

## **Coton Football Club: Chairman's Report 2008/9**

2008/9 marks 100 years since the first Coton Institute side took to the field, and it is therefore with great pleasure that I report on our activities in our Centenary Season.

The season began poorly. Some heavy early season defeats for our Under 14 Colts induced several players to leave for other Clubs, thus depleting what was already a small squad. When the League ruled that two others were ineligible, it meant that we had no choice but to withdraw for the season. This was a great shame. This squad of players had been the first to join the Club when junior football was reintroduced in 2005 and their loss, and of our investment in them, was keenly felt.

In addition, our attempt to combine the U10s with several players from the non-playing 7-11 squad from 2007/8 proved unworkable. Training sessions were increasingly difficult to manage and the decision to exclude weaker players from matches drew criticism from some quarters that was both upsetting and divisive.

Fortunately, two negatives produced a positive as the two U14s coaches, Adam Smart and myself, were able to refocus on other activities. In December, the Under 10s were split into A and B squads. The majority of the B squad were actually U9s and for the remainder of the season they trained with me twice a week and played a series of friendlies against local opposition. Adam struck out in an entirely new direction, starting an Under 7 section, recruiting Fizz Elmes as a new coach, and forming the nucleus of a squad that we hope will join the League as our Under 8 team in 2009/10. In the meantime, Piero was able to concentrate on improving the Under 10s and by the end of the season had completed several notable victories against Clubs able to draw on much larger pools of players and resources. Everything here reflects extremely well on the Club as whole, and on the efforts of those concerned. They deserve both our praise and gratitude.

However, our highest praise must go to Dave Hale and the Senior Team that, in addition to two good cup runs, secured the Division 1B title by two points. This not only means that Coton has a side in the Senior Division for the first time in our Sunday League history, but that we have secured our first silverware in more than 50 years. To do this in our Centenary Year is a notable achievement. My sincere congratulations to everyone - well deserved!

As ever, none of this would have been possible without those prepared to assist in the practical running of the Club. Richard as Secretary has again kept us on the straight and narrow and the addition of Helen Moss and (briefly!) Nikola Baumgarten as Registration and Fixtures Secretaries, has led to a significant reduction in fines and done much to lighten the coaches' burden. Beverley's commitment to ensure that all monies were duly collected and accounted for has been exemplary, while Tiggy Black's efforts as Child Welfare Officer means that our understanding of Child Welfare issues has been enhanced no end. I've also been pleased to note a growing willingness amongst Members to help out in all kinds of ways - for example, marking out the pitches, selling refreshments, officiating, putting up the posts. It all helps and is all appreciated.

Reviewing my report from last year, I see that I set us several objectives for 2008/9. So let's see how we did and have a think about next year:

- We hoped to offer sides at Senior U14s and U10s. We did that and though we lost the U14s we've more than replaced them since. Our objective for next season is to offer Senior, U11, U10 and U8 sides;
- We hoped to seek recognition as a Charter Standard Club. Well, we initially thought that we were ineligible but a recent message from the FA has stated

that we can apply, so we will seek to ensure that it is in place by the end of 2009/10;

- We've been less successful in persuading Members to take coaching badges, but with Fizz Elmes joining us recently, and several others expressing an interest, I think an objective to have one level 2 and a total of six level 1 coaches by the end of the season is challenging but achievable;
- We hoped that our players would continue to enjoy their football and develop as footballers and as individuals. Of course these are all immeasurables, but equally I think, their achievement is self-evident.

My final objective was a wistful muse that we would mark our Centenary with some silverware. I genuinely didn't expect it, but sometimes football is just great that way. Nothing so grand for 2009/10 however, our objective is to establish our presence in Senior League.

My thanks to everyone. Well done. Let's take the opportunity not only celebrate our Centenary on 6<sup>th</sup> June properly, but our achievements this season and our Club as a whole. We deserve it.

Dr Neil Sparnon  
Chairman, Coton Football Club