



SETTING THE STANDARD

A Project For Improving Rangers



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Introduction

I doubt many Rangers supporters will be unaware of criticisms of our club in recent times. Inconsistent performance on the park; worsening financial problems off the park; ongoing and unchallenged negative supporter disciplinary coverage; and minimal methods for concerned fans to make their worries clear due to poor club/supporter relations precipitated by malfunctioning supporters groups. We could all add our own grievances.

Of course it is easy for anyone to criticise – supporters, journalists and even the club have done so in various ways. However, it is important to keep these criticisms constructive to avoid adding to any perceived problems. It is with that positive outlook in mind that Gersnet have led an investigation into supporter concerns but, rather than simply complain, we felt it prudent to examine these valid issues and offer suggestions to address them. Having just won the SPL title, it is vital we use this position of relative strength to examine all areas of the club and improve our chances of future success.

This project has initially taken the form of in-depth supporter articles available on various websites. A wide range of contributor background was utilised – from season ticket holders, to ex-pat supporters, to neutrals with relevant experience in certain fields.

The main thrust of these articles was debated online and we now make these articles and their empirical conclusions part of this report for offline supporters. While we have refrained from reproducing every article in full, we urge all readers to visit the links provided so they can examine the full context of the debate.

The next obvious step is to provide the report for the perusal of Rangers Football Club and other relevant parties; such as the Rangers Supporters Assembly. We hope that this will stimulate debate in these organisations and ask all bodies in receipt of this report to contact us with their input. We also invite contributions from any supporters interested in the project.

To conclude, the 'Setting the Standard' project is all about positive debate for the betterment of Rangers Football Club. Many Rangers supporters have already taken part and are interested in finding out more about the suggestions they offer. To that end we look forward to the club replying to the report in full and challenge all supporters to also get involved as this project develops.

Yours in Rangers,

Stewart Franklin
GersnetOnline.co.uk



Article One: ‘Why Fanzines Matter’

(Author: Professor Chris Atton – Napier University, Edinburgh)

It is easy, perhaps too easy, to dismiss fanzines. Some consider them as the inconsequential ramblings of obsessive’s with too much time on their hands. Others feel that they are vehicles for wannabe journalists who cannot make it in the professional media. With so many fanzines available on the web, some believe that the level of discussion that takes place on fanzine sites rarely rises above that of the gutter.

As an academic I have been researching fanzines for over fifteen years. My work shows fanzines in a very different light. I have read thousands of these amateur publications; I have talked with their editors, their contributors and their readers. And I have learned that fanzines play an extremely important role in the cultural life of a nation.

The fanzine deals with popular culture, such as football, music, films, television and genre fiction. By its very nature, popular culture is enjoyed by ordinary people – its audiences do not need any special qualifications to appreciate it. In this respect football fans (for example) are no different from sports journalists. Simon Frith, Professor of Music at Edinburgh University, argues that ‘critics of popular forms need know nothing about such forms except as consumers; their skill is to be able to write about ordinary experience’. In other words, the ‘amateur’ fan has the potential to write about their experiences of football just as expertly and just as knowledgeably as the football commentator. The football fan is just as likely to offer a detailed analysis of a game, of a team or of an individual footballer as is the professional journalist. That fan is likely to draw on a wealth of accumulated knowledge, comparing games that have taken place that same day, comparing games and players historically, examining the local game as well as the European competition.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article One Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Fanzines (online or print) form an important part of football culture.
- Supporter opinion is just as (or more) informed than any professional view.
- Fanzine contributors could be considered more loyal and passionate than other fans.

Inherent problems:

- Occasionally offensive output can occur in such areas.
- Recipients of fanzine criticism can become annoyed with ever-present criticism so dismiss it too easily.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club works with fanzine editors to understand content and use it in a positive sense.
- Club investigates providing their own online fanzine which is less sanitised than other official publications.

Article Two: 'Improving the Match-Day Experience'

(Author: Stewart Franklin)

I doubt any Rangers fan would disagree with me in saying that in recent years the overall experience of attending a home match has steadily worsened. Not just from an atmospheric point of view but the overall quality of the experience. Poor quality catering, aggressive stewarding/policing, lack of atmosphere, aging stadium, poor facilities outwith the stadium, awful shop, lack of security in the locus, terrible sound system, broken 'Jumbotrons' – we could be here all day, so I'll stop there.

OK, criticisms made; how can we improve; how can we set the standard?

Let's start at the beginning and go through a typical match-day. Personally, like thousands of other fans, I go to most games along with a few mates. We live well outside of Glasgow so we leave early to ensure we miss any traffic problems and get through early enough to enjoy the afternoon.



We have a few hours to spare and money to spend so what's on offer once we arrive? An official Rangers restaurant/café selling reasonably priced food – no. An official Rangers pub selling quality beer with organised entertainment – no. A museum where we can take our children, learn more about the club and educate away/foreign supporters – no. A few spacious shops with a range of different products relevant to the club – no. Entertainment and comfortable facilities inside the ground to get fans in early and build up the atmosphere – no.

Now, I do think it would be unfair to suggest the club don't recognise some of these issues. Recent improvements have been made: the stadium has been cleaned and painted in parts; Bar72 seems to be popular (if unaffordable for most bears); reports have

been made into further extensions; corporate hospitality is adequate; and the club have tried to mimic singing section displays on the odd occasion. Unfortunately, this is as far as the budget seems to reach. But finance alone surely isn't the only problem here?

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Two Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Match-day experience needs great improvement in several key areas.
- Thousands of fans congregate outside stadium but are not serviced effectively.
- Several suggestions of entertainment made within article (such as museum and improved hospitality choices).
- Fans are worried about media misrepresentation which is causing stewarding/policing problems.
- Singing sections should be accommodated more effectively and used as focal points.



Article Two (continued)

- Develop the multimedia aspect of the experience (e.g. mobile phone and wi-fi innovations) in conjunction with 'Jumbotron' screens/advertising hoardings.

Inherent problems:

- Costs of new/upgraded facilities would be high.
- External economy problems may minimise interest in new facilities.
- How would such facilities attract visitors out with match-days?
- Are club prepared to challenge supporters' misrepresentation more forcibly?
- Would fans pay more money for better facilities?

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to fully investigate methods of improving ticketing methods to allow groups of fans to sit together.
- Club to liaise with Scottish National Football Museum to investigate own project.
- Club to investigate private partnership for in-situ restaurant/bar franchises.
- Club and football/policing authorities provide full proscribed song/chant list to minimise behavioural problems.
- Club to commission generic match-day experience review in conjunction with supporters.

Article Three: 'Showcasing Our Unique History: A Rangers Museum'

(Authors: Graham Cairns and Richard McBrearty – Curator of the Scottish Football Museum)

'The Scottish Football Museum exists to promote the unique football heritage of Scotland, to build and maintain a national football collection, and to educate and inspire future generations.'

The above is the mission statement for the Scottish Football Association Museum Trust which through hard work and dedication has opened the impressive Scottish Football Museum at Hampden. I have a personal interest in this museum as my Grandfather's junior and amateur medals are now held in the museum and are occasionally on display. Richard McBrearty, Curator of the Scottish Football Museum kindly supplied detailed information that is used within this article and we are indebted to Richard for taking the time to add his input to this article and project.

The above mission statement rings true when showcasing Scottish Football and the same could be said for Rangers' uniqueness, while having our own museum is something that I know some fans have been suggesting for many years now. I believe that the first time I personally became aware of the need for a Rangers museum was after the tragic death of Davie Cooper. Many Rangers fans at the time rightly stated that a Rangers Museum would be lasting and fitting tribute to Davie Cooper. The idea of a museum has been muted and discussed at various AGMs, but as yet, there has been little, if any movement on this front.



If you have been lucky enough to have visited the Ibrox Trophy Room you will know that there are many unique, interesting and quirky exhibits that deserve to be showcased in a dedicated museum – the 'Loving Cup' instantly springs to mind. Indeed, the club feel that the stadium is a museum in itself and while that opinion has validity, we could build upon the existing tour by providing new stand-alone facilities for such an initiative. This existing tour has positive feedback but there is no doubt improvement, as always, can be sought.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Three Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Existing trophy room and stadium tour need to be expanded into a proper museum.
- This should be based in the Bill Struth Stand or in self-contained building.
- Successful museum projects such as Hampden and Camp Nou should be examined.
- Online aspects would also be important to project.
- Finance and dedication would be required to make project successful.
- Club needs to work with former players and interested fans to investigate further.



Article Three (continued)

Inherent problems:

- Costs of such facilities would be high.
- Making a profit is not guaranteed.
- How would a museum attract visitors out with match-days?

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to liaise with Scottish National Football Museum to investigate own project.
- Club to study existing successful foreign models.
- Club to found new 'Rangers Historical Society' made up of former players and committed fans.
- Club to investigate any sources of external funds and help from local authority sources.

Article Four: ‘Selling Rangers to the World‘

(Authors: Robert Boyle and Lee Fitzgerald)

Football is not just about the trophies or the glory anymore: money is as big a part of the modern game as success on the field. It is what keeps clubs afloat, allows them to buy the players and to improve the facilities for those players and the supporters who follow the club. It is these supporters who collectively provide football clubs with much of the revenue needed to achieve these goals. Rangers Football Club are well aware of this fact and know that the unwavering loyalty and devotion shown by us supporters can be exploited through the sale of merchandise and memorabilia to increase the yearly turnover.

If ever there was a more critical time for this loyalty to be utilised, it is now. The club is enduring a period of financial insecurity after two consecutive summers of big spending coupled with failure to make the group stages of the Champions League this season and the £10 million cash incentive that coincided. In January, David Murray was forced to admit that all offers for our big-name players would be considered due to our financial predicament. These are tough times, but is the club exploring every avenue of generating income? What of our merchandising revenue?

The Rangers support is vast; you will find Bears in all corners of the world that are devoted and loyal to their club. Around 200,000 of these supporters descended on Manchester last season for the UEFA Cup Final, an unprecedented number of people actively following a football match. That single event served as proof of the enormity of the Rangers fan base, and the truth is that most of these fans would have come from the United Kingdom alone. Think of the thousands upon thousands of others who would have packed their local Rangers or Scottish bar in the cities of Canada, America and Australia to watch their beloved team contest a European final. What I am trying to emphasise here is that with these great numbers comes great marketing potential. Which sadly isn't being explored.



Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Four Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Existing Rangers retail activities require improvement – especially for overseas fans.
- JJB deal may be financially lucrative but it is failing on the ‘shop floor’.
- Do we have an alternative in place if JJB’s financial problems continue?
- Merchandise availability is poor at home and abroad (comments from England, Northern Ireland, North America and Australia – all sources of ex-pat interest).
- Could existing supporter networks (e.g. NARSA and ORSA) be utilised to complement existing agreements?
- Is range of merchandise wide-enough?

Article Four (continued)

Inherent problems:

- Is club restricted due to existing retail arrangements with Umbro and JJB?
- Do we have enough ex-pat supporters to make investment worthwhile?
- Upkeep of 'in-house' retail stores is expensive.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to liaise with JJB and Umbro to investigate improvements to existing deals.
- Club to look into working with supporter networks to distribute stock.
- Club to detail alternative arrangements in event of further JJB financial problems.





Article Five: 'Redeveloping RSC Links with the Club'

(Author: Richard Cleary)

I would like to discuss the role of Rangers Supporters Clubs (RSCs) in today's game, the links between them and the club, and how we can get the best working relationship between them.

At the moment, all official RSCs are registered at Ibrox through the Worldwide Alliance (WWA), with claims of over 600 registered clubs and a membership of 30,000 supporters. From within this comes the Rangers Supporters Assembly, with 10 elected representatives taken from the Worldwide Alliance.

There is also the Rangers Supporters Association, the much longer-standing organisation which used to distribute tickets to RSCs for matches both at Ibrox and away from home. Sadly, this has diminished much in recent years, forcing it to sell their headquarters within the Wee Rangers Club to pay off its debts and now has only around 20 member clubs.

RSCs take many shapes and forms throughout the world. From the many Glasgow based clubs with decades of history behind them and a million stories of follow following, to the many overseas RSC's that show games in clubs and pubs for exiled Bears all over the world. I personally have been a member of a Glasgow based RSC for 20 years, 10 of which as part of their committee, so I really believe in the value of the RSC and have some experience of how they are run.

RSCs in this country are mainly run with one primary function: to arrange travel and tickets for Rangers supporters to follow the team. The club's contact with RSCs throughout the course of the season almost entirely consists of ticketing issues. Most RSCs will know very little about the WWA, when it has meetings in its area, who are the area representatives, and what it is there to do for them. Outside the UK, they are mostly social, a gathering of supporters to watch the game together at all hours of the day and night.

We all know that the current situation does very little for either party. It gives virtually nothing to the RSCs and the club gets virtually nothing back from them.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Five Analysis

Main points of debate:

- The club/RSC relationship is undervalued.
- It has been proven that such fans and club can work together to achieve results.
- More should be done by the club to make RSC membership more attractive.
- RSC's could raise money for the club in return for such benefits.
- New supporters' organisation required to implement this due to failing existing ones.

Article Five (continued)



Inherent problems:

- Rangers Supporters Association needs to modernise.
- Would fans be interested in another supporters' group?
- What happens when relations break down over difficult issues?

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to fully investigate methods of improving ticketing methods.
- Club to investigate failing existing fan organisations and look to revamp if necessary.
- Club to survey season ticket holders for new membership scheme.

Article Six: 'The Rangers Scholarship'

(Author: John McCallum)

My first job was an apprentice printer, it was a small place employing about 8 or so people at that time and I was their first 'apprentice'. Times were hard then (sound familiar?) and rather than take me on I was employed through the government run Youth Training Scheme on the princely sum of £27.50 a week and £5 travelling expenses.

Part of how the YTS was sold to potential employees was that there would be college based training as well as on the job skills. This sounded good; rather than just being exploited slave labour I got 2 week stints at the Building and Printing College every month and more ScotVec modules than you could shake an inky rag at.

Eventually after a month or two my boss approached me and asked how I was enjoying college. The reality was I loved it, you didn't start until 9am, it was a very relaxed atmosphere, and you got to ogle at the hairdressers in the College of Commerce across the road. However if truth be told, I wasn't learning a whole lot about printing which was what I was supposed to be doing. Lots of theory and not a lot of practical was my diplomatic reply. My boss, who had spent his entire working life in the printing game paused for a moment and reflected on my reply and his slightly confusing words have remained with me until this day; 'Aye son', he ventured 'theory is alright in theory but when you want to learn to swim sooner or later you need to get into the water'.



The training of young footballers seems to be a thing of great difficulty for Rangers recently. Part of that problem seems to have been our reluctance to move with the times. In this day of public/private partnerships, you have to wonder why Rangers (and other clubs) haven't got a genuine tie-in with a local school. A residential aspect to youth development is common place on the continent where boys are schooled from 13 to 15 in conjunction with a club or FA. The acclaimed Clairefontaine centre outside Paris and the famous Ajax Academy all include 'normal' schooling as part of their curriculum; these people are children after all.

Curiously, a local school to Ibrox, Bellahouston Academy, is Scotland's first 'school for sporting excellence'. The school has over 130 pupils who are only there because of their sporting talent. These kids still get a full education but they also get access to specialist coaches, advice, conditioning and sports psychologists. Football isn't currently one of the sports covered at the school - perhaps Rangers could consider helping to change that?

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>



Article Six Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Club youth system doesn't appear to be as successful as it could be.
- Use successful foreign models to improve this.
- Utilise local schools to implement scholarship model.
- Feeder clubs and loan deals would perhaps benefit experience of young pros.

Inherent problems:

- Initial financial investment could be high.
- Success still isn't guaranteed.
- Patience of supporters would be required during change of strategic operations.
- Social issues in Scotland would still hold young talent back.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to investigate successful existing football models at home and abroad.
- Club to investigate existing venues for use by Rangers (e.g. Largs, Bellahouston etc)
- What governmental or SFA funds are available for such a project?



Article Seven: 'Scouting for a Future'

(Author: Lee Fitzgerald)

The Rangers of 2009 is not the club we all once knew.

No longer can we attract Europe's best players when they are at the top of their game. In fact, nowadays we would struggle to pay their appearance bonuses, never mind their weekly salaries. The club is suffering the effects of an economic downturn and poor money-management from the Boardroom to the Manager's Office. In correlation with this fact, we are seeing a decline in the quality of performances produced on the pitch. There is no doubt about it; we are in the midst of a decline. Every year we have to sell our top players, qualify for the Champions League and continue to fill Ibrox with 50,000 fans, just so as we break even and don't record a loss year on year.

Something has to change. David Murray and Walter Smith have constantly reminded us as fans that the days of big spending are over and that we cannot compete financially with the top European sides that are paying ludicrous amounts of money for players. But why are we making excuses for our predicament? We should be creating a new vision for the club, one which will see us compete in the Champions League, assert dominance in the SPL and become an attractive club again. I have such a vision; it is neither complicated nor costly. It is the creation of a multi-level scouting network which can identify the best young hidden talent from across the globe, find players who are within our price range and who will improve the squad and also give the manager a chance to explore avenues never before open to him.

It is the future.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Seven Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Club can't compete financially with Europe's top clubs.
- Creation of a multi-level scouting network to identify world football's best talent.
- Current transfer policy is failing with millions of pounds wasted.
- Director of Football should be appointed to oversee development of new system.
- Marketing benefits of worldwide talent could offset costs.
- Use existing models at other similar sized clubs (such as AZ Alkmaar and Hoffenheim) to maximise success.
- Former players should be used as a starting point.

Inherent problems:

- Initial financial investment and ongoing costs could be high.
- Success still isn't guaranteed.
- Such a network would take years to bear fruit.
- Director of Football model hasn't worked well in the UK in recent times.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to investigate successful existing scouting models and home and abroad.
- Club to arrange former player forum to gauge interest in working as above.

Article Eight: ‘Looking Through Oranje Glasses’

(Author: David Tomlinson)

I would like to bring in two new names of men that have become chairmen of Dutch football clubs that don't have billions to spend but through positive thinking and good club management have brought their teams to punching above their weight on a long term basis.

That is Riemer van der Velde the ex-chairman of Herenveen and Joop Munsterman of FC Twente. Both these chairmen took over the clubs when they were on a low and in financial turmoil (sound familiar?).

Riemer van der Velde took over Herenveen in 1983 when they played in the second Dutch league. They were in financial mess and had little going for them. By 1985 Riemer had the club financially in the black and looked to the future by bringing in Foppe de Haan as trainer. Foppe is a trainer who had a vision for positive and attacking football (he is to this day coach from the Dutch U21 team). Although Foppe was replaced after a year for poor results he was put in charge of coordinating the technical side of the club. Johan Crujff who had just been sacked as manager of Ajax was asked to take over the club and was totally impressed by the vision of van der Velde. Only the pulling power of taking over at Barcelona stopped Crujff from taking the managers job at Herenveen.



The next Chairman is Joop Munsterman, from FC Twente. He is special because he started as a cleaner at the local newspaper. He worked his way up the ladder from cleaner to director of the newspaper and later Chief Executive Officer of the British investment firm Mecom who owned the publishing company. Joop, who was already a director of Twente, took over when Twente were minutes away from bankruptcy. He built a plan to save Twente, which translates to 'Twente under the scaffold'.

In addition that that strategy, Twente have one of the best youth academies in Holland while having people with vision in place who can pull misfits from other teams and turn them into million pound players. Orlando Engelaar came to Twente for €400,000 and was sold to Schalke for €7 million and Karim El Ahmadi a youth product was also sold for millions. They formed the midfield positions for Twente last season and were thought irreplaceable. Twente now lie second with a totally new midfield nine points behind AZ. Eljero Elia was a young player sitting on the bench at Den Haag when Twente bought him for €100,000. He is now valued at €12 million...!

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Eight Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Herenveen and FC Twente are similar clubs to Rangers in terms of finance.
- Good, innovative management can bring relative success.



Article Eight (continued)

- Genuine scouting and youth systems need not be as expensive as first thought.
- Marketing benefits of worldwide talent could offset costs.
- Dutch football should be examined more closely given its success internationally.
- We need the correct people in the correct roles.

Inherent problems:

- Once again such a model could take a long time to invoke successfully.
- Success still isn't guaranteed.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club to investigate successful existing Dutch models.



Article Nine: 'A New Model for the Rangers of the Future'

(Author: K. Park)

Why would anyone invest in Rangers? Financial crisis. Large, growing debt. Shortage of cash. SPL. Small TV deal. Small country. Need I go on?

Well, I would invest in Rangers. I already have, and so have people I know. Businesses already do and sponsors already do. I would invest more. So would people I know. So would businesses and so would sponsors – Carling will not be the last sponsor of Rangers. But nobody's queuing up at the moment are they?

Our absolute and fundamental problem is that the club (the business, if you like) needs a fresh start. It needs a new energy, a new vision, a new strategy, a new plan. And to put these things in place, it needs a new leader with a new leadership team. THEN, we can start going somewhere.

This discussion promotes the concept of fan ownership. At its heart is the belief that Rangers is too important to be allowed to be controlled by just one man. The next man might be great, he might be a disaster. Survey the landscape of British football boardrooms of 2009, consider the trends and ask yourself if you are entirely comfortable. 90% of fans would, I bet, say no.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Nine Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Article promotes fan ownership via high net worth supporter consortium model.
- Club would be restructured and base its future on long term youth/scouting systems.
- The status quo would be maintained on the park while restructuring would take place.
- Wide-ranging Rangers fan base would be utilised for investment and new ideas.

Inherent problems:

- Why would people invest considering various external pressures (e.g. recession)?
- Correct focal figure required for fans to rally behind.
- Patience of supporters would be required during change of strategic operations.
- One person – one vote system may not suit larger investors

Subsequent Recommendations:

- High net worth supporters approached for open debate on above model.
- Club to investigate ways of instilling new members system to ensure more supporter involvement in club.



Article Ten: ‘Are Player Contracts the Epitaph of Rangers?’

(Author: Robert Boyle)

“Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains”

Life is good if you have the abilities to become a modern professional footballer. The Bentleys, the broads, the bank accounts, the buffed up egos and the bumper contracts.

Such short footballing careers are nowadays followed by long forays into the media circus, property, showbusiness, modelling or literally anything that takes their whim. They have the capital to do as they please. Gone are the days when players had to accentuate their meagre pay packets with second jobs and ‘retire’ only to start their lives again as a member of the workforce at large. Nowadays distinctly average players can retire to a better and more comfortable life than a large percentage of the population could ever dream of.

From the onset of professional football, the players gracing the hallowed turf across the land quickly realised that they were being paid more than the loyal fans who came to watch as their escape from the rigours of their weekly grind. With the rise of unionism (in the workforce) players began to seek employment rights and players’ associations were born. With these rights came contracts.

Stories of players now agreeing contracts readily with clubs without some form of barter, agent provocation or underhand tactics are tough to come by. Sadly the trend is much more obtuse, sometimes sinister and more money hungry than these three pro’s. Wranglings over player ownership, image rights, agent fees, relocation bonuses and sponsorship, are far more common than anything else – especially with a figure of around 90% of the UK’s professional players represented by some form of football agent. But I suppose that in these times of multi-million pound contracts, Arab sheiks, Israeli super agents and Willie McKay; that kind of contract pontificating is to be expected.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Ten Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Player contracts are costing the club far too much.
- Too many players and under-utilised and overpaid.
- Not enough money is being made from non high profile transfers.
- Smaller squad is required to avoid Hemdani/Balde examples.
- Strict wage policy needs to be enforced and adhered to long term.
- Statistics should be used to evaluate performance related pay.
- Clauses should be used to protect club’s investment in youth players.



Article Ten (continued)

Inherent problems:

- Delivering success during further squad downsizing is challenging.
- Are fans patient enough to back younger players long term?
- How can we move on players if they don't want to leave?

Subsequent Recommendations:

- What are the club doing to future-proof itself against new UEFA player pool rules?
- Club to implement clear wage structure.
- Club to investigate use of statistics to modernise expensive bonus scheme.



Article Eleven - Improvements in the Boardroom

(Author: Derek Howie)

This article is going to look at one of the most important areas of the club - the place where the decisions that affect the running of the club - the boardroom. It proposes that two independent directors are appointed in a non-executive position to assist in the decision-making process.

It was only 4 and a half years ago that the club was £74 million in debt and in a great deal of financial difficulty. We got out of that debt following the rights issue that was supported by Sir David Murray (SDM) and the cash from the JJB deal, but yet again the club finds itself in financial difficulty after such a short period of time.

Our debt could be in excess of £30m in January, which is a lot when we consider that we only have facilities of £36m from the bank, and our outgoings will exceed our incomings in the months prior to the receipt of the season ticket money. We were in the position that we were unable to even bring one player in on loan during the recent winter transfer window.

Both situations arose due to overspending which the club can't afford, but was authorised by the directors nevertheless.

It is because of this situation arising twice that it is believed that the Board of Directors of Rangers would benefit from having independent non-executive directors appointed, who may force SDM to at least question and re-examine the level of spending and other decisions and bring a freshness and alternative outlook that can only benefit the club as a whole.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Eleven Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Club requires innovation in the boardroom.
- This needs to be by way of independent and successful business people.
- Debt has risen unacceptably twice in the last decade.
- This must be controlled more effectively as well as other parts of the club.

Inherent problems:

- Club has no formal obligations to PLUS Markets in this regard.
- Independent director may reduce influence of Sir David Murray.
- Would such directors be strong willed enough to stand by their opinions?

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club must make changes in the boardroom via independent non-executive directors.

Article Twelve - Thinking the Unthinkable: Is the Time Right for Protest?

(Author: K. Park)

Let's assume for a moment that Rangers is for sale at £50m. We have debts rumoured to be approaching £30m and, going by quotes from the club in January, we need to offload £3-4m of talent from a small group of our 'top' players or that we may have serious problems to function as a business.

These obligations are thought to include a substantial transfer fee to Burnley for Kyle Lafferty but we have run out of cash at the same time as being confronted with a sobering and sudden inability to increase our borrowing. We intend to cut our wage bill by up to one-third. There is a global financial crisis, we are at the beginning of a deep recession, our biggest asset has been a victim of property price deflation and credit markets have dried up. Our Edinburgh-based bank has collapsed, was rescued by the government and has been taken over by an English-based rival.



As we finish season 2008/09, Celtic have dominated the SPL for the past 8 years, winning 6 times and up until the last few weeks of this season were looking at 4-in-a-row – an achievement they have managed only once since 1916/17 incidentally, nearly 100 years. They have only £3.5m of debts (maybe zero by now), 10,000 more season ticket holders than us and can strengthen their team significantly immediately if they choose.

Were it not for us winning the league in the last game of 3 different seasons, they would be looking at 9-in-a-row now - NOW! We have won 3 out of the last 10 domestic cup competitions (2 last season). We've had no European football this season. I won't get into the quality of player we have, tactics, formations, players out of position, entertainment value etc as these are subjective issues and this piece makes an attempt to deal in facts as much as possible.

Read full article at <http://www.gersnetonline.co.uk/settingthestandard>

Article Twelve Analysis

Main points of debate:

- Club continues to be unsuccessful after poor decade overall.
- Celtic outperform us in many ways despite having worse financial problems in the recent past.
- This turnaround in fortunes was down to supporters opposing a previous board of directors via aggressive protest.
- One difference was the 1990s Celtic did have room for improvement/investment unlike Rangers in 2009.
- Rangers' fans need to similarly force change before status quo gets worse.

Article Twelve (continued)

Inherent problems:

- Aggressive protest is seen as undignified by majority of fans.
- Club is still competing stronger than Celtic were in the 1990s.
- Aggressive protest would increase tension and destroy any facets of supporter/club trust.
- No focal point for such protests or protest group.
- Increasing debt and minimal scope for chances of financial flexibility due to outsourced business means entrepreneurs have little interest in the owning the club.

Subsequent Recommendations:

- Club must improve supporter relations to avoid the kind of breakdown above.
- Similarly, while success can't be guaranteed, evidence of strategic operations to improve way club is run needs to be provided to impact positive change.
- Supporters must work together instead of the disorganised factions that current exist.





Overall Conclusions

The above articles highlight that many aspects of the way the club is run could be revisited and improved. It is understood that some changes may be financially or logistically unworkable at this point. Indeed, the authors of this report don't expect positive change to happen overnight and we do appreciate the limitations the club are operating under.

Nonetheless it is vital for the club to acknowledge that it is failing in a number of aspects in the eyes of many fans. Ongoing commitment from the fans in terms of record ticket sales shouldn't be confused with blind loyalty. As such, the club need to embrace that devotion by working with the supporters, invite constructive criticism such as this report and look to the future together as one.

Rangers FC are one of the world's most successful and most passionately supported clubs. These factors should be at the forefront of any study on how we can modernise the business to ensure our position as Scotland's best team is not placed under threat.

We challenge Rangers FC and any interested fan to look within and ask if we are doing enough to secure our long term future. As it stands it appears our future is based on hope - rather than expectation via ongoing positive analysis. We expect leadership from the key figures in the club and for them to adapt to ensure that successful future is delivered.

Are we 'Ready' for change?

Overall Recommendations:

- Club must improve supporter relations via the complete overhaul of the Rangers Supporters Assembly.
- From this new organisation, the club and supporters must work together to produce a thesis on our future.
- This should include 1 year, 3-5 year and 10 year plans which are revisited on an annual basis.
- By the club AGM of Autumn 2009, we would welcome a public commitment to the above as well as a full and open reply to the other suggestions in this report.



Project Collaborators

The 'Setting the Standard' project was led by the site administrators of GersnetOnline.co.uk and helped enormously by the administrators of RangersMedia.com.

Both these sites are unofficial, independent, not-for-profit websites with a combined membership of over 12,000 online supporters and both have been running for up to 5 years. The article contributors have experience of supporters representation work, most are season ticket holders and shareholders, a few are RSC members and all come from a wide range of relevant backgrounds; at home and abroad.

Both Gersnet and RangersMedia are involved in various charity initiatives including raising money for awareness in Malawi as well as domestic charities involving ex-Rangers players.

The contributors are as follows:

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