



GILLINGHAM FOOTBALL CLUB LTD

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear fellow supporters,

27th November 2020

I hope you are all well and in good health in these ever changing, and very challenging times. I wanted to write and update you all on matters relating to your Club, I have been holding off until clarification was published in regards to current Tiers Medway falls within, and as you will now be aware we sadly fall within Tier 3, meaning we are unable to allow fans into the stadium, and all our income generating football and non-football facilities remain closed until further notice, save for our new on-line retail shop which we finally launched this week.

It is difficult, and would be irresponsible for me to criticize those that determine these tiers given the awful increase in Kent and beyond of Covid cases, with many families suffering great pain and grief directly or indirectly, and our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who have lost loved ones in this awful pandemic.

The facts are not to be argued with and we must all pull together, protect each other, look out for the elderly and vulnerable, show respect and understanding, be patient and tolerant and try to ensure we all come through this period as safely as possible, so that we can rebuild our lives and return to some kind of normality as soon as is safely possible.

Regrettably, I have to report the sad news that Laurence Plummer, one of our administration staff in the Boys Academy here at GFC, lost his battle with the virus last Sunday and sadly passed away in hospital, just a short time after we received more hopeful news that he appeared to be recovering and looked like he was heading home.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to Laurence's wife Shirley and his family and friends. We will hold a minute's silence before our game against Exeter tomorrow as a mark of respect and solidarity.

It has now been nine months since we last received any matchday or non-matchday income.

As you are all aware our Banqueting facilities and theme bar were also closed and we have lost all our bookings for this year, all our Xmas trade, which would have been over £600k of revenue during this current Xmas period alone, and signs are not encouraging that we will be able to open these facilities until mid -summer next year at the earliest, and that assumes we have a vaccine that is successful in the Spring.



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In the first week of May, whilst we were all coming to grips with the sheer magnitude of the problem, and having, like most people, spent a six week period at home doing jobs I had previously never had time to do, and spending time with my children, I went back to the stadium on my own to collect some files and spent a day just looking at various areas, I sat for a couple of hours in the Rainham End looking at the pitch, taking in the calm and thinking of the many happy and exciting times we had all enjoyed over the years (and a couple of not so happy times), and I wondered when, and if, we were ever going to return to enjoy those times which we had all taken for granted, and travel the many journeys we had previously travelled together.

It was a sobering time, but a time that started a process of reflection, a time that made me realize what a great Club we had, what a loss it would be if we didn't have it, and I guess it was a time I realized that whatever it took, whatever pain we went through, I could not see it all disappear. It was a time to reset our business, to dig deep, to re- focus and to work with people who shared the same views, people we could trust, people who genuinely cared about the Football Club, people that were prepared to go that extra mile, and people that wanted to be on the new journey ahead.

I've learnt a lot about people in these last six months, many have risen to the occasion, some have not, those that I thought would let me down have generally proved me wrong and have led from the front, and the opposite has also occurred. I have been humbled by many creditors and suppliers to whom we owe money from past trading for their understanding assistance and patience, and shocked by other individuals and businesses who have behaved appallingly in this crisis, showing no compassion, care, understanding, nor class.

Above all I applaud you all, our honest, caring and understanding supporters, because almost to a person, (there have been a couple that haven't), you have stood shoulder to shoulder every step of the way, not only with your generosity and patience, but also your moral and encouraging support which has been overwhelming.

It is no secret that we have all struggled behind closed doors, from myself down, there has not been a member of staff that has found it anything but tough, draining, and heartbreaking for most of the time. That is why we must all stick together and help each other through, ensuring that those that seek to damage or disrupt the Club do not succeed.



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Playing in an empty Priestfield with no fans is awful, and great credit must go to Steve, Rayns, the coaching staff and of course the players, all of whom have faced real challenges from time to time, yet they have gone about their duties and carried on with their roles in trying to ensure there is a tomorrow, and when that arrives we will be in good shape and ready with whatever gets thrown our way. It's not about money, it's about human beings, with families and normal lives, and our staff to a person have been a credit to you all and to the Club in general. Whilst yesterday's news regarding Tiers was not what we wanted, we look forward and pick on the positives.

Our ticketing and online retail provider turned off our platform in June depriving us of much needed income, we owed them some money which we were trying to pay, but it caused a problem by their actions. We were in a bit of an unsettled place in that period but have now settled down well. I'm not blaming the supplier but I felt their actions were harsh, in any event it challenged me to arrange a new merchandise on- line platform, more advanced than our previous offering, and I'm delighted that we were able to launch our new GFC store on-line on Wednesday afternoon, after four months of hard work behind the scenes.

The site is fantastic, and based on the huge number of sales we have taken in the past 48 hours, you are all liking it too. The site will be further developed over the months ahead; you will see more products, more variety, more deals and more excitement. Go take a look ASAP, we have Black Friday discounts until midnight tonight! If you have any ideas on what type of items/ranges you would like to see us offer going forwards, email Jo Barnes on jbarnes@priestfield.com. Any suggestions are very much welcome!

<https://retail.gillinghamfootballclub.com/>

The platform is in conjunction with Retail and Sports Systems from Nottingham, and I'd like to thank their Head of Business Development Richard Waltham, and all his staff including Hannah, Ash and Borislav for all their hard work and assistance, as well as all members of the support Companies that helped us go live.

I'm sure those that have been on line will love the photography, so thanks to all those that modelled for us, the players enjoyed their session, and thanks also to our photographers Colin Nash and Julian Hart as well as to our GFC staff Jo Barnes, Phill Catterick, Mel Tsangarides, Tom Lawrence, Dan Ward, Ben Reeves, Jo Binks and Kelly Derham, our Head of Finance, who made it all possible by volunteering their time.

On the pitch, and after a small run of defeats, which frankly should have mostly been wins based on how well we played, the team continue to develop and excite and are playing out of their skins at every moment.



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They are so positive, focused and to be fair are a great bunch of lads, have a strong bonding and want to take the Club forward.

To be fair also, they have a tough taskmaster in Steve, so even if they ever consider taking their foot off the pedal, rest assured Steve will persuade them to think again, not that they ever would of course. The balance within the team and the Club is excellent and whilst most staff are furloughed, those that are not are working extremely hard on new projects, so we are not sitting around moaning, more getting the ship ready for you all to embark ASAP.

The GFC School is open, our staff and students are working hard and ensuring they stay safe, and we are looking forward to some good exam results from everyone come next June/July.

Just to remind all season ticket holders, you can follow our games live on iFollow and free of charge, non-season ticket holders can obviously also watch by paying a small charge of £10 per fixture, but we are all working and hoping for the day we can all be together again as the 12th man at Priestfield.

Until then, please take good care of yourselves and your families, the Club is safe right now and whilst negative cash flow is clearly a problem, we live and hope that our fathers in football do the right thing and assist Leagues One and Two with a solidarity payment, which at the least will get us all to the end of the season, at which stage we plan a route through to the following season. Life was never meant to be easy, it certainly isn't, but we stick together and we find a way through. Fingers crossed for a good result in the FA Cup tomorrow.

Paul D P Scally

Chairman



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