

Meeting
Association of Tartan Army Clubs (ATAC) & Scottish Football Association (SFA)
Jock Stein Suite, Hampden Park, Glasgow
Friday 4 December 2009 at 3.p.m.

Present

ATAC – Jim Brown (WESTA) Simon Johnson (ETA)
Peter Morton (KTA) Scott Rae (WEBATA),
Maurice Hickey (BASTA) Craig Morrison (LADTA)
Scott Pilmer (HBETA)

ATAC Guests - (Guest 1) (Guest2)

SFA / SSC – Gordon Smith (Chief Executive)
Colin Banks (Marketing Manager)
Alison Jack (Customer Services Manager)
Derek Kirkwood (Head of Security)
Darryl Broadfoot (Head of Communications)

Jim Brown, (JB) opened the meeting by thanking Gordon Smith (GS) and his team for taking the time to meet with ATAC. JB stated that he hoped the irony of the meeting taking place today was not lost on everyone, given that the sectional draw for the World Cup would take place in a few hours.

JB went on to state 'I am confident that everyone recognised the frustration within the Scottish support at this time. Today we are seeking response to a number of questions which were submitted in advance, I understand that written responses have been prepared, can I suggest that they be circulated, allow us a few moments to consider them and then we can perhaps explore a few areas in great detail'

GS agreed to this and went on to welcome JB in his new role and extend his thanks to his predecessor Tam Ferry

Original ATAC questions printed in Black

SFA written responses in Blue

Follow up and supplementary questions / responses / statements in Red

The World Cup '10 Qualification Campaign

1. As the SFA reflect on the World Cup qualifying campaign, will the SFA be performing a 'lessons learned' exercise and what do you believe them to be? In particular, we highlight the fixtures and scheduling of matches.

1) The Scottish FA have reviewed all aspects of the previous campaign, as we do as a matter of course for all campaigns. Ultimately, failure to qualify for the play-off stage of the World Cup qualifiers was a major disappointment. Some aspects of the campaign worked well and others did not prove so successful. With regards the issue of player misbehaviour, a Code of Conduct was agreed and implemented and will continue to be circulated to all future international players.

As for fixture scheduling, I have already stated to the media that the matter was discussed with three previous managers – Alex McLeish, Walter Smith and Craig Brown – before the dates draw in Amsterdam. Similarly, it is re-emphasised that the Norway fixture change was made by FIFA.

2. Following the match in Skopje, Macedonia, the SFA sent a highly critical letter to FIFA (of the match organisation, specifically the safety and treatment of Scottish Fans) which you shared with ATAC at the time – what was the response, as it was never circulated to SSC members?

2) Derek Kirkwood, Head of Security: The stadium was of poor condition but had been passed suitable for the qualifier by FIFA despite our concerns. Since then, the Macedonian FA have carried out extensive work with the building of new stands, which has improved facilities considerably. If Scotland are drawn to play in Macedonia in future, we would hope the standards would be suitable, with a security officer assigned to ensure no repeat of the poor policing arrangements or decisions made at the last visit.

3. During the campaign there were several disruptive issues, we would like to hear your position on these matters and if you believe that the issues were addressed adequately and properly?

A) A member of the squad withdrew his services stating that they did not wish to play for the then Manager, George Burley...is / should this individual be available for selection in future?

3a) We will aim to attract the highest calibre of manager and, subsequently, the preferred candidate must be given full autonomy of selection. Each case will be considered on its own merits and the manager will be responsible for so doing but there must also be repatriation in the eyes of the supporters before any player is 'reactivated'.

B) The issue / events which became known as "Boozegate".....who made the decisions and when? Are the players involved to be considered for future selection?

3b. The board took the decision to exclude the players involved, in support of the manager's wishes. As for future involvement, see answer 3a.

JB asked for clarification on this point, was it the Managers decision supported by the board - GS confirmed that George Burley wanted the players excluded and took that to the board who decided to back the Manager's recommendation.

Maurice Hickey (MH) asked how this repatriation would be measured. GS stated that there was no precise measurement but gave an example of two players today, they were not named, one of whom had quite clearly shown through the media that he recognised the error of his ways and had clearly stated that he would be honoured and thankful of the chance to play for the national team again – and another example where this attitude had not as yet been seen

Going forward, GS stated that in future all disciplinary matters regarding the player's will be handled exclusively by the manager. The Chief Executive's office will be available to confirm the disciplinary actions and decisions of the Manager

- C) SFA President George Peat made reported remarks, immediately before an important fixture, that Scotland's failure to achieve second position was down to one miss and the player responsible castigated.....in our view this was an ill considered statement, we appreciate that the reported version may not have been published in it's full context, but the timing of any reference to this was inappropriate, any comment?

George Peat, President: The comments were, indeed, taken out of context. I was asked from the start of the campaign if failure to reach the play-offs would constitute failure and I stated, obviously, that it would. When the same question was put to me on this occasion, I used the Norway game as an example of the fine margin between success and failure, with the intention of alleviating the pressure on the manager. In no way did I intend to undermine the player or the team preparations and, in fact, purposely did not name the player in question with that in mind.

The National Team Manager

4. George Burley is a decent man and a proud, passionate Scot, unfortunately he was not the man to take the International team forward. The decision for him to go was taken two matches after the failure to qualify or to even reach a play off position, can you explain the timing of this decision?

4) As I have previously outlined, it would have been a dereliction of duty not to support the manager after the performance improvement noted in the final two qualification matches against Macedonia and Holland. It was prudent, therefore, to assess that improvement in the safety of two friendly internationals. Regrettably, the improvement was not sustained and it was necessary to act to before the start of preparations for the Euro 2012 qualifiers.

5. Some commentators and indeed many fans believe that the 'buck does not stop with George Burley' and that the SFA Chief Executive and President should resign, how do you react to those suggestions, after all, you appointed the manager and are ultimately responsible for Scottish football?

5) The appointment of a national team manager is only one aspect of the board's remit at the Scottish FA. The Association is in a healthy position in a difficult climate and we work continually to improve football at all levels. The board did not take credit for the successful appointments of Walter Smith and Alex McLeish and the only regret is that the previous manager was unable to fulfil his own ambitions.

JB stated "It will have been clear from the fans' reactions in Cardiff, that they were not only

calling for the head of George Burley, they were calling for your head (gesture to GS) and that of the SFA Board – it is clear that the fans are seeking accountability”

GS – “ The frustrations in Cardiff were apparentand in football it is success or failure, there is no middle way”. GS went on to explain that it was his desire that he, and he alone be responsible for the selection of the national team manager, the SFA board however favour a more collective procedure. On the last occasion it was a group of four who made the decision.

JB – “The head of the SFA Board is the SFA President – Can you explain how the voting or appointment process works, is there a line of succession and are there any statutes or rules regarding the length of tenure of office.

GS - described the Line of succession based on a new process - President is in place for 4 years when the 1st Vice President will take over (Campbell Ogilvie at present in this role, who will become President in 2011) and the 2nd Vice President (Allan Macrae of Cove Rangers) will take over as 1st Vice President and a new 2nd Vice President will be elected. GS explained that this process was currently being reviewed whereby there may only be one Vice President.

GS – went onto describe the success of the Under 21 team under the guidance of Billy Stark and spoke of how well the women’s football team were doing

JB – responded by stating that yes they are doing well, but the under 21’s were regarded as a feeder group to the national squad and as for the Women’s team, who really cares – the World Cup draw is getting made in an hour or so in South Africa and we are not there – that’s what really matters and how we measure things.

6. What process are you adopting for the appointment of a new manager and when do you anticipate that appointment being made?

6) The process has been established and activated and, as has been well documented, the target is to have a new manager in place for the qualification draw for Euro 2012.

JB – Could you expand on this

GS stated that he has a list of possible candidates, over 20, - some the SFA board have suggested and others who have approached the SFA, either directly or indirectly (generally through agents) about the vacancy. GS will conduct a due diligence report on these candidates and take it back to the Board and the decision will be made by the four office bearers and GS.

JB – The press this morning are suggesting that you (GS) have been instructed by the SFA Board to approach certain individuals, care to comment – is it true?

GS - Contrary to various press reports I have not been instructed or directed in a specific direction on the new manager.

7. Do you have any views on whether the next appointment should be a Scot or another nationality?

7) There will be no conditions of nationality in the process of appointing the best candidate to take the national team forward. The main criteria will be finding an experienced and respected manager who is capable of leading the team to a successful Euro 2012 qualification campaign and beyond.

Challenge Matches (Friendlies)

8. Prior to the match in Japan it was found necessary to apologise to the JFA for the depleted squad that travelled – how do you react to frequent call off's and what benefit did the Scottish national squad take from the match in Yokohama?

8) Withdrawals, unfortunately, are a part of international football across the globe. Injured players selected by the national team must report for examination by the medical staff. The best interests of the national team and the player's health must always be the priorities. The benefit of the trip to Japan was to increase the profile of the national team in a different continent and to allow new players to gain invaluable experience at international level. It was also the first opportunity to assess the extent of the improvement noted in the final two qualifiers.

9 As you may appreciate, the announcement of friendly matches at relatively short notice can create problems for fans with regards to costs and time off work, and we note there is only one match currently organised for next year. What is your strategy in identifying challenge matches and notwithstanding the lack of a Manager, when can we expect the SFA to confirm the calendar of friendly matches for 2010 and will the forward planning of future fixtures improve?"

9) We always strive to give as much notice as possible to supporters with regards the announcement of fixtures. As well as the Czech Republic match on March 3, we are already in negotiations to arrange other friendly matches in 2010. A number of factors will affect the dates and opposition: the World Cup finals draw, available dates beyond the summer and the Euro 2012 fixture schedule and the wishes of the new manager, among others factors. There will be constant dialogue throughout this period.

JB – our members and many Scottish fans determine their annual leave, amount of savings and space on credit cards on the fixtures of the national team, we would appreciate as much notice as possible

10. Will the “Celtic Cup” happen and if so what are the benefits?

10) The Celtic Cup’s inaugural season has already been confirmed for 2011, which creates an opportunity for greater forward planning and a standardisation of future fixtures.

JB – “Yes maybe so, but you haven’t answered the question – what are the benefits – has this been put together for football reasons or commercial reasons”

GS - “ We believe that this will give the games a bit more spice and might encourage the players to be a bit more competitive, obviously commercially it has to work, we can’t have it costing us money”

Colin Banks (CB) stated – “ if we look at the Kirin Cup that worked as we were playing for some silverware”

JB – “ we were playing for a cheque.....I am not convinced, I am not the football professional, you are, but I would have thought that there would have been more benefit playing , say, the Ivory Coast than someone with a very similar style to our own”

GS - stated that at the moment this is a one-off and depending on the 2012 qualifying campaign fixtures Scotland can withdraw from this if we so wish.

SSC (Scotland Supporters Club)

11. Do you anticipate a change in the fees for membership of the SSC and have you considered a discounted ‘family’ membership?

11) We have kept membership prices at 2008 levels. Various packages have been considered during our planning process and the overall feeling was to hold all pricing rather than highlight any particular area.

JB - SSC – a recurring theme within our membership is the use of membership fees etc. The most recent renewal material refers to ‘it’s your club’ unfortunately a number of members don’t believe it to be so – for example at my own club WESTA – the treasurer delivers a monthly report fully explaining transactions. I know ATAC and the SSC have discussed this before, but today we request greater transparency on the use of Club funds, what would you suggest ?

Alison Jack (AJ) -The SSC believe in the product and see no need to devalue it, by reducing membership fees. There are significant costs involved in administering the Club.

Colin Banks (CB) - Money is invested back into the club e.g. new website and any profit is turned round and used to help invest in grass roots football.

JB – All of which is undoubtedly true, however the members of the SSC have no visibility to this,

if there are funds going back into grassroots football then that's great – but you are doing yourself a disservice by not telling members. Alison has been very open and willing to discuss these matters with ATAC in the past, we simply request greater transparency to all

Maurice Hickey (MH) – When you are sending our renewal messages, you could just explain where the money goes

AJ & CB - Let us look into this.

12. When SSC membership renewals or indeed new memberships are due, do you anticipate this being an online or postal registration process?

12) Membership fees can be paid online for those with this facility and for members who do not have computer access a phone line service has been set up.

13. Do you have any concerns that the membership numbers of the SSC will decline as a consequence of results and failure to qualify for the World Cup?

13) Membership of the club has always been popular and has grown over the last few years. We still anticipate a high level of support; reaching a maximum 32,500 again will be challenging but we hope to get there.

JB – Is this a worry for you

CB – Not so much a worry. We have fixed costs built to support membership levels and we have been fortunate in that a surplus has been generated, as previously explained it has gone into other projects. But the key is to ensure that the fixed costs and infrastructure we have built to support the club can be maintained

14. With G4S being announced as the new sponsors of the SSC what benefits do you believe that this will bring to members or indeed to the sponsors?

14) We are delighted to welcome G4S as our new SSC partner and look forward to working with them over the next few years. We have already started discussions on how we can work with them and our supporters to instigate new initiatives. More information on these will follow in the new year.

Commercial

15. When do you anticipate the release of the new kit from Adidas, will this be a bespoke strip, a 'type2' or an 'off the shelf' version?

15) The new Adidas home kit will be worn for the first time in March against the Czech Republic. The kit will be available to supporters to buy from late May. The kit is unique to Scotland and will be of a very high quality. It is not an 'off-the-shelf' product.

JB – I know that Adidas are at Hampden today, is the new strip a type 2.

CB - New strip is a type 2 strip - new away strip ready in August 2010 will similarly be type 2 and Summer 2011 will see the introduction of a specifically designed strip for Scotland similar to France and Germany as this takes 18 months to fully design and Adidas have already started the process.

SP- Why May before replica's are ready and what's it like

CB – There are production timetables and it's traditional

JB - so the New Home strip will be Blue Top - White shorts - and Red socks

CB – Yes

GS – I have to say that I am absolutely delighted to have an international brand such as Adidas involved with Scotland

Football Administration in Scotland

16. In a country the size of Scotland is there a case for three administrative bodies (not including the many member associations of the SFA) i.e. SFA , SFL and SPL ?

16) There is constant communication between the three administrative bodies to debate and devise strategy to take Scottish football forward at all levels. As the governing body, the Scottish FA will always take into consideration the views outwith the organisations, including the supporters.

JB – This is just the standard line it doesn't say anything

Darryl Broadfoot (DB) - no-one has come up with a better option

JB – I am not here today presenting a better option, I am here asking the SFA to make a case

GS - FIFA want all referee organisations to come under the national FA's rather than the specific

leagues and most countries have 2 organisations. But it will be covered under the next question

JB - The mere fact that it has always been so does not mean that it should be so, let's hope the Think tank can come up with something

17..Henry McLeish has been tasked with a review of Scottish football, when will he be talking to supporters, when can we expect to see an outcome and will it be meaningful and actionable – will it not be another report that gathers dust in a cupboard?

17) Henry McLeish is currently in the process of compiling a definitive Scottish Football Review. The intention is to publish the findings early in the New Year. In the meantime, he will continue to engage with all relevant parties and organisations to ensure the most thorough investigation into the game yet.

JB – “ATAC have opened up dialogue with Henry McLeish and hope to meet with him in the near future”

Communication

18. To Darryl Broadfoot – congratulations on your new role, we look forward to working with you. You may (or not) be aware that in the eyes of some Scottish supporters, a number of your articles have been perceived as being “Anti Tartan Army” how would you respond to that comment?

18) Darryl Broadfoot, Head of Communications: Firstly, I am delighted to be working at the Scottish FA and look forward to dealing with the ATAC on a regular basis. With regards the “Anti Tartan Army” accusation, let me state categorically that anyone who is considered Anti Tartan Army must also be considered unpatriotic. This is simply not the case. In my previous job I was employed to analyse and comment on all aspects of Scottish football. From my experiences, I have commented on the thrilling sight of a packed Hampden and the joyous scenes of Paris. As with the Old Firm and other clubs, I have also commented on a minority of supporters who, in my opinion, let down the good name of the Tartan Army. Rest assured I am as passionate about the future of the national team as all ATAC members and look forward to a positive and mutually rewarding relationship with all supporters’ groups. Ultimately, I ask to be judged on the job I do at the Scottish FA, not my previous employment.

(8)

19. ATAC believe that the SFA should get out and meet the fans....allowing the opportunity for questions to be asked and answers given. A number of ATAC member clubs have had the benefit of SFA officials attending their meetings, but we are the first to accept that we do not represent all Scottish Fans (although we believe we are very representative of those who actually attend games home and away). To facilitate this, given that we have the structures in place, we offer to open up our Club meetings to the SFA and to non-members, allowing more open and transparent communication. Being organised by ATAC member clubs will ensure that it's not an SFA PR

Roadshow...our members and we know non-members will ask the difficult questions. If you are willing to accept this offer, we can deal with the logistics.

19) We have already increased accessibility and, indeed, speak to supporters on a daily basis. Eighteen months ago, we also conducted one of the largest pieces of supporter research ever undertaken and received 8500 responses from members on a variety of issues. We seek to continually improve in a number of areas and the response has been very positive. We will continue to consult supporters when deemed appropriate and welcome offers to assist us in our quest to maximise communication between the Scottish FA and supporters.

JB – So do you accept the offer

DB – we believe that open dialogue with supporters is important and feel that the use of ‘blogs’ etc and our website is the way forward, with player interviews and the like. Going on the road remains a possibility when the Association has something important to say or respond to.

JB – I have no doubt that websites and blogs are important – and it’s not a case of whether the SFA have something to say – I can tell you that the fans will have something to ask

GS – Our long term plan is to meet supporters possibly through Fans Forums etc – would it be possible to bring 2 or 3 clubs together at a time

JB – Everything is possible, I suggest that I take this up with DB offline

And Finally ☺

20. As we anticipate the draw for the qualification rounds of the European Championships, with Scotland amongst the third seeds, it is going to be challenging, how do you see the future?

20) We acknowledge the disappointment of the World Cup qualification campaign and have taken decisive action to ensure readiness and stability for the forthcoming Euro 2012 qualification campaign. The challenge is obvious but it is a challenge we will relish. With the continued support of the Tartan Army, we look forward to a new year with a new manager in place to lead the national team into a new era.

Jim Brown closed the meeting by thanking the SFA for their time and stated that he felt confident that the feeling of frustration and concern for Scottish football in general from ATAC has been appreciated by the SFA.

There followed some detail on how the minutes would be approved and distributed

ATAC Clubs in attendance

WESTA – West of Scotland TA

ETA – Edinburgh TA

KTA – Kirkcaldy TA

WEBATA – West End Bar Airdrie TA

BASTA – Badenoch and Strathspey TA

LADTA – Linlithgow and District TA

HBETA – Hebrides Bar Edinburgh TA

Note – There are 19 member clubs.