



Bluesletter



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DEEP FROM THE HEART

Notes from the Chairwoman

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Hi guys,

TOP OF THE LEAGUE, WE'RE HAVIN' A LAUGH! Okay, well maybe not a laugh, but a guarded smile and a bit of nerves and still relief. It is, as they say the business end of the season, loads of games, still in 3 competitions, and top of the league (no I can't say it enough). And why not, I think if you look back through our history there were more not so great times than there were times like these. I was reminded of that by a text I got from Chris Axon after the match yesterday: "Last time we came here, we lost 3-0 and were staring relegation to Division Three in the face. Can't be the same club, can it? ;-)" It made me smile because how many times I have thought that? So I replied with the first thing that came to mind: "Yes, my dear, there is a Santa (Roman Abramovic)." And you know that is sort of what I believe these days. Most days it is like waking up on Christmas morning when I was five. Seeing the wonder of the tree and the magic that is Christmas for little children, and the feeling of how lucky I was to be able to have all of that! And that about sums it up, how lucky I am.

I had a brilliant month since last I wrote all of you. Work is coming quick and strong, so keeping me plenty busy. I know I have heard from some that they are in the same boat, working their tails off, but also from a few more that they had found jobs. What a relief! I hate hearing about part of the "family" out of work, facing hard times, so those of you that are still trying: heads up, things seem to be getting a bit better. And as in most years, I had a business trip in late January, and luckily it once again brought me to Southern California, home of the OC Hooligans! What a joy it is to join them for a match. Last year it was an FA Cup game, but we weren't on television, so we set up my laptop and streamed the match on the radio and

even at stupid-thirty in the morning, sharing it with a few die-hards is always good.

This year started out about the same, with the game not being shown and then it was... with a little organization, it was decided: MEET UP. I have to tell you, there is nothing I would trade to have to live through that time zone - it is murder! I was up at half 2 in the morning to be ready for Sarah to come and pick me up to be at the pub at 4:30! That is ridiculous, and to think these nutters do it week in and week out. For all of us on the right side of the country: no complaining until you face a 4:30am kick off! Sarah and I were the first to the pub and were greeted by the sole employee, who looked us in the face and told us "YOU GUYS ARE CRAZY!" with a smile. Quickly the pub filled up, and I mean filled up, weren't there about 20 or more of us? Unbelievable! Coffee and doughnuts (provided by Huby and Julie) at the ready, a song in our voice and Chelsea in our hearts, we were ready to go. It was great to see everyone, and just sad it wasn't longer. I can tell you if you ever get to within 100 miles of Southern California, let them know, they treat you like a VIP. I love those guys!

And we had a few other meet ups - Danny and I for dinner, to catch up since our trip to London, then Monday for Huby's birthday get together. There were about 10 of us back at the pub at a normal time. And we laughed, drank, laughed, ate, drank and laughed some more. You know it is the thing I miss the most on match day, that get-together in the pub before and after the match. And that night reminded me so much of it. The chatter, the banter, the good natured teasing and the laughter, and luckily Huby didn't arrive in his birthday suit and Cech helmet; we were saved

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Danny and Beth at the Chelsea CPO Luncheon, presenting the money the CIA raised for the Past Players' Trust!



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from that. So that is a reminder to all of you – if you get a chance, when you get a chance, get together for more than a match! Sitting with friends over a beer or a Coke and having a chat, it is the best time. You find out how great your Chelsea family is, you find friends that become even more dear, you share interests, debate issues and have a place to call your own, in the company of friends! And if you are travelling for business or whatever, what a great way to break the drag of working long hours away from home then meeting up and having a laugh!

So just a little bit of business:

1) We have posted the first version of our member survey. We are interested in what you liked and didn't like about last summer and a few other things. This is your chance to help us make the next tour even better. We can't do that if we don't hear from you. Please take a moment to tell us the pluses and the minuses. You can find the survey by going to <http://www.ChelseaInAmerica.com/survey>
Thanks to Chris and Daniel for creating the survey!

2) We are getting ready for the Dallas Cup! In the next few days or so, I will be trying to figure some things out, so stay tuned to the board for more information. If you are planning on making the drive/flight for it, please let us know.

3) Our spring trip is decided, and I have heard from the club that loyalty points will not be needed (yes we had a scare about that), so Stoke at home it is. For all True Blue and registered affiliates (if you registered with Chelsea not just got a CIA membership), ticket info will be up soon.

4) The DVD is nearly finished, THANKS TO BILL! What a mess we gave him, but he has been such a star getting stuck in and sorting it out and turning out a great product. We are just about to get it all done, then burn them and get them in cases and in the mail to you. Sorry for the delay but it was our first try and everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Hopefully the next time it will be

a bit more organized.

5) We are talking to the Megastore and should have news very soon about Chelsea crested, CIA embroidered merchandise. This first run will be limited, but I think expanded compared to what we have had in the past. As soon as I get word, it will be on the board.

6) We have finalized membership. If you signed up and have not gotten your permissions on the board, please bare with us a couple more days while we get all of that data from the database to the board to get you all your permissions. But if you notice you don't have your ability to see the members section, attached avatars and that stuff, let me know. Rich is working as fast as he can!

7) And I hear there is a great new set of competitions from our Twitter guru! So if you haven't signed up for us on Twitter, you could be missing out. I hear this month we are starting a competition for a signed first team player photo! Just look for CFCInAmerica on Twitter and follow us. And don't forget the Facebook pages we have, CIA and locally.

8) I also have been talking to Neil Barnett and it looks like we could be hearing loads more from him on the Football Show on Sirius 125. If you have it, tune in Wednesday afternoons; he would love to hear from you! If you don't have Sirius but have XM instead, I believe it is free (even without the Sirius extra package) and running on channel 421, but I am not sure of that number, I will post it on the board. But listen in!

Okay, I think that is about it for now. I am sure I am forgetting something, or maybe even many things. There is much going on, and you can be as involved as you like. So if you are wondering what your membership benefits get you, besides the upcoming DVD, and more stuff on the board, then get involved and find out, help with the newsletter, sign up for the podcast, join us on Facebook, help plan the Dallas Cup, get ready for the Spring Tour... none of this happens without you!

CAREFREE!

Beth

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Tune in & join the
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MY FIRST CHELSEA MATCH: 1974

By Chris Axon

“Why do you support Chelsea, then, Chris?” is a question which I have been asked at least five-hundred times I reckon. Well, I started primary school in my Somerset village at Easter 1970. The Cup Final was earlier than usual that year because of England’s preparations for the Mexico World Cup. Not sure of the exact dates, but school began for me just as Chelsea beat Leeds in the FA Cup Final. I have no recollections of either the first game at Wembley or the replay. But I do know that I used to watch the older schoolboys play football in the schoolyard at break times. One team would be Leeds, one team would be Liverpool or the next week, Manchester United and Arsenal. I think (and this is the story I always tell) I heard that either Chelsea were a good team or they had just won a big game, so one team would be Chelsea on one particular day. I think that is how it all began. Who knows... maybe on that fateful day, I perhaps joined in with the bigger boys for the first time. It would be nice to think so. Anyway, from the littlest of acorns do mighty oaks grow – from that initial mention of the name Chelsea, they became my team.

Andy Cox was Arsenal, Paul Seviour was Liverpool, Tony Heywood and David Rideout were Leeds, but I was Chelsea. From 1970, I began looking out for their results, but my memories are not particularly great about individual games. I can’t remember the 1971 game in Athens for example. To be honest, my parents weren’t particularly big sport fans...I think my football genes came from my maternal grandfather who had played football and cricket for the village in his youth (and incidentally, visited Stamford Bridge when he was a young man, the only ground he ever went to...if I am right, he favoured Newcastle and Villa for some reason.)

An important event happened around 1971 or 1972. A friend of ours in Windsor worked with Peter Osgood’s sister Mandy and he said he could get his autograph. I was so excited. The two names I knew at Chelsea were the two Peters, Osgood and Bonetti. I still have that signed photograph and it really cemented my affection for Peter Osgood

and Chelsea Football Club.

I have no recollection of the 1972 League Cup Final loss to Stoke, but I do remember hearing “Blue Is The Colour” on the radio and that really affected me too. I guess I must’ve seen Chelsea on TV – I only have vague recollections of the old East stand which came down in the summer of 1972, though. The first FA Cup Final I saw was the 1972 one.

The first Chelsea game I can honestly remember seeing on TV was the 1972 opener against mighty Leeds. Their goalie was injured, I think Peter Lorimer replaced him and Chelsea won 4-0. I think Ossie scored.

I remember – specifically – the build-up to the March 1973 FA Cup game with Arsenal. I remember Ossie’s goal in the first game and then watching the action on the 9.30pm news of the replay at Highbury. I remember Bobby Charlton’s last ever game – at Chelsea – being shown on TV highlights in May 1973.

Anyway – you get the picture...I loved playing football at school break times, on Saturdays, in the street, I was a football fan and Chelsea was my team. Imagine my absolute elation when – without prompting from me – my parents announced (either on Christmas Day 1973 or soon after) they would take me to see Chelsea play. In London. At Stamford Bridge. I still get chills when I think of that feeling 33 years later.

By a cruel twist of fate, of course, both my idol Peter Osgood and Alan Hudson left Chelsea in February of 1974, a month ahead of my Chelsea debut on March 16th. I was upset, but the thought of seeing the team in the flesh more than made up for this. My mother wrote to the club asking for ticket and travel information and I still have the letter the club sent back, nicely embossed with the club crest. It was signed by an office junior called Jackie, who I believe later became Ray Wilkins’ wife. In due course, the West Stand benches tickets arrived... price 60p each.

I don’t think any of my school pals could actually believe I was going to see

Chelsea live. This was unheard of amongst the village kids. I was only eight remember. At last the great day arrived and it is amazing I remember so much. My father was a local shopkeeper and so he pulled a few strings to get the Saturday off. Unfortunately, he wasn’t in great health at the time. He had been diagnosed with throat cancer and was due radiation treatment in May. Thankfully, this was totally successful, but he was feeling a bit under-the-weather on this momentous day.

He drove to London via the Wiltshire countryside and then the M4 motorway. We had arranged to park our car at a nursing home at Park Royal, where an uncle had recently been staying. I suppose we reached there at around 12.30pm. We then walked the short distance to Park Royal tube station and caught the train to Fulham Broadway. I recently visited Park Royal station and it did bring back memories...I recalled walking over the footbridge over the tracks and the art deco façade of the station. In March 1974, my heart must have been beating fast as we boarded the eastbound train. I had been on a tube train before, but this felt so exciting – doing what thousands of Chelsea fans do each week...this is what stuck with me the most I think; a small boy from Somerset being a Londoner for the day.

My first game sticks with me so many reasons. I can recall waiting in line at the bottom of the West Stand steps at the turnstiles. As the West Stand was the stand with the TV gantry, I wasn’t particularly sure what the stand looked like. I distinctly remember walking up the banked steps as if it was yesterday... I can recall the sense of anticipation, the noises of the crowd and specifically the blue paintwork at the back of the stand, the turnstiles, the souvenir huts...just writing these words I am transported back to my childhood. I realise that this day was such an important day in my life and I am so grateful my parents took me. We bought a match programme, which I still have. I remember the smudge from my mother’s wet leather glove is still visible...strange, though, I

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5 QUESTIONS FOR... Beltway Blue Neal Hobson

How did you become Chelsea, and when?

In May of 2007, I traveled to London to visit my cousin who was studying abroad there. While hanging out in pubs I saw some matches being played on TV, and while I'd never been a fan of football before, I got hooked very fast! I had heard about Chelsea before, but had no idea they were as great a team, or had just won the league the two previous seasons! I bought an 06/07 third shirt while I was there, more as a souvenir than anything else at first. I wore the shirt flying home and when I was going through the security line at Heathrow, the man checking my personal effects noticed my shirt and said, "Damn fine shirt there, son! I've been supporting Chelsea for 35 years!" He even called another man over to see. I was a little embarrassed, but I could tell these men had great pride in their club. This was the day before Chelsea raised the FA Cup at the new Wembley, and when I learned of this I was pretty much hooked. So I was introduced right at the tail-end of the Mourinho era, and one day I'll be able to proudly say that I've supported Chelsea for 35 years! I might be a relatively new fan, but I'm no less passionate than a veteran! I saw the Blues in person for the first time last summer in Baltimore v. AC Milan and one day soon, I'll make the pilgrimage to Stamford Bridge!

Who is your favorite first team player?

At the current moment, my favorite player is Nicolas Anelka. He took a bit to find his feet in the side, but he's more than made up for it since he was signed.



The crazy PCBlues who woke up in time for the 4:45am kickoff against Preston! (photo by CFCDrake)



He is the consummate team player; always hunting for the ball or keeping defenders occupied and looking for a way to cross the ball in. He can see goalscoring chances before the space is opened up, as if he can see a couple seconds into the future. He's very selfless as well, being just as happy creating goals for the rest of the squad as he is scoring himself. His cross in to Drogba in the Champions League Semi-Final v. Liverpool to make it 3-1 (April 2008) was amazing. Quick, precise and effective. Vive l'Anelka!

What is your most cherished piece of Chelsea "stuff"?

I would have to say my 06/08 home shirt with Lampard's name and number on the back is my favorite piece of gear. I also have several other jerseys, and my girlfriend found for me one of the new "presentation" jackets from the Megastore for Christmas.

If you could have any player from any other team player for Chelsea, who would it be?

This one is really stumping me. I love the squad we have now, and can't think of where another player could fit in better than who we have. I'll concede though that I would love to have Arjen Robben back!

Do you have any pregame rituals?

Before any big match, I adorn the TV with my Chelsea scarf and get my Chelsea shirts out and Blue up the room. I also try to listen to the Liquidator before each match starts, and psych myself up.

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remember the day as being sunny.

We walked behind the West Stand, right to the end (the seats were laid on top of the terraces and the access came right at the top of the stand) and I caught a glimpse of the pitch and the inside of the stadium which had been obscured from view. How exciting. We walked down the access steps and found our seats...six rows from the front, level with the penalty spot at the North Stand end.

We had a black and white TV set at home and of course it was breathtaking to see Stamford Bridge bathed in spring sunshine and in glorious colour. The East Stand was still mid-construction on the other side of the pitch. There was a smattering of away fans mixed in with Chelsea fans on the North terrace to my left. I remember the closeness of those fans to me.

The Chelsea team included such players as Ron Harris, John Phillips, John Hollins, Steve Kember, Dave Webb, Ian Hutchinson and Charlie Cooke. Newcastle United fielded Malcolm Macdonald, Stewart Barrowclough, Terry McDermott and Terry Hibbitt. The gate was 24,000 on that day in March 1974.

What do I remember of the actual game? I remember the middle part of The Shed twirling their blue and white bar scarves. I remember the goal after ten minutes... a header close in from Ian Hutchinson, which bounced up off the ground before crossing the line. I remember two or three Newcastle fans, resplendent with black and white scarves, being sat right in front of me. I remember shouting out "we want two!" to which one of them replied "we want three!" I remember actually thinking "did I stand up and celebrate the goal correctly?" after the first goal. I promised myself that if there was to be further goals, I would celebrate better...I guess I wanted to fit in. Of course, a second goal came along and I stood up and shouted, but it was disallowed. I remember a Topic chocolate bar at half-time. I remember Gary Locke doing many sliding tackles in front of us in the second half. I remember debutant Ken Swain (previously unheard of by me) come on as a substitute. I paid just as much

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BOSTON BLUES MOVE ON PHOENIX LANDING

by Ben Horner

Most of us on the message board are well aware of the success and size of the meet-ups that take place on the West Coast, or at least in southern California. Be it The Olde Ship in Santa Ana, or Shakespeare or Phileas Fogs in San Diego, the match gatherings are to be envied by those of us that aren't there. For big matches there have been over 40 people there for the Blues!

For all of us who aren't in sunny SoCal, those numbers are unheard of. Unless you are within a reasonable distance of New York City, and can therefore go to Nevada Smith's to watch our beloved Blues, you will find meet-ups like those seen on the West Coast few and far between.

I have been struggling with this very phenomenon. I currently live in Boston while I attend Northeastern University and have struggled to get a group of any size together. You would think that a city like Boston would have a solid group of True Blues together already. You would think that it would be easy to watch matches with a bunch of other like-minded Chelsea fans in a city of this size. You would think that in a city as diverse as Boston, especially one that has such a rich history of immigration from the British Isles, that it would not be a problem getting together for the games. You would think all these things...but you would be wrong.

Before I joined CIA, finding other Chelsea fans in Boston was a very difficult thing to do. But after I joined CIA, well, it was still a very difficult thing to do. In my time in Boston, I've found that while there are a lot of us Blues in the Boston-area, we are incredibly unorganized and spread out. However, through the message board I have been able to connect with a couple of other fans. Over the past few months, myself and one of these fine gents, Garrett, have been getting together whenever possible to watch matches, with another joining us for the first time on Saturday.

The problem is that the bar we have been going to does not open early enough to show the 10am kickoffs. With



that (and the 10am EST start against Sunderland) in mind, it was time to try some place new, and so we headed up to Cambridge to the Phoenix Landing.

The Phoenix Landing is first and foremost a Liverpool pub. It might not look like it from the outside, but it is a Liverpool bar through and through (for now). That much is evident from the signed kits framed and hanging on the wall, along with the banners, scarves, and various pictures and plaques adorning the interior; it is about as red as you can get on this side of the pond, and it was not a pretty sight.

There were four of us – myself, Garrett, Dennis (who as I mentioned was joining us for the first time), and his friend Kevin – who went up to the Landing, and when we walked in decked out in our Chelsea gear we were told that our match would be shown on the blurry projector screen in the front corner. It was a classic Liverpool move, trying to shoo us away into the corner. With the other TVs playing Man United versus Burnley, we settled into the less than comfortable alcove given to us for what would become a fantastic game for our boys.

Not even a full two minutes into the match and we were already up out of our seats as Joe Cole had a great chance but couldn't get a shot away. From there it only got better for us. After Anelka put us into the lead and we were scoring every seven minutes, it seemed the Mancs at the bar were getting jealous of our success. Just for fun, the four of us periodically gave a quick "Come on

Burnley!" to distract them from their prawn sandwiches, but alas, our joy at their expense was not to last the whole day.

No matter, however, as Chelsea put in a blinding performance on the day. It was a great performance, by a great team, with some great company, in a pretty nice place, even if it is a Liverpool bar. But who knows, maybe it will become Chelsea Central in Boston. Either way, we were all in agreement at the end of the match that the game against Liverpool at Anfield would be the perfect opportunity to get as many of us together as we can and march on the place.

On a final note, if there are any readers in the Boston area who haven't gotten in touch to meet up, what are you waiting for? PM me at NUhusky13 on the board so we can start to really get this group growing!

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attention to the songs coming out of The Shed as to the play on the pitch. Generally, I remember the overwhelming feeling of belonging... that this was right, that I should be there.

As the game ended and the crowd drifted away, I know as I reached the very top of the steps, I looked back at the pitch and the stands with wonderment and hoped I would be back again. My mother bought me a "Chelsea The Blues" scarf at one of the souvenir huts behind the West stand. I was so happy. I wore that same scarf in Stockholm for the 1998 ECWC Final.

I remember we enjoyed a hamburger meal at the Fulham Broadway Wimpy Bar (a big extravagance, believe me) – the site of the American Burger Grill today. We caught the tube train back to Park Royal and then home to Somerset, but that is a blur. However something important happened to me that day in 1974...six hundred games later, I'm still going strong.