

Why League One could be lovely

BY ALAN FISHER
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It's all doom and gloom in the world of the Forest fan at the moment; it is unthinkable that we're playing in the third tier of English football for the first time in eons – but is it really all that bad?

The best comparable occasion I can think of was when we were relegated in the first season of the Premier League, which at the time seemed similarly impossible. There was a similar mixture of doom-mongering and almost utter disbelief that we wouldn't get promoted back at the first attempt; the doom-mongering heightening after an uninspiring 1-1 draw at Roots Hall against Southend on the opening day.

Of course, as the season panned out we did indeed attain promotion at the first attempt – and did so by investing a not inconsiderable amount of cash in the likes of Collymore, Bohinen, Cooper, et al.

What can we look forward to this

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season? Well, personally I have two trips to the seaside planned. Admittedly, Southend in October and Blackpool in February wouldn't be my chosen dates, but I'm looking forward nonetheless. For Southend a tribe of us are staying with a friend down in Essex and making a weekend of it, while for Blackpool we're already sourcing the worst dive of a hotel in preparation for a weekend of the Pleasure Beach, Forest and much alcohol! What more could you ask for?

It will be with baited breath that we travel to obscure places like Yeovil to see if they really do have that legendary sloping pitch (sadly I'm informed this is no longer the case!). Many grounds we visit will have almost as many – if not more – Forest fans in attendance as home fans. We're likely to benefit from boosted away followings from many clubs who will not have thought it likely to be playing somewhere like the City Ground anytime soon. From an off-the-pitch perspective, I really think we have lots to look forward to.

On the pitch, whilst Holt is no Bohinen, Southall no Stone and Breckin no Cooper,

we have strengthened our squad – and aside from the worries about who will fill the role that Collymore did in the entertaining 1993/94 season, we don't look in too bad shape. If it all goes according to plan – given the track record of Gary Megson (and the backing of the bookmakers) – I don't feel it's arrogant for us to expect us to be pushing for promotion.

If this season goes well then it will be enjoyable for us, which is something we haven't had since Paul Hart unexpectedly took us into the Division One play-offs. Whilst I have concerns about numerous things – lack of goal-scorers, a mediocre-at-best pre-season, and all the familiar stuff we contend with – I am quite pleased to see Megson putting together a side that, with a few more additions, wouldn't look out of place a league above the one in

which we find ourselves ensconced.

And that brings us neatly onto a major asset we have at this level – us! With sustained support we have a real asset over our rivals. If we can back Forest with noise

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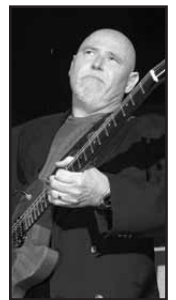
and numbers then – cheesy as it sounds – we can become the twelfth man. It will be easier if we get off to a good start, as we'll build a momentum, which means that the fans will be getting behind the team rather than putting them under pressure from the off. So let's start as we mean to go on against Huddersfield and back the lads to the hilt.

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Reds get Googled



#2 David Johnson



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