

39) TWTD Issue 99: Raydon make abysmal start to 2009 / 2010 campaign

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Raydon's search for a motivational coach has drawn a blank after only two people applied for the position, neither of whom was deemed worthy of a letter of rejection, let alone an interview.

One was Raydon's number one fan, 76-year-old Reg Shuttlebuck who, despite being a massive fan of the club, is well known for his dour and negative personality. His last wife upon divorcing him, bought a globe and worked out literally the farthest place on the planet she could get away from him, moving to Borneo to become a trapeze designer. Reg once bought a puppy for a bit of company and the dog was found dead within seven hours, having drowned itself in his upstairs toilet.

It was felt that Reg's demeanour wouldn't deliver the positive impact required on the team and his application was placed in a beige A4 folder clearly marked 'open when hell freezes over' by Roland Peters who chuckled quietly to himself after having done so.

The only other application was from local hairdresser Maltov Vladumskins who is looking for a job after his Barbery Licence was withdrawn after he was found to be using non-EU regulation combs. Unfortunately Maltov, whilst being a really nice guy, does not like football, doesn't understand the rules and only knows four words of English, having emigrated from Croatia in May.*

Anyway - Chairman Lionel Stubbs had expected a massive response to the job adverts and in the latest in a very long line of suspect decisions, had hired Ipswich Corn Exchange as a venue to hold a full day assessment event for the applicants. With no suitable applicants forthcoming, Stubbs decided to keep the booking of the Corn Exchange rather than lose his £2,000 deposit, and use it as venue for his local theatre group, the Raydon Amateur Dramatic Society, to stage their latest play, a production of 'Bagpuss - the early years'. Stubbs himself is a keen actor and played the lead role of Bagpuss.

In the interests of research I attended the performance of the play which did not transfer well from its designated venue of the 100 capacity Raydon Community Centre to the 1200 capacity Corn Exchange, though in fairness it's hard to imagine the best venue for it - apart from an airless dark room filled with nerve gas. I have written a full report for the Raydon Parish Magazine but thought I'd include a couple of extracts here to give you a flavour. Sadly it's a flavour which leaves a taste in the mouth somewhat like old tar:

'I sat down with great expectations of this play but left wishing I'd just sat at home and slowly pushed a rusty 6-inch nail into my eye socket. The discomfort and overall affect on my brain would have been the same, I'd have just saved the £5 entry and cost of petrol…”

'Sitting in the 1200 capacity Corn Exchange amongst a crowd of just 70 people made for an atmosphere that was more sombre than what one would normally experience at an autopsy. And that was before the play had started”

'Things started badly when Bagpuss - played by Lionel Stubbs - tripped over when entering the stage during the opening scene. Over the course of the following couple of hours, things went from absolutely terrible to completely and utterly f*cking horrific”

'Stubbs thinks he can act and sing but really he's just an oaf with a loud voice. He gave a prolonged bow at the end of the excruciating two hours of tedious hell expecting applause but was met with silence broken only by a quiet moaning from the back of the hall. His bow merely gave us all the chance to leave quietly and quickly whilst his eyes were averted downwards…”

'There are several younger actors in this production which you'd think would give it a fresh and youthful feel but they were all awful. It literally brings bile to my throat to even recall their performances. The main culprit was 14 year old actress Gertrude Hunter who played the part of Emily (Bagpuss's owner) and who seemed nervous and stuttery throughout. She was in tears at the end, having fluffed her lines several times and was possibly affected by me booing loudly when I got particularly frustrated (which was 90% of the time she was speaking) There's no doubt be more tears when she reads this review, particularly as I've posted a copy (in bold ink) to her family with a heartfelt plea that she is firmly encouraged not to pursue a career in acting…”

Back on the playing side of things, the need for a motivational coach has grown every more urgent as Raydon have started the season with a 21 match winless run. The last time they had a start that bad was five years before records began.

Raydon have not actually been playing too badly but have lacked a potency in front of goal with the normally prolific strikers Dougie McManahammond, George Mnunga and Dave Mackinackie being unable able to hit a cows arse with a barn door. The team has also developed a tendency to switch off at the back towards the end of games, having conceded crucial last minute goals in six matches. In one of them against Rickinghall Inferior Hotspur, Raydon had been 3-0 up and conceded four goals in five minutes of injury time, losing 4-3. Exasperated manager Peters said in his post match press conference, “I think Simon Le Bon said it best when he once said, ‘you can run your bloody arse off for ninety minutes like a blue arsed cheetah, but if you switch off in the ninety fifth minute and concede a goal you might as well have just stayed at home curling one off.’

The local newspaper, The Raydon Bugle – which has always previously been extremely supportive of the club and the management - have turned on manager Roland Peters. With headlines such as “Why Roland Peters should f**k off”, which was an open letter from the editor to Raydon chairman Lionel Stubbs - the publication has been relentless in their criticism of Peters.

Peters himself remains confident that he can turn things round. “Sometimes football has a habit of kicking you up the arse just when you think it’s going to give you a playful pat on the buttocks. It’s worse than being up shit creek without a paddle. It feels like the boat we were sailing up shit creek in has capsized, we’re surrounded by man-eating crocodiles and we’ve just passed a shop with 50% off paddles but I’ve forgotten my wallet. However, just like Moses brought Jesus back from the dead or whatever the f*ck it was he did, I will lift Raydon out of this run. The strikers have been doing extra training to help them find their shooting boots. We’ve given them ping pong balls full of sand** to dribble with and they’ve had to use them to try and hit a contact lens sewn into the lining of the net in the back of the goal. The idea is this will improve their accuracy and shooting ability. I think it might be helping – apart from with George Mnunga who’s struggling to hit the goal, let alone the contact lens. Perhaps we shouldn’t have used his contact lens as the target.”

Striker Dave Mackinackie has had a particularly frustrating start to the campaign. In a home match against Onehouse St Germain a mesmerising Raydon move left the opposing keeper stranded and Mackinackie only one yard out with the whole goal to aim at. He managed to blast his effort against the crossbar but the ball then came back to him giving him a second shot of the cherry. He hit his second attempt against the left post and the ball came to him again. This time he hit it against the right post. As he was shaping up to try for the fourth time, the keeper got back to try and challenge for the ball at his feet and in doing so upended Mackinackie.

The referee decided it was a penalty which Mackinackie duly blazed over the bar. The ball flew into his own garden, which happened to be beside the playing field, and shattered his greenhouse in which his wife happened to be polishing courgettes at the time.

The unfortunate Mackinackie reluctantly had to be substituted so he could drive his wife – who had 87 shards of glass protruding from her person - to hospital. Desperate to keep abreast of his team mates’ progress, Mackinackie phoned manager Roland Peters on his mobile phone whilst en route to the hospital and in doing so lost concentration and ploughed into a tree writing off his car and traumatising his elbow joints (it didn’t improve his wife’s agonising injuries much either).

The subsequent injury forced unavailability of Mackinackie, coupled with the impotency*** of the other strikers lead to 64 year old manager Roland Peters making the slightly irrational decision to play himself up front in the latest match, a crucial contest away against fellow strugglers Hemingstone of the South.

Speaking just before what was his first competitive start in 17 years Peters said, “I know people will knock me for jeopardising the team’s chances as I’ve had no recent training, am totally unfit and far too old. Running is going to be a problem, particularly as my blood pressure is eye-wateringly high – only this morning I had a funny turn when I bent down to pick up the post. And that wasn’t from the floor it was from the little wooden table under the letterbox. But football isn’t all about fitness, it’s about experience, it’s about knowing where to be what to do and who to foul.”

Unfortunately, Peters got so knackered in the pre-match warm up that he got a stitch so painful that his fellow team mates thought he was having a heart attack and duly called an ambulance. The paramedics arrived on the scene and soon started to administer CPR and deploy their defibrillator to try and kick-start Peters’ heart. As there was nothing actually wrong with Peter’s heart, the jolt of the electric shock made him jump so much that he soiled himself. An ashamed and totally worn-out Peters managed to wangle a lift home with the paramedics as they had been called out on another shout to a massive explosion at a fireworks shop in Ipswich and his house was only a 10 minute detour for them.

Upon returning home Peters flopped onto his sofa in exhaustion (without bothering to de-soil himself) and his wife made the paramedics a cup of tea before they headed off to the fireworks shop. A shattered Peters then asked his wife if she would kindly drive to the Raydon match and text him regular updates by mobile. He would have asked Lionel Stubbs for

the updates but Stubbs had recently lost his mobile phone down the back of his large leather sofa. So far down the back in fact, that he had arranged for an MFI engineer with hydraulic cutting gear and specialised upholstery tools to come out and extract it.

Peters's physical state improved dramatically as his wife called with frequent updates on the rest of the match and Raydon took a commanding lead. His wife finally reported that Raydon had won 7-0 and he gleefully promised to take her out for a meal later when he was feeling better. In hindsight, after putting the phone down, he felt he'd been a bit rash and texted to ask her to get fish and chips on the way home instead.

Having recovered enough to also text a congratulatory post-match message to the team, he was surprised to get several moody responses from players pointing out that they'd lost 1-0 to another late goal.

Roland Peters called his wife back to clarify where she was calling from and it emerged that she was at Clockton Park, having thought that Raydon were playing at home. She had in fact been watching the Raydon's Reserve Team beat Stratford St Mary Academicals Reserves in a meaningless friendly. Needless to say he was not best pleased with his wife, although on reflection he did recall that, in his weakened state he'd forgotten to tell her where the match was and was therefore prepared to shoulder some of the responsibility. It was soon spilt milk under the bridge when she arrived home with two battered fillets of stingray and chips.

Raydon's worryingly poor run goes on and if things don't improve soon they still won't have won a game. Following the defeat to Hemingstone, Chairman Lionel Stubbs issued a statement that was published by the Raydon Bugle which read:

"These are troubled times for our beloved club and I wake up in floods of tears every morning, but in times like these it is important that we all stick together. The fans are entitled to their opinion and I don't blame them for getting the 'ump with the performances at the moment but everyone is doing all they can to turn things around - none moreso than Roland Peters who has been working his socks to the bone to get the best out of these players which in some cases is like trying to get blood out of a microchip. I implore you all - from the bottom of my loins - the team really need your support right now so please get behind us. And if I hear anyone booing or criticising the team, I will personally eject them from the ground and seek an injunction to prevent them coming within 25 metres of Clockton Park."

*The words he knows are 'comb', 'yes', 'dwelling' and mysteriously no-one knows the other one.

**No-one knows how Roland Peters got the sand into the balls.

*** This is not intended to be a cheap jibe at striker Dywn Wynwynch who is indeed impotent, according to a very very reliable source.