the campaign. However, their progress to the top of the table was hindered by a series of postponements. A chronic drainage problem at Raydon's Clockton Park ground during February and March resulted in sewage spewing out of a manhole cover and covering the pitch in faeces, excrement, stools, turds, business and dung. The first match to take place after the incident was abandoned after 40 minutes, not because of the horrendous nature of the playing conditions but because both teams' players were undistinguishable, completely caked in brown sludge. This included the referee who'd been chopped down by some pretty nasty tackles from players who mistook him for an opponent. All of Raydon's home games during February and March were postponed. On top of three other weather-enforced postponements from earlier in the season*, this meant that Raydon went into the last two weeks of the season with eight matches to play. League rules state that matches must be complete by the first Saturday of April (inclusive) otherwise offending teams will be restricted to playing with 10 players for all of their matches throughout the following season. Raydon managed to fit in a couple of midweek matches but they still went into the final Saturday of the season with four home games to play. The only option was to play the four games back to back with games kicking off at 9am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm. To add to the drama, the last of Raydon's four matches was against title rivals, Debenham Debonair. Raydon started the day fifth in the table. They were 11 points behind leaders Debenham but with all other teams having one remaining game, if Raydon won all four of their fixtures, they would win the league.

Coach Peters surprisingly only named 16 players in his squad for the four games, leaving out five other available players, despite the inevitability of players becoming severely exhausted. He explained, "There's no point naming players who are shit. I'd rather have good players who are totally knackered than talentless twatts who can't kick a ball to save their toffee."

There was a buoyant atmosphere in the Raydon changing room before the kick-off of the first game against the league's whipping-boys Whitton Whippersnappers. After a rigorous, and perhaps ill advised, two hour training session before the game, Peters sent the team out under strict instructions to take it easy and to exert the minimum amount of energy necessary to secure a win, in view of their hectic schedule. The players totally ignored the instructions and went full throttle at their beleaguered opponents, storming to a 15-0 victory, with Peters not making a single substitution. The players didn't even bother leaving the pitch at the end of the game as their opponents in the second match - Stonham Barnstormers - were already waiting at pitchside to take to the field.

There were only two minutes between the final whistle of the first game and the kick off of the second game. The Raydon players were visibly weary against their midtable opponents. This time they did follow Peters' pre-match instructions, booting the ball into touch as hard as possible at any opportunity in order to waste time. With nobody associated with Raydon raising an eyelid to retrieve the ball, it was left to the Stonham players to clamber over fences, trudge through muddy fields and knock on people's front doors in order to get the ball back. The plan worked as the referee, under pressure to ensure the game didn't over-run too much, only added three minutes injury time on at the end of the first half, despite the ball only being in play for 19 minutes.

The second half was much the same story with Raydon clearly trying to conserve their energy by doing as little running and wasting as much time as possible. Goalkeeper Ian Buffalo was booked for time wasting when he took seven minutes to do his shoelaces up before taking a goal kick. Stonham players were getting increasingly frustrated with Raydon's tactics. This frustration boiled over in the 70th minute when Stonham's captain, player manager, owner, physio and website editor Manfred Yoipes lunged at Raydon's George Mnunga who was taking three minutes to position the ball before taking a corner. The grade 8 kick-boxer leapt into the air and smashed his feet into Mnunga's chest at 86.5mph**. Luckily Mnunga has a steel plate fitted in his chest after a freak press-up accident when young so he suffered nothing more than a few shocked tears. Rather than being given a straight red card, Yoipes was given two yellow cards before being shown the red. The first card was for initially failing to apologise to Mnunga and the second was for "not meaning it"; when he finally did say sorry.

With Stonham reduced to ten men Raydon pushed forward in search of a winner for the final twenty minutes. As a result, they left themselves exposed at the back and there were a few moments when the sphincters of everyone associated with Raydon were twitching like a man wired up by the testes to a car battery. There were two "three on none"; situations with Raydon's defence and goalkeeper stranded. The first saw a Stonham striker blast the ball towards the open goal from 10 yards but fortunately a pigeon flew into the path of the ball and deflected it wide. The grateful Raydon players piled on top of the pigeon in celebration as it lay unconscious on the pitch, sadly killing it. The

danger of the second 'three on none' scenario was averted when Raydon's number one fan, Reg Shuttlebuck, stuck out his umbrella handle and hooked it round the ankle of the player in possession as he printed up the touchline, tripping him up. This allowed the Raydon defence time to get back and clear the ball. The Raydon players piled on top of Shuttlebuck in celebration, breaking three of his ribs, puncturing his lung and tweaking his bowels. In the final quadresecond of injury time, Raydon snatched an unlikely victory from the gob of a draw in bizarre circumstances. The Stonham goalkeeper had the ball and amidst the piercing whistling of the Stonham fans who were desperate for the final whistle, thought he heard the referee blow up. Believing the game to have ended, he turned round and booted the ball into the empty net, giving Raydon the lead. Stonham took the centre to restart but the referee immediately blew the final whistle. To add insult to the wounds, from the restart Stonham hammered the ball upfield and it flew over the head of the stranded Ian Buffalo in the Raydon goal. The disallowed goal was 4 seconds after the restart so had the Stonham keeper made his blunder 4 seconds earlier, the goal would have counted and the result would have been a 1-1 draw. The keeper was inconsolable and was still crying hysterically two hours later when he left the ground after having a shower, getting changed and having a few pints in the club bar.

When the final whistle went Raydon were too tired to celebrate and merely collapsed on the ground as their third opponents, Oulton Broad Beans ran on to the pitch in sprightly fashion to begin the afternoon's third match. Peters finally decided to make some changes to save a few tired legs. He had been so engrossed in the Stonham game he had again forgotten to make any substitutions. He made four changes to his starting eleven and the four rested players were wired up to glucose drips while they recuperated.

Oulton Broad Beans were another side with little to play for, having topped the league up until Christmas when all their points were docked after the chairman of the league discovered their manager was having an affair with his wife. Oulton had continued their impressive form and remarkably accumulated enough points to achieve a mid table finish. Had they not suffered the points deduction they would have won the league by the start of March. As well as their impressive form, Oulton had recently been given an award for being the 'most fit' side in the league. Therefore on paper this would be the toughest of the four matches. Fortunately the Oulton team were all seriously hungover having all been out on a stag night the previous night and Raydon coaxed a comfortable 4-0 victory out of the fixture.

After the Oulton game, some of the Raydon players were hallucinating and sitting around rocking backwards and forwards such was their shattered physical state. Raydon manager Roland Peters tipped buckets of freezing cold water over the main sufferers and this seemed to bring them back to planet earth. They went into the final game two points behind leaders and opponents Debenham Debonair, knowing that a win would secure the championship and promotion to the top tier of the Kaliber 9% Special Brew league. Raydon physio Lionel Stubbs had obtained some adrenalin injections from a doctor friend of his. All the players were injected with half a pint of pure adrenaline and made to drink a pint of Red Bull prior to kick off. In a brief but extremely loud, forceful and frankly offensive pre-match team talk Peters demanded that the players 'defend their arses off like their cocks depended on it' in order to keep a clean sheet and waste time at every available opportunity.

The clean sheet plan was pissed out the window after just a minute when Debenham scored with their first attack after Sid Chopper failed to pick up an opponent in midfield who was allowed to thread the ball through to a striker with Derek Diffydale lacking concentration in defence. The striker duly slipped the ball past stranded keeper Buffalo. The reason for Chopper and Diffydale's lapse in concentration was a desperate need for the toilet due to the Red Bull that they had consumed. It emerged that most of the team needed the toilet and there was a fraught ten minute spell when Raydon were reduced to ten men as the players took in turns to pop to the pitch side and wee against the fences of neighbouring houses. During this period Raydon found themselves in all sorts of sixes and sevens. There was a goalmouth scramble which last 7 minutes although keeper Buffalo wasn't troubled once and he actually had his wee against a goalpost during this spell. When play eventually broke away from the scramble, there was a 5-meter diameter patch of bare pitch where the scramble had taken place.

Raydon managed to hold out until half time without conceding further goals despite their players literally vomiting with exhaustion at the side of the pitch. Andy Slipper, who had played every minute of all four games, was so exhausted that there was blood exuding from his ears and he had no feeling in his feet. At half time, Peters made a treble substitution to try and rejuvenate his bedraggled side but with the three players he brought on having already played an aggregate of over 800 minutes in the previous games, their legs were about as fresh as a dead cat that's been left out in the sun for a hat-trick of fortnights during a hot summer. Raydon were camped in their own box, desperately defending to avoid conceding another goal and hoping that they might break away and score a couple of goals themselves - which seemed very unlikely as most of their players were unable to move much faster than walking pace. Nevertheless, the match passed the hour mark with the score still only 1-0 to Stonham. There was then a peculiar moment when Raydon's millionaire Chairman Lionel Stubbs and Roland Peters ushered the Stonham manager Duncan Donut away for a private chat a few metres from the pitch. When they returned to the touchline, the Stonham manager beckoned his captain over and issued him some instructions. He in turn dished out instructions to his team-mates. The Stonham players suddenly stopped competing and Dougie McManahammond was allowed to break free on the half way line, amble upfield (which was as fast as he could move), unchallenged, round the keeper and equalise. McManahammond then collapsed from the effort and had to have his heart started via a car battery and jump leads before he could carry on.

The teams played out the remaining 15 minutes with Raydon having no energy to attack and Stonham doing enough not to concede but displaying no penetrative*** aspirations.

As the final whistle went, there were jubilant scenes from both teams. News had filtered through to Clockton Park that results in other games - all of which had kicked off half an hour before the Raydon v Debenham game - meant that the draw left Raydon in second place and Debenham top, with both teams securing promotion. Had Raydon not

secured the point they would have finished third on goal difference, outside the promotion places.

The teams held a massive, joint drunken party in Raydon's shack of a bar after the game. Raydon Chairman Lionel Stubbs disappeared after the game for a half an hour and returned with a pile of brown envelopes which he dished out to the Stonham players. The Stonham team departed at midnight but the physically shattered Raydon team continued partying until they had all passed out in the bar. The takings from the day were sufficient to pay for the construction of a new club bar in time for the 2007-2008 season.

A league enquiry into whether Raydon had bribed Stonham to play for a draw proved inconclusive with Stubbs insisting that the brown envelopes merely contained congratulations cards, with nobody being able to prove otherwise.

Raydon would like to thank Lionel Stubbs's friend and league vice chairman Craig Harkett for his support throughout the 2006-2007 season and would remind all readers that Harkett's Carpets of Rhubarb Industrial Estate, Hadleigh really do provide the best carpet deals around for your home. Lionel Stubbs says: "I bought my carpets from Harkett's and the craftsmanship and quality is second to none. And I couldn't believe they were so inexpensive."

Harkett's carpets – "Underlying" the success of Raydon Athletic Football Club. ****

* One by rain, one by snow and one because it was unseasonably pleasant and players from both teams decided to go out for the day instead. ** Measured by Keith's Speed Measurement Specialists Of Tunbridge Wells.

*** We apologise for the use of this word.

****This is merely a factual statement and in no way an advert or endorsement of the superior product provided by Harkett's Carpets or an indication of any connection whatsoever between Harkett's Carpets and Raydon Athletic.