

# **SARACENS SUPPORTER FORUM MINUTES**

## **WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019, 18H30 – 20H30**

### **ATTENDEES**

Richard Gregg – Operations Director, Saracens Ltd  
Alex Gummer – Marketing Director, Saracens Ltd  
Ally Spicer – Head of Ticketing, Saracens Ltd  
Clare Ludlow – Marketing Manager, Saracens Ltd  
Charlotte Marshall – Marketing Executive, Saracens Ltd

Brian Levin – North Stand Season Ticket Holders  
Steve Cummins – East Stand Season Ticket Holders  
Jasmine Farrant – West Lower Season Ticket Holders  
Gavin Jones – Hospitality Season Ticket Holders  
Denis Collen – BAME Supporters  
Helen Ellis – Disabled Supporters  
Lesley Mayo – Over 65s representative  
Katherine Engler – Women’s Representative

### **APOLOGIES**

Debbie Knight – West Upper Season Ticket Holders  
Steve Cracknell – Local Supporters  
Luke Saint – Sarries on Tour representative  
Alun Morgan – SSA Representative  
Dean Harris – South Stand Season Ticket Holders  
Emma Southam – Under 25s Representative

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1. FEEDBACK DISCUSSION ON MEMBERSHIPS, WEBSITE AND KIT LAUNCH**

#### **1a. MEMBERSHIPS**

CL introduced CM and explained her role in looking after the new membership programme which was launched over the summer.

BL emphasised that the kids membership packs had been really well received and that he was impressed with the quality of the merchandise which would encourage kids to buy in to the Saracens brand. He also felt the adult memberships were a positive move. DC agreed and said Number 10 packs were loved by supporters. AG confirmed the Number 10 pack will be available to non season ticket holders soon and that the club would be visiting community rugby events to promote the membership.

KE complimented the smooth delivery process, particularly the ‘track your parcel’ function which was easy to use.

LM raised concerns that there had been some confusion over the detail of the membership benefits for season ticket holders, with particular reference to the

additional tickets for the game at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and upgrading from 1876 Membership to the 28 Club.

AS confirmed season ticket holders would receive their standard two additional tickets at a 50% discount for the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium game as well as the new additional discounted red and black tickets as part of their membership. She also confirmed season ticket holders only need pay an upgrade fee to switch from 1876 Membership to 28 Club. AS also suggested the club could add some further differentiation between seasonal membership and standalone 1876 membership on the website to aid understanding.

DC flagged that the online upgrade from 1876 Membership to 28 Club for season ticket holders is not working and showed the full price product in online cart.

CM confirmed the club is aware of this and has moved to allow upgrade by phone only

**Action: CM to update website with clearer details**

GJ raises a query around hospitality client reference numbers and how the Fez Club will be managed in line with new memberships.

**Action: CL to raise with hospitality team**

LM suggested the club could add more details about which games are which category on the website.

HE felt that communication around the arrival of the membership packs could have been earlier to help supporters suffering with anxiety. DC agreed there may be queries from supporters at the start of the season and there could be more communications for general supporters to help with transition to new membership style packs. Perhaps the club could provide a 'heads up' of changes taking place over the off season.

## **1b. WEBSITE**

AG provided a quick update on some of the website work that was still taking place including the process for introducing single sign on across the shop, website and ticket site. KE asked whether email could be used as well as client reference number which was confirmed by AG.

HE raised concerns that the colour scheme could be difficult for disabled supporters accessing the site. She flagged that red and black were difficult for colour blind supporters and white text on a black background can be an accessibility issue.

CL confirmed discussion had taken place with site developers around accessibility. AG suggested a colour inverter and font size toggle could be introduced.

BL highlighted that the fixture filter on the site is not the most user friendly and felt the competition filter could be difficult to follow for fans who are new to rugby and may not be familiar with all the competitions.

GJ and BL suggested a downloadable fixture calendar for phone and outlook would be useful. CL confirmed this was being investigated.

AG confirmed the club were working to simplify the fixture page and filter but that the club were also keen to make sure they were showing off everything happening at Allianz Park.

SC suggested a home and away filter could be added to make fixtures clearer.

DC asked whether a system for supporters to feedback bugs could be made available.

**Action: AG and CL to look at making a document available**

JF flagged that while the travel information on the new site is great that car parking information could be much clearer. AG and CL confirmed the page is being worked on and more information will be available as match by match parking goes on sale.

## **1c. KIT LAUNCH**

CL explained the club had been working with a new agency over the summer to create the kit launch.

SC felt the inclusion of the club's postcode in the launch video was a great feature and well received by supporters. DC added the 'one club' approach was a really positive step forward.

HE raised concerns that the flashing elements of the kit announcement made it difficult viewing for disabled supporters and could be an epilepsy trigger.

GJ flagged that in general he felt the club's social content over the summer had been down on previous years.

DC complimented the in-store kit launch at the Summer Gathering, highlighting a stress free shopping experience with high stock levels and the shop seeming better prepared compared to last season.

LM felt there was a low-key approach to the new kit at the Gathering and found the player Q&A difficult to find as it was located upstairs as opposed to outside.

HE suggested timings for the Summer Gathering could have been released earlier. CM highlighted the new landing pages on the new website, including a page dedicated to the Summer Gathering.

KE suggested season ticket packs could be posted before the Gathering and include details of the event. This would also make it easier to collect Rewards4Rugby points.

## **2. UPDATE ON WEST STAND WORKS AHEAD OF START OF NEW SEASON**

CL introduced RG, Operations Director, to the group. RG explained his role at Saracens and his remit which includes day to day operations at Allianz Park amongst other areas. RG explained he would be discussing the 2019/20 season and not looking further ahead to the 2020/2021 season.

RG showed the group a number of artists impressions of the new stand and explained that Middlesex University will be the primary tenant of the West Stand, using 65% of the building. The club plans for the stand to be used 365 days a year. Capacity will be raised to 10,500 with the club prioritising quality of the match day experience over quantity of seats.

RG updated the group on some of the changes taking place around the ground. These have included the relocation of Gate C and the building of a temporary village in P3 area. Work to Improve accessibility to the stadium is also in progress with paved pathways replacing previous gravel paths.

RG explained the stadium is currently in an 'enabling' period which includes work on car park areas including the resurfacing of the back of P1 with grass-crete. Tarmac is not an option due to green belt regulations.

RG showed the group planning documents for the temporary structure and explained the structure will have team requirements, including improved changing rooms, and medical as its primary function.

RG introduced drawings of the West Stand seating arrangements for 2019/20 and highlighted the club's commitment to athletics at the ground in shaping the construction of a temporary stand. He flagged the temporary stand will have a higher rake than the previous stand. RG explained the players' route from the changing rooms to the pitch from the North West corner. He highlighted the temporary media centre and TV gantry in the centre of the temporary stand which will sit between the two 10 metre lines. RG explained how the structure will impact some sight lines and therefore why some season ticket holders have been moved in to new seats.

GJ suggested Saracens could take inspiration from the NFL when looking at creative ways to introduce the players to pitch this season.

KE asked about the location of the Wolfpack bus given the changes to the West Stand. RG introduced a site plan for the season and highlighted the operational challenge around moving concessions and facilities. RG discussed the movement of bars with the group include move of Wolfpack to behind the North Stand and a new bar on the athletics steps area behind the South Stand.

RG highlighted supporters will not be able to cross between the two sides of the West Stand due to the temporary media structure. GJ asked whether this would be an issue for ticket collections for those sitting in certain areas of the ground and suggested a collection points at Gate C. AS said ticket collection numbers were usually quite low on a match day and SC emphasised the importance of promoting e-tickets.

KE emphasised the important of signage as supporters will be used to free movement around the site. SC agreed.

BL also highlighted the importance of communications and encouraging supporters to arrive early.

DC suggested ongoing communications about changes as many season ticket holders might not attend the first game. KE suggested a West Stand landing page with updates and SC asked whether there could be a West Stand newsletter with update. LM highlighted a high interest in the building works among supporters.

HE raised concerns about disabled access around the site. RG confirmed the club had been working with Level Playing fields on the project.

### **3. POINTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES**

BL felt F&B outlets didn't seem ready for the start of the season last year and it would be good to see this improved

KE suggested new seasonal produce in the shop including cheap and cheerful stocking fillers. She also suggested cup return points for charity.

LM highlighted that PA announcements of match days are hard to heard and that production on women's match days could be approved. RG explained a new Director of Women's Sport had recently joined the club and there was a big focus on driving the growth of the women's game.

GJ asked club to ensure there were enough staff in hospitality for the first game of the season.

HE reiterated an earlier point about early communications from the club, particularly with all the changes this season including West Stand, move to Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and changes to the season dates.

DC passed on a suggestion regarding Partner Clubs and whether the club could run social media workshops.

Action: CL to pick up with Community Rugby department

DC also asked how the club can recognise the growing number of travelling fans who spend significant amounts to support the team.

SC raised a concern about the men's toilets in the East Stand. RG fed back that new cleaning company had been taken onboard at the stadium and hoped this would address any issues.

SC also fed back on F&B on match days and highlighted the need for more IPA. Finally SC praised the Duchene partnership launch; this sentiment was seconded by many representatives.

CL concluded the meeting and explained a process for the election of any positions which were on one year terms. She explained representative whose term was expiring would be contacted in the coming weeks before nominations were opened to the wider supporter base. A vote would then take place ahead of the next meeting in November.