

CUTTING EDGE

Sheffield United Football Club

Winter 2008



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United's World Cup view?

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With England's success under Fabio C, attention has inevitably been drawn to 2010 and the staging of the first World Cup in Africa.

However, at Bramall Lane, it is the World Cup of 2018 that is currently occupying the thoughts of Chief Executive Jason Rockett and his senior management team.

They believe the club is well placed to take up the opportunities offered by a successful bid by England to be the host nation for a sporting event second only to the Olympic Games.

And they are not hanging about.

Plans are being drawn up which would mean the home of football, as the stadium is affectionately called in Sheffield, having a capacity in excess of 40,000 – the threshold by which Bramall Lane can be considered as a regional venue for games.

It is an exciting prospect for all Blades fans. Not only could they be watching their red and white heroes in one of the best stadiums in the land but international football as well.



So what can we expect?

At the heart of the redevelopment is The Kop – the furnace of support for the steel city club. Under the plans it is set to see an increase of more than three thousand seats. A modern, attractive stand the club believe it will be any eye-catching feature.

The columns will go – to be replaced by a cantilever roof. Supporters will be able to enjoy a new covered concourse area with improved catering and toilet facilities.

But that's not all.

Next to The Kop will be an additional Blades Enterprise Centre. Its construction, in the corner of the stadium between The Kop and the Valad South Stand, will mean a fully enclosed ground which enhances the match day atmosphere.

Other proposals for the Kop area include:

- New office, community and education facilities
- Media and corporate facilities
- A multi-use games area to be managed by the United Initiative, the club's community charity which delivers highly regarded programmes across the city
- A student accommodation block built on the corner of John Street and Shoreham Street

In addition, the club is seeking outline planning approval for the development of the South Stand which, with the expansion of the Kop, will take capacity to more than 40,000, with further residential and car parking.

Under these plans fans will also see enhanced corporate and supporter facilities centred on the Platinum Suite, the Legends of the Lane and the concourse areas. United have already extensively engaged with local community groups, fans and shareholders and constituency MP Richard Caborn.

The plans also incorporate a number of facilities for use by the local community where the club continues to play an integral part. The planned commercial elements of the proposals which will help assist in the funding of the developments and provide long term revenue earning opportunities for the club, will also provide growth opportunities for businesses located in the original enterprise centre.

Sheffield United Chief Executive Jason Rockett explained why the club is looking to the future. He said: "Over recent years we have upgraded supporters' facilities, have increased the capacity to just under 33,000 and seen the club become the best supported in the Championship.

"We continue to plan for the medium to long-term, putting in place the infrastructure to support a growing fan base and with an

...To this



intention of achieving our main objectives, promotion and sustained Premier League Football.

"We have also taken a longer term view and identified the opportunities around the South Stand which would enable Sheffield and Bramall Lane to be a part of any 2018 bid.

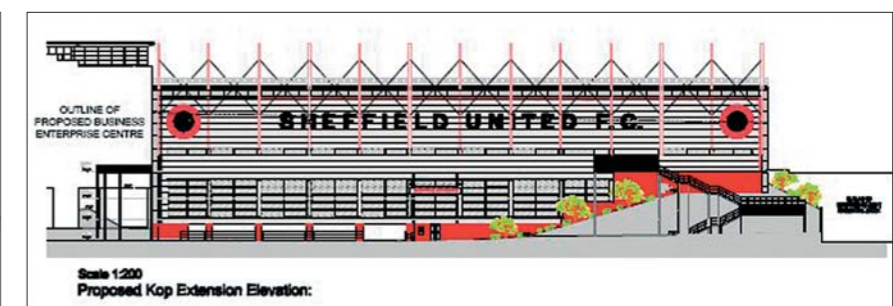
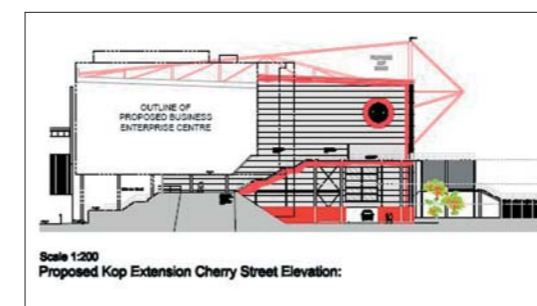
"The planning consultation forms part of the initial stages of the planning process.

This process can take anywhere between three to six months from the application being submitted. We also recognise with a project of this size there is a need for continuing consultation with the local community and our supporters throughout the whole development process.

"This is an important opportunity for the club and the community, which has seen United

become the biggest employer in the area (350 full-time, 650 on match days), sensitively delivering a number of high profile schemes including the 4-star hotel and the Business Enterprise Centre, both providing employment opportunities for the local area and Sheffield."

The proposals are due to be considered by the local authority shortly.



Football

A World Family Affair

Once upon a time – for a long time – English football clubs were able to exist in a comfortable cocoon in which they just about paid their way and looked no further than their own local boundaries.

With the world now a much smaller place and football becoming the global game, the clubs with both a clear vision of how to adapt to the financial demands, and the drive to create strong, modern strategies have the best chance of flourishing. The trendsetting Blades are earning admiring glances for their policies which aim to ensure that they stay ahead of the game.



Mariners boss, Lawrie McKinna



Chengdu at full stretch



Bobby Davison (left) at Fradi

Sheffield United has long been known as a family club...

But now the Club's 'family' links have grown to stretch across the globe to incorporate Australasia, Asia and mainland Europe.

A family of clubs puts the Blades in a unique position to develop partnerships, ultimately benefiting the 'mother club' both commercially and playing wise back here in Sheffield 2.

The development of United's international commerciality is a series of progressive moves keeping the Club in the vanguard of progress – incidentally further demonstrated when the Mediterranean island of Malta recently signed a sponsorship agreement with the Club.

The Blades bring to the Malta Tourism Authority a unique blend of international reach and proactive business development, enabling the Club to increase sponsorship revenue at a time when budgets for such expenditure are being cut by many organisations.

This family of international clubs will help develop players both here in Sheffield and abroad – an aspect United have been quick to demonstrate under the watchful eye of Football Director Terry Robinson.

Young UK players who have come through United's Shirecliffe Academy are gaining experience through playing football abroad, assisted by United's overseas coaches such as Don O'Riordan (China), Bobby Davison (Hungary) and Craig Short (Hungary).

In addition, youngsters from elsewhere in the world who the Club believe can make it in the professional game are being given a chance to shine.

Players recruited from the Ivory Coast – Dramine Kamate, Mohamed Lamine, Tidiane Souare and Moussa Bamba – are currently experiencing European football with Ferencvaros after first representing Chengdu Blades.

Chairman Kevin McCabe recognises the advantages a broad footballing base can bring and said in a message to shareholders:

"We are now in changed economic times. The world of football will inevitably change as monies available to fund player wages, transfer fees, agents' costs and the like diminish.

"There will always be exceptions to the rule. But the many ingredients that have created the present environment means that quickly adapting to the changed circumstances is to be a key factor for the future health and wealth of clubs, certainly in the next three to five years.

"Here at Sheffield United we are doing our utmost to plan and reposition all divisions of the group – none more so than football – taking cognisance of the negative factors facing the UK economy," added Mr McCabe.

So how are Sheffield United making a mark on the international stage?

Perhaps the biggest impact has come in China and Hungary.

The Sheffield United owned Chengdu Blades are now established in the Chinese Super League during the year. This, despite the emotional devastation caused by the massive earthquake that hit the Sichuan Province, including Chengdu, in May 2008.

Combined with the exciting performances of Sun Jihai for the United first team it is easy to understand how the 'Blades Brand' is making an impression behind the Bamboo curtain and significantly building awareness which ultimately will provide commercial benefits.

The Club has expanded into Hong Kong – by fielding a reserve team to create the Hong Kong Blades – creating exposure in one of the world's leading financial centres.

It will soon move into a new stadium in Shangliu, open a new academy – the best in China – and through Kevin McCabe is considering exciting property developments.

In Hungary, Kevin McCabe's Scarborough Group International Ltd., through one of its subsidiaries, has purchased land along with the ownership of Budapest's world-famous Ferencvaros Club.

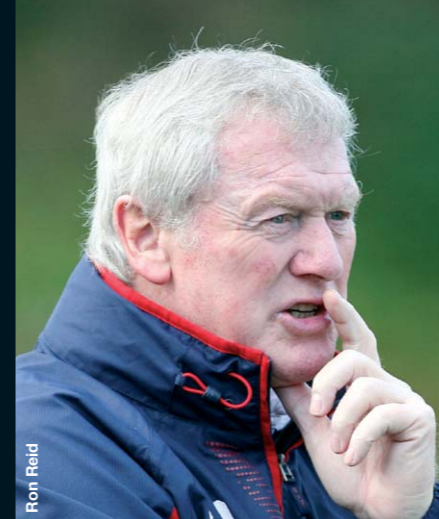
The rebuilding on and off the field of this well-known central European club which has fallen on difficult times is underway, including proposals for a new stadium.

Fradi – Ferencvaros' nickname – are performing well in the Second Division of Hungarian Football and is well set for promotion back to the First Division.

A co-operation agreement has been entered into by the two clubs. It will see youngsters from Hungary being eligible to play for Sheffield United FC in the coming years and, alongside it, up and coming Academy players gaining valuable experience playing for Fradi's first team in Hungarian football.



Pele with Kevin McCabe



Two of the biggest smiles at Bramall Lane in recent weeks have been worn by Academy Manager, **Ron Reid**, and Assistant Manager, **Kevin Fogg**, the two most consistent threads in the footballing development of **Kyle Naughton** at Sheffield United.

They are better placed than anyone to talk about how the Sheffield youngster has hit the Championship scene and won his first England U21 cap after just a handful of games for the Blades.

He joined United's Centre of Excellence at U9 after being recommended through our scouting networks, and came through the grades as the Club was achieving Academy status.

"He always had a good attitude and technical ability but he wasn't the biggest in the early days, in fact he was very small.



The reputation of the Forsyth Sheffield United Academy at Shirecliffe has been boosted by the emergence of Kyle Naughton from within its ranks.

Home grown Talent

"Although he was lightweight in size we always believed in him because he could deal with the ball, and our philosophy is to look at the technical side of the game," says Fogg, whilst Reid revealed that in those early days his real potential had not shone through:

"Kyle only started really coming to the fore at U14 level. That's when he really began to look the best in the group. Earlier on we knew he had good qualities but, like many young players, he had problems with concentration off the ball and had to learn that side of the game."

He benefited from working with some very good coaches who monitored his progress as the Academy adapted to the process of working with fewer, but higher quality, players.

As a late developer in the physical sense but an early one in terms of technique, the youngster was part of the long term player development plan which Reid put in place, one that comprises technical, physical and mental development.

The Academy Manager says: "When Kyle got to 16 years old he was exceptional and we have pushed his cause for the last two years because we felt he was capable.

"Credit is due to Kevin Blackwell because he asked us our own opinions and then watched him for the first time in a high quality private fixture.

"He liked what he saw and our business was then done because Kyle went with the first team squad. It is a feather in the Academy's cap because several of our coaches have their fingerprint on Kyle, but credit is also due to the lad himself because he has taken his chance.

"Developing players need the opportunity. They can play so many reserve games and then they need the next challenge – if they don't get that then they become just reserve players. Maybe others have come through so far and not had the chance.

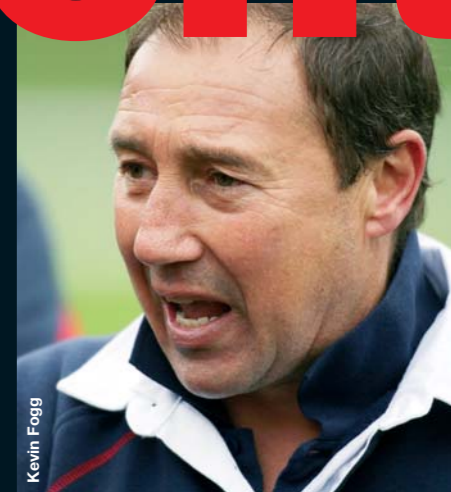
"We are not all surprised by how well he is doing because we know he is good enough to cope with whatever is thrown at him."

Perhaps the single most impressive part of Kyle's game so far has been his composure, something that Kevin Fogg can explain:

"He is so comfortable on the pitch because he knows his position, knows when to defend and when to attack."

Ron Reid's description is a good pointer as to where the game is going, particularly at the higher level:

"I would describe Kyle as a modern day footballer, he's athletic, adaptable, technically first class, composed and he has pace – all the ingredients needed today."



Kevin Fogg

Next up?

The likes of Kevan Hurst, Jonathan Forte, Evan Horwood, Ian Ross, Ryan Cresswell and Lloyd Kerry emerged from the Shirecliffe Academy and are now with other league clubs, whilst more prospects have already, or who are about to, taste the pro game:

- **Jordan Robertson.** Sheffield born striker with loan experience at Torquay, Dundee United and currently, Southampton.
- **Nicky Law.** Has played for the Blades and now is on loan at Bradford City.
- **Kyle Walker.** Another right-back, currently on loan at Northampton Town and playing in the league. Like Naughton is a local lad who has been with United since he was nine years old.
- **Adam Chapman.** Physically powerful defender or midfielder with plenty of technical ability. Only 19, but gaining experience playing with Northern Ireland U21s.

The future looks bright as several younger Academy youngsters seem destined to follow in the footsteps of Kyle and Billy Sharp's footsteps. Reid explains:

"Our 1st years, U16s, U15s and U14s would suggest that we have a particularly good crop of exciting prospects with good technical ability.

"Jack Adams is a schoolboy who has scored in the Reserves, whilst Nathaniel Foster scored at Barnsley. Then there are the likes of Kingsley James, Connor Brown, Jordan Chappell, Phillip Roe, and U16s such as Cory Gregory, Jordan Slew and Ishmael Lammy."

You think you know Kevin Blackwell?

Well, we guarantee that you won't have heard him answering these questions.

Straight from the heart

School – brainy or sporty?

KB Both, although sport definitely had a detrimental effect on my education. In maths, I used to sit at the back of the class and the teacher often wondered why I wasn't doing my work. I was practising doing my autograph and told him that I would need it – he said, “*You'll need more than that, lad!*”

I did have a brain, though, and got enough O levels to go to sixth form college to become a games teacher, hopefully at Loughborough University. But I left after eight months and started my own business where I very quickly realised I was good at maths and English after all!

How did the business thing come about then?

KB My mum and dad are from Ireland and because I was a good footballer all the Irish lads wanted me to play in their football team, and they gave me a job in holiday times whilst I was at college.

On Fridays all the big cars would pull up and money would be passed out of the window. I learned that they were the sub-contractors who provided all the bricklayers, electricians and plumbers etc.

I wanted some of that so I went and took a construction trade qualification, and built the company up. By the time I was 23 I was employing 65 people, many of them 20 years older than myself and turnover was £1.4m which was big money at that time.

I never laid bricks but ran a company with big contracts, including one at Confederate Life in Stevenage which was worth £600,000 in 1984.

You have an identical twin brother – friend or foe?

KB Noel is my greatest friend and bitterest enemy. We are so competitive that we couldn't play in the same team at school because we would end up fighting. If things went wrong we would be at each other, but if someone else got involved we would turn on them – that 'don't mess with my brother' thing!

Now he is a successful business man involved in printing and advertising in Luton but he does some work for me on the football side as well. He played for Stevenage and was assistant manager there when they were promoted to the Football League but weren't allowed in because of ground limitations

Noel is an A licenced coach and had the same hopes as me, but he was unlucky not to be a professional player. These days he can be very critical of my teams, my biggest critic, but he is over the moon when we do well

And the funny side?

KB Being identical has always confused people and we have a pact that when people are like that we will be civilised until we work out what or who they want and then we let them know gently.

When I was at the play-off final with Leeds Noel was walking around Cardiff with the rest of the family and Leeds fans were saying 'you should be with the team!'

On numerous occasions we have been somewhere together and I have been wearing, perhaps, a blue shirt and when I have left the room Noel has come in moments later wearing a red one which has really flummoxed people – they think 'Why have you done that?!'

How has your marriage been affected by football?

KB Being away all the time has put a strain on it but I am fortunate that Julie has been an absolute brick, so solid, and I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for that. On many occasions I haven't been there when she has needed help with the kids and I couldn't spend much quality time with them which must have been stressful for Julie.

I have had to be very single-minded to get where I have and I regard it as a weakness that I haven't supported them enough although I love them to bits. I have two great girls, Carly is a nurse in Luton A&E and Kirsty is in finance.

We lived as a family in Scarborough, Nottingham, and Plymouth but when I moved on again we decided it was affecting the girls' education too much. As a result we went back to where we know in Luton where the family can support Julie when I am away.



What is your management style with the lads?

KB I like to tell people where they stand so that there is no ambiguity and they do not know what I mean or what is expected of them. If they do the business I will back them, if not, I will make them aware although we have some very good senior players who know the game and aren't idiots.

I can be compassionate, helpful, cajoling, but I don't get too matey because when players do cross the line I have to show that I mean business. Although I stand by players I won't be cajoled or manipulated by them, and if I decide on something we will do it – that removes any grey areas.

Players know that demarcation lines are important and what is and isn't acceptable. For example, we have rules about not having telephones on the bus going to games because we are going to work – if a player doesn't comply he is fined.

Ambiguity amongst 60 odd people could turn things into chaos. If one person gets away with something and another doesn't then there is hostility.

I like to lead and to take things from front help, then once I believe people have proved themselves I let them get on with it.



Your blueprint for success here?

KB Kevin McCabe led the way in the summer when we coined the phrase 'The Blades Way' and that is my philosophy. Qualities such as determination, honesty, passion, commitment are being used to build Sheffield United as a business and a football club.

We are fortunate to have, perhaps for the first time on such a scale, a chairman and board of directors totally focused on taking the club to the highest possible level.

The infrastructure here is of Premiership quality and I have to achieve that on the pitch with a dynamic chairman and take Sheffield United to where it belongs, easily one of the top twenty clubs in the country.

Everything at this club is the best – our PR and commercial work is as good as anything – and we have all the sustainable ingredients with no component part built in isolation. But we have got to continue to want to do better and improve or else we will stand still.



Why do you do most of the coaching?

KB At Leeds I had a first-team coach in John Carver and we were successful, but I just feel that I can manage and coach. I love the coaching side but I want players to be on my wavelength and it is easier if I do it in the first place. Then players know what I mean, and if things aren't right it is down to me to make it right.

A manager always has the most impact anyway whether he is coaching or not, and I am a good delegator – once I know that people can do their jobs.

You are a fan of motivational messages, aren't you?

KB Yes, because they plant obvious but positive and important messages so cleverly. I read books on motivation as part of a business degree at Warwick University, and for a Sports Psychology diploma from Newcastle University.

I study more now than ever and love becoming knowledgeable when I find something that will be useful or relevant to me, even financial magazines. If I watch anything on TV it would



be Newsnight because it is about things around me – if they impact on me I want to know what is really happening and how it will affect people. When opportunities to study football methods abroad at good clubs like Milan, Lyon, and Sao Paulo cropped up I grabbed them because I could learn so much from them.

In particular I saw how youth football is tackled out there and in wanting us to be the best I aim to ensure that our own Academy steps up yet another level now that Kyle Naughton has been such a revelation.

The heartbeat of a United team has to be products from the youth system. When you have too many players in your team for whom losing doesn't really hurt you are in trouble and they will soon move on.

Losing hurts more to players who are local, or at least produced at the club. We need that heartbeat and I believe that our fans love seeing some of their own break through.

We have to continue that and keep developing everything else at top sphere level as we are trying to do.

How close to not going full-time did you come?

KB If I hadn't had won the Conference with Scarborough I wouldn't have gone full-time. Other clubs had tried and I was never sure but at 'Boro when Neil Warnock gave me that chance I was number one in my position and that was the difference so I had a go.

I hate people who sit around saying 'I could have been this, that and the other' but I am not like that. In my book you do it and if you fail you have at least had a good go. I could sit there and say 'I could have been a football manager but I had my own business'.

I bought my house and a car, and did everything to set up a business which was a

mixture of gambling and risk taking, so I don't have a lot of time for people who might have been.

A chance to do something special presented itself and I took another gamble to go full-time.

My business was turning over £1.4m, it was very labour orientated and I had kept it going for two years. But I wanted to know if I was good enough and it would always have been in the back of mind if I had not taken the plunge with Scarborough.

I could have been a failure but I had to do find out. That's also why I went to manage Leeds when I could have stayed here in a great job, comfortable with no worries.

Could I succeed elsewhere as a manager? It took courage, even though I had earned respect as a coach and there was big talk about going as number two to Sir Alex. I took a step into the unknown, confident that I could do it.

Why are you such a 'northern' southerner?

KB I lived in a council house, had a tough upbringing and never had much of anything

really in a material sense, at least compared with the 'posh kids'. Mum and dad instilled discipline in me and I learned that you only ever get what you deserve.

Sheffield United is a hard working club, one that has grafted without much luck but it has done things the in the right way, the honest, hard way.

I have settled so well in the north because I know exactly what people are like round here and I have come from my own very tough back ground. My mum and dad did all they could but I had one jacket (overcoat) all the way through school.

However, I never let it be used as a goalpost because it was the only one I had and if I had it now it would still be immaculate.

I look after everything – my car and clothes are spotless, my desk is tidy – because of my desire to succeed and better myself. That is the principle my parents taught me and it gave me motivation to do well.

When I came to the Blades I found a work ethic, an ethos that matched mine. I like things in the right order and hate seeing people who don't respect anything.



COPTHORNE HOTEL SHEFFIELD

New Lane landmark ready to shine

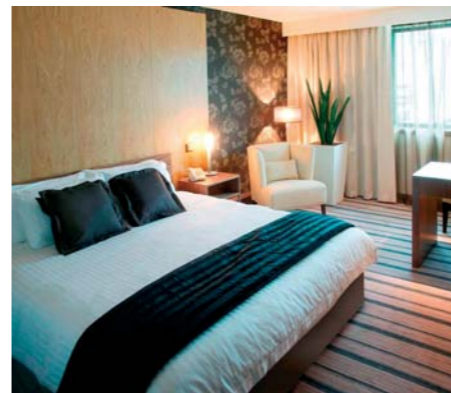
Work has been completed on the Sheffield United hotel operated by Millennium Copthorne under the Copthorne brand.

The contemporary four-star 158-bedroom Copthorne Hotel is a joint venture between the Blades and Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc.

Along with the football stadium it will offer one of the most comprehensive conference facilities in Yorkshire, with executive suites, meetings rooms, a stylish bar, 100-cover restaurant and a state-of-the-art fitness suite that incorporates a 56-station gym.

The close relationship between the hotel and Bramall Lane's proud sporting heritage is reflected by the hotel restaurant's name, '1855', which refers to the date the ground was established as a major cricketing venue.

It became the original home of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, which first started playing here in 1863. Famous cricketers that played at Bramall Lane include Sir Len Hutton, W.G. Grace, Fred Trueman and Geoff Boycott.



Orla Watt, the hotel's General Manager, says: "As a brand new purpose-built hotel at one of the most historic and famous sporting venues in the whole country, The Copthorne Hotel and Sheffield United will be able to jointly offer the local community and visitors to Sheffield truly outstanding facilities, service and comfort.

"I am really excited by the opening of the Copthorne Hotel Sheffield, as I know that together with Sheffield United's stadium, it will fast become the major focus for business, sport and leisure activity in the region, and a great asset to the Club," she continues.

Creating a stylish, modernist feel, the hotel's contemporary interior also reflects Sheffield's status as one the greenest cities in Europe, with a unique nature motif incorporated throughout the building's design theme.

As befits the latest addition to the Millennium & Copthorne worldwide portfolio of hotels, the Copthorne Sheffield's interior fit-out is being carried out to the highest standards of design, detailing and finish.

Spacious bedrooms feature colour schemes and furniture that provide a feeling of cool sophistication and comfortable elegance.

Equipment levels are first class with each bedroom offering guests a range of facilities and services including computer modem point, internet access, hospitality fridge, radio and TV, and safe.

Free on-site parking is also available to hotel guests.

Designed by award-winning Chesterfield architects WCEC, the hotel is set to become one of Sheffield's key landmarks.

Millennium & Copthorne Hotels also manage the Copthorne Hotel at Chelsea's Stamford

Bridge stadium as well as the Millennium Hotel at Reading FC's Madjeski Stadium and the Copthorne Hotel near Manchester Utd's Old Trafford stadium.

Millennium and Copthorne Hotels comprise over 120 three, four- and five-star hotels with over 33,000 rooms worldwide in 19 countries. Our World of Hospitality marketing alliance partner Maritim Hotels has 53 hotels with 15,694 rooms in nine countries. More information from www.millenniumhotels.co.uk and www.maritim.com



When the Blades agreed a club sponsorship deal with the Malta Tourism Authority in summer 2008 they became the first club to conclude such an agreement with a country. The partnership offers both parties extensive opportunities for marketing themselves and each other – and no doubt Blades fans will be keen to explore.....



www.visitMALTA.com

The Mediterranean's Best Kept Secret?



Nothing prepares you for the beauty of Malta. You'll read all the books, do all the research and think you know what to expect, but still, when you get there, it still manages to blow you away.

Situated at the gates of Africa and the East, 100 km to the south of Sicily, the honey-coloured stone of the Maltese Archipelago is stunningly lovely.

With a burgeoning nightlife in Paceville, outdoor nightclubs, weekly fiestas and fireworks, a host of events featuring top international music artists – plus the annual 'Isle of MTV' summer event – Malta's hip new image is helping to change UK

perceptions. Add to this the many up and coming Health Spas and you have the perfect weekend getaway.

The islands have one of the best climates in the world and a backdrop of 7,000 years of history, with historical relics evident of years of civilization such as the medieval walled city of Mdina, Roman ruins and catacombs as well as the oldest free-standing temple in the world – Ggantija.

The island of Gozo is for those who want to get away from it all! A short distance from Malta, it is very different from its neighbour.

Its natural landscape, spectacular coastline, sandy beaches, secluded coves and clear seas, together with its culture, traditions and hospitable people somehow merge to create a rich experience.

Gozo also offers authentic restored farmhouses and luxury villas, top quality hotels and spas, excellent restaurants and a range of opportunities for a taste of relaxed Mediterranean life.

Ideal for short breaks or longer, Malta and Gozo have a charm and friendliness which have to be experienced first hand. With daily flights being offered by Airmalta, British Airways, Easyjet and Ryanair, getting there is now easier and cheaper than ever before!

Sam's local angle



Sam Mifsud, Chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority, brought local Sheffield knowledge to his crucial role in helping secure the groundbreaking association between Sheffield United FC and destination Malta – through visitmalta.com

Incredibly he already had a strong Sheffield connection in that he attended school just outside the city, at Spinkhill, from the age of seven to seventeen and recently returned here after more than 20 years.

Sam – no relation to Coventry City's fellow countryman, Michael Mifsud – was struck by the city's transformation:

"The Sheffield of my youth was a very different city to the one you can see today. The development of the city core is phenomenal... the changes, for the better that have taken place should be used as a template for other cities to emulate. And what's more... there's still a lot of fun to be had in Sheffield!"

Commenting on the sponsorship deal, Sam adds: "We are very pleased that this deal is to everyone's satisfaction. Sheffield United is, historically, a very important club that enjoys a considerable, loyal following, and last season's strong finish indicated that future prospects are also very bright indeed.

"Malta's exposure in the region will increase immensely, as will our country's visibility increase exponentially on nationwide and regional television whenever Blades fixtures are covered.

"The UK is already our strongest source market, and we are certain that through this sponsorship agreement destination Malta stands to make considerable new inroads in Britain."

Win A WEEK'S LUXURY HOLIDAY IN MALTA!

The Malta Tourism Authority is offering one lucky reader a luxury 5 star holiday for two to Malta.

- **The winner of this fantastic prize will receive:** seven nights for two persons in double/twin room at the Radisson SAS Golden Sands 5-star Hotel on Bed & Breakfast basis, plus return flights from London Gatwick or Manchester.
- **2nd Prize** is a VIP day out for two on a Match Day in the Platinum Suite.

- **3rd Prize** is a £100 Blades Superstore Voucher.

To enter, simply answer the question below and email your answer, name, address, telephone number and client code to marketing@sufc.co.uk by Friday 19 December 2008.

Q. What is Justin Haber's home town?



Reaching for the stars

In Justin Haber the Blades have one of Malta's most instantly recognisable sportsmen – and probably one of that country's most affable and ambitious.

Those two qualities often don't go hand in hand in professional sport but the 27 year old goalkeeper combines the two with disarming honesty and an engaging smile.

A trial here a couple of years ago came to nought, but it made an impression on him and he is clearly delighted to have another opportunity.

As is often the case with goalkeepers, he didn't set out to be one:

"As a child I went with my grandfather to the National Stadium for the Malta FA Cup final and my first thought was 'Wow!'"

"Then, when I was an eight year old striker for my home town, Floriana, I put through my own goal which cost us the game and I couldn't stop thinking about it.

"I decided that I didn't want to be running about all the time and joined the goalkeepers. From my local team I moved on eventually to the national U12s and began dreaming about a career in the game like my hero, Pierre Barthez."

First football in England

Maltese television shows a lot of live football from Europe and many junior sides from Scandinavian, Dutch and English teams go there to play in tournaments.

In Justin's second game as a goalkeeper, aged eleven, he played in a 0-0 draw against Norwich for his home town:

"I had a good game, but can you imagine playing between big posts with my height?! I am not the biggest and I had to jump around a lot.

"I was invited to play at Norwich in a cup competition which was a great, first football experience in England, although my parents once had relatives living there."

Sponsors delight lucky fans

Every matchday this season has seen a lucky Blades supporter winning a luxury 5-star holiday for two to Malta, courtesy of the Blades' official sponsors.

So far, United fans Roger Frith, Darren Lea, Susan Slack, Paul Thompson, Chris Hardy, Alan Thompson, Stephen Goodwin, Sharon Morley, Jonathan Westby and Chris Allen have all won a luxury holiday to Malta and many more will do so throughout the season.

All you have to do to enter the competition is enter your details online at www.visitmalta.com/sufc and once

Putting money second

During his formative years in Malta Justin played through the levels, often playing on Saturdays and Sundays in higher age groups, before being called up to the Floriana first-team squad:

"My friends used to be working and going out but I had to be dedicated and stayed in – it wasn't the easy life in comparison but, looking back, it has paid off in the end.

"Maltese Premier League semi-pros often work as well, maybe own shops and restaurants, and are comfortably off. But I was always ambitious and single-minded about playing at the highest level I could!"

At 18 years old Justin went to play in Bulgaria for PFC Dobrudzha on loan:

"The standard of play was higher but there were only ten teams in the top division and very little money there, not enough to live on, really. The temperature was -22, nobody spoke English, and although PFC wanted me to sign a contract they couldn't afford the transfer fee required."

Further spells in Greece, Malta and France followed whilst he maintained a challenge for the International goalkeeper's jersey, picking up 32 caps so far.

Life at United

"I knew when I came that United have two great goalkeepers in Paddy and Ian Bennett so just being here is a proud achievement. But I am aware that no-one knows about Maltese football and I have to prove myself.

"My target has to be the first team and I am learning from them both, although I can't understand Paddy's jokes!

"Goalkeeping coach Andy Leaning is a massive influence and I feel that I am improving.



registered you will be in the draw for the rest of the season. To be in with a chance of winning you must be present at the game and in your seat at half-time when the draw is made.

Winner of the luxury holiday at the Southampton game was Alan Thompson, pictured here receiving his prize from Victor Bonett, Information & Support Service Executive for the Malta Tourism Authority.

"They are all nice, friendly down to earth people – a small family of goalkeepers – and that, I think, is the key that makes Sheffield United such a special club.

"The tempo of training is really quick, there is a lot of emphasis on footwork and positioning, and saving shots from the likes of James Beattie is great.

"There are things I need to adapt to, for example, the weather and how that affects the game. Whilst it is always sunny when you play in Greece, it is going to be wetter here and the ball will fly faster."



Posh and Becks?

Justin Haber visibly shudders with embarrassment at the suggestion that he and partner, Raquel, are Malta's version of Posh and Becks!

Young, attractive, fashionably turned out and both in the public eye, the pair are instantly recognisable to their fellow islanders.

Raquel was captain of the Maltese national basketball team which won a gold medal in a small nations event:

"That is how we met. Flooding forced both the football and basketball squads to train in the same gym.

"Raquel was laughing at me because I wasn't doing my weights properly and we started chatting. That was six years ago but we are going to get engaged and settle down after moving to England."

Following Justin in his football career meant Raquel had to retire from basketball but she forged a new high-profile career as a TV presenter on 'Kick-Off', Malta's equivalent of Sky Sports:

"She has done so well and even though she doesn't watch football too much she is very good at what she does and I am very proud of her.

"She's patient and understands that when I dream of doing something I normally achieve it – life is too short to regret not trying. I want to succeed and Raquel knows how I feel mentally, especially with me being a goalkeeper."

Events Calendar...

December 2008



Mini Season Tickets... NOW ON SALE



Sunday 7th – Junior Blades Christmas Party
12noon-3pm, Platinum Suite
£8 Junior Blade Members, £10 non members plus one accompanying adult.

Wednesday 10th – Live bands night in the Tunnel Bar
Local up and coming bands show off their talent all night long.

Thursday 11th – Skool Disco
£15.95 7.30pm to 1am
The first of various skool disco parties; dinner, dance and fancy dress.

Thursday 18th – Skool Disco
£15.95 7.30pm to 1am

Saturday 20th and 28th – Blades Super Draw Festive Double Prize Draw, up to £20,000 in prizes including 2 x £5,000 1st Prizes.

Saturday 20th – 'Legends of the Lane' Lottery Scratchcards now on sale.



Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd – Christmas Football Camps 9.30am-3pm

Drop the kids off for a full day's football fun for all aged 6-13 years old only £10 a day, please call 0871 663 2432 to book in at the Academy (Shirecliffe), Gym Plus (Crookes) or Heeley.

Wednesday 31st – New Year's Eve family celebration night

7.30pm-1am, £21.95 Adults and £9.95 Children

Christmas Opening Times



January 2009



SALE

Blades Superstore

Get a range of end of season bargains at the Superstore, Blades Direct (www.sufc-shop.co.uk) and TJ Hughes concession.

Saturday 3rd – The first Draw of the new relaunched Blades Super Draw incorporating The Blades Birthday Lottery.

Friday 9th – Skool Disco
£15.95 7.30pm to 1am

February

Saturday 14th – Valentines Day
7.30pm-1.00am, Millennium Suite
£21.95 per person.

Three-course meal. Valentines gift. DJ and disco.

Monday 16th to Friday 20th – Football Camps 9.30am-3pm

Call 0871 663 2432 to book.



Monday 26th – An Evening with Ricky 'The Hitman' Hatton MBE

Join Sheffield United FC and Sheffield Eagles for this very special evening with the newest light-welterweight champ after his recent 45th win.

7.15pm, Platinum Suite
From £65 per person or £600 per table of ten.

The evening will include:

Three-course meal, half bottle of wine per person, speeches, auction, raffle, photo and signing session.



Tuesday 27th – Fake That The Ultimate Tribute Show

7.30pm-1am. Three-course meal, tribute show and DJ.

Platinum Suite, Bramall Lane, £21.95 per person.



For more information or to book any of the above events, please call the events team on 0871 663 2448, email events@sufc.co.uk or visit: www.sufc.co.uk



	Blades Superstore	Ticket Office	Promotions
December...			
21 Sunday	10am-4pm	Closed	Closed
22 Monday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm
23 Tuesday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm
24 Wednesday	9am-2pm	9am-2pm	Closed
25 Thursday	Closed	Closed	Closed
26 Friday	Closed	Closed	9am-11am
27 Saturday	9am-4pm	9am-2pm	9am-12noon
28 Sunday	10am-3pm	10am-3pm	10am-3pm
29 Monday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm
30 Tuesday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm
31 Wednesday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm
January...			
1 Thursday	Closed	Closed	Closed
2 Friday	9.30am-5.30pm	9am-5pm	9am-5pm