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Bristol City; Bristol Rovers;
Cardiff City; Cheltenham Town;
Exeter City; Forest Green Rovers;
Newport County; Plymouth Argyle;
Swansea City; Swindon Town;
Torquay United & Yeovil Town



SWDFEF Newsletter

February 2020

Sharing experiences to improve disabled
access and services for disabled fans

South West Disabled Fans' Experience Forum

Swansea City DSA

The DSA are extremely grateful to Trevor Birch and his team for kindly purchasing DSA lanyards for our DSA committee. Here are our committee proudly wearing our lanyards, which we hope will help our members recognise us at our events.



DSA lanyards



“Question of Sport”

The DSA had 2 tables at the club’s “Question of Sport” event at the Liberty Stadium on 05 December. One of our DSA sponsors, Dawsons, came along and joined in the fun. Everyone had a great time.

Our DSA Committee for 2019 -2020

Chair – Andrew Brayley, Vice Chair – Michelle Preece, Treasurer – Malcolm Fearn, Secretary – Cath Dyer, Committee members – Lesley Williams, Cath Williams, Andrew Williams, Clare Lewis, Lee Ellery and Nicola Dyer.

We are pleased that we have a great relationship with the club, and regularly meet with Cath Thomas, Head of Hospitality, and Mark Phillips, DAO, where we discuss club and DSA ideas.

During the Christmas period our DSA lifetime president, Kev Johns, was hard at work in pantomime. We understand that it went very well.

Give us your Questions

As an enhancement to our Annual Forums and Quarterly Newsletters, anyone who has a subject that they would welcome input and comments from other clubs, in between Forums and Newsletters, please email them to me at d.g.munn@btinternet.com and I will circulate them. Once ALL of the replies are received (no more than 2 weeks after I have raised the question), I will send all inputs and comments to every club. Thanks.

Or you can use Facebook page: - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DFSAT>

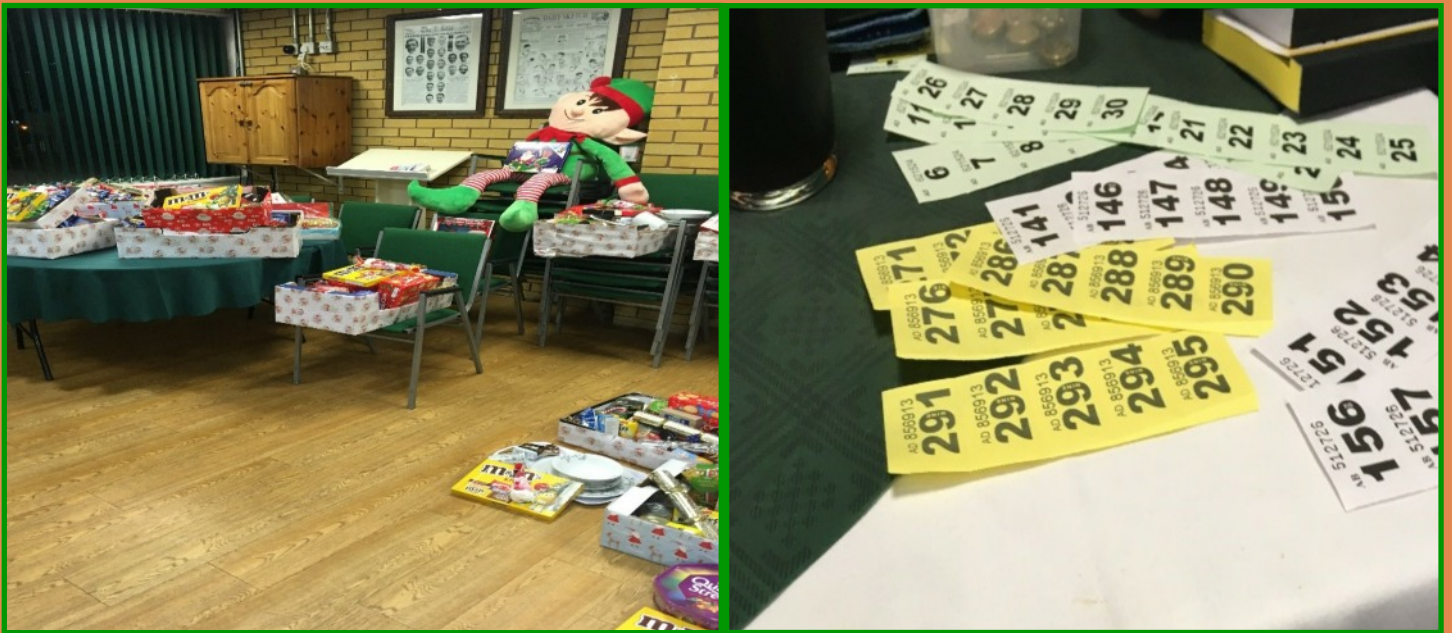
Yeovil Town DSA

Christmas Bingo Night on 27 November 2019

Wednesday evening 27 November saw the DSA hold their Christmas bingo in the Alec Stock lounge at Huish Park and what a success. There wasn't a spare seat to be had and everybody had a brilliant night with some fantastic prizes on offer with the bingo and the draw that was held at half time.

A fantastic amount of £700 was raised for the DSA.

A huge Thank you to Tracey Wilson for organising this brilliant event.



Level Playing Field National Forum



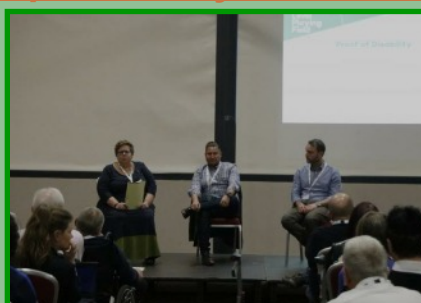
On Monday 04 November 2019, Level Playing Field held its first National Forum at MK Dons F.C. stadium.

Over 150 delegates from fans, DSA's, clubs, governing bodies and organisations around the country enjoyed an excellent Forum with many superb presentations including one 'Special Presentation' by Stephen Miller MBE, 3 x Paralympic Champion and Newcastle United Disabled Supporters Association Secretary.

Plymouth's DLO Nikki Francis, Swansea's DAO Mark Phillips, Yeovil's DSA Chair Sharon Swain, Committee members Tracey Wilson & Jethro Hill along with the Webmaster for ytfcdsa.net David Munn, all attended this event.

The 25 clubs who attended, in alphabetical order, were: Arsenal, Brighton, Crystal Palace, Everton, Fulham, Grimsby, Leicester City, Leicester Tigers, Liverpool, Luton, Man City, MK Dons, Plymouth, Portsmouth, QPR, Reading, Sheff Utd, Sheff Wed, Southampton, Stevenage, Swansea, Watford, West Brom, Wolves & Yeovil.

Short video of the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jFFJBFBcrM>



Exeter City DSA

Nick Saunders, Chairman of the ECDSA, on the Autism Packs

“The take up has been unbelievable from start to finish. It makes me very proud”.

Nick wrote a report in our last issue but to see Nick’s comments on facebook, on EFL Day of Disabilities, click the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/exetercityfc/videos/672814829915739/?t=82>



Yeovil Town DSA

On 22 November we received the good news that our DSA will receive £200 through the ASDA 'Green Token Giving' Foundation. This was possible by people voting for us, by popping their green token in our slot in the store.



Swansea City DSA

Swansea City Disabled Supporters' Association (DSA) were treated to special guest appearances from Steve Cooper, Trevor Birch, Matt Grimes, Ben Wilmot, Yan Dhanda and Lee Trundle at their annual Christmas party.

The Swans stars met and mingled with the DSA members before singing Christmas carols at their social - compered by Swansea City Academy chaplain Eirian Wyn - at the Liberty Stadium.

The DSA, which launched in 2013, is continually growing, and it looks to improve facilities and policies that affect disabled supporters by working with the club and other bodies. With committee meetings held monthly, and social gatherings held three times per season, the DSA Christmas party is an important time for members to get together to socialise.

“It was great to come along and chat to all the DSA members,” said Swans captain Matt Grimes. “Having associations like the DSA is so important and the support they give our disabled fans is amazing. We all really enjoyed the evening, it was brilliant to see everyone coming together at Christmas.” Cath Dyer DSA Secretary.

“Swansea DSA kindly invited me to attend their annual Christmas shindig alongside 100's of their members who ate mince pies, won raffle prizes (all funds going to support the DSA in future projects) and witness Swansea City Chairman Trevor Birch, Head Coach Steve Cooper plus two Swansea City legends, Leon Britton and Lee Trundle and several first-team players butcher 'Jingle Bells' Thankfully the rest of the congregation were up to the task!” Liam Bird LPF Fans Liaison Officer



Plymouth Argyle DSA (PADSA)

In a welcome development, the club is delighted to announce that we have vastly improved our disabled facilities in the Mayflower Grandstand.

Work undertaken by Argyle's Head of Operations Jon Back and GL Events, in partnership with the Plymouth Argyle Disabled Supporters' Association (PADSA), has seen the quality of seating, and the range of views available, vastly improved against plans for the new Mayflower Grandstand.

Wheelchair users will now have an elevated platform at the rear of two blocks towards the Devonport End – providing a better view for disabled supporters than was previously possible at the Theatre of Greens.

In addition, amendments to the original development plan have allowed further seating to be installed on the eastern side of the new Grandstand. The majority of these seats will be protected for ambulant disabled members of the Green Army, with ample space also provided for friends, partners and carers in a premium seating area.

Steve Helley, Chairman of the Plymouth Argyle Disabled Supporters Association (PADSA), said, "The club has been working closely with PADSA on these changes. I am quite happy with the seating arrangements put forward by the club, and we will continue to work together moving forward to enhance the match-day experience for disabled supporters."



The new stand was fully opened for the League Two fixture against Swindon Town on January 1st, 2020. The stand has a capacity of 5,403 seats and has new corporate facilities, which will open up a new income stream for the Club.

Plymouth Argyle (PADSA) (continued)

Now that the stand is open, Steve Helley PADSA Chairman has added some updated comments:

We have been talking about this for the last 2 years but our Grandstand is finally open and boy it was well worth the wait. The viewing area for disabled fans is brilliant. we have great toilets and if you can stretch to corporate then you won't be disappointed.

We also have the new Green Taverners suite open as well and this is where we are holding our AGM and party on the 16th Feb.

We had our party booked for December but due to changes in fixtures we had to cancel. I have to say that this stadium is now a championship stadium. Let's hope the new wave of optimism at the club can translate into success on the pitch.

Plymouth is in a very exciting year with the Mayflower 400 celebrations being well under way and this year will see a lot of activities and events around the city, celebrating the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers voyage to the Americas in 1620.

The stadium is also being used this summer for concerts and sales have been good. The buzz around the club is there to be seen, everyone connected is excited.



Newport County DSA



The Sunflower Lanyard scheme was first introduced in airports to assist travellers that may need a little extra help. It was designed as a discreet way for people to recognise that the traveller had a disability that may not be apparent. The success of the Sunflower Lanyard has now spread and is now becoming recognised across many businesses within the UK.

What is a hidden disability? It is as simple as a disability that cannot be seen. Something that may not require a wheelchair, crutches or a blue badge. A disability that may not be apparent, but none the less still affecting lives on a day to day basis and quite often are painful, isolating and exhausting. These can be anything from Autism, ADHD, Alzheimers, Dementia, HIV/Aids, Fibromyalgia, Cystic Fibrosis, Hearing Impaired, Loss of Vision, Speech and Language difficulties, Mental Health illnesses, to name a few. These all affect people in different ways, but as they are not visible, often sympathy and understanding are in short supply.

I have been so lucky in my role, that I get to meet so many wonderful people of all ages, from all walks of life, who all share one passion. Our football club. They tell me how they enjoy coming to a game so much, because they feel a part of something special. It is a community, one big family, a sense of belonging, where they feel accepted, which perhaps they may not feel in their day to day lives. As I look around me at every game, I have a colleague who is hearing impaired, someone who is visually impaired, a volunteer who has dementia, children and adults who have autism, supporters who struggle with crippling anxiety, a little boy who is non-verbal, several who are diabetic, some who have terminal illnesses and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Even when you think that on average 1 in 4 people struggle with their mental health, 1 in 5 people in the UK have a disability, 80% of those are hidden disabilities. *

In October, I read a local article about a little girl who has autism, who had recently had her 5th birthday party at a soft play centre and only 2 children attended. As a parent myself, my heart broke for her and her parents and after a conversation with my colleague, we decided to go ahead and invite

Newport County DSA (continued)

her and her family to the next home game and have a little birthday party with us. Not because we wanted any press attention, but simply because we wanted her and her family to become a part of our family. To feel a part of something special. To feel included, welcome and accepted. In our Family Zone, we saw her face light up as she was able to join in with other children. I saw Dad's shoulders physically relax, probably for the first time in a long time. Did she shout a little? Yes. Did she stim a little? Yes. Did it matter? No. Did she enjoy herself? Absolutely.

Just two weeks later we launched our support for the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme. These are available from us free of charge from the Family Zone on a match day and also from our Club Shop throughout the week.

Originally introduced in May 2016 at Gatwick Airport, the Sunflower Lanyard scheme is now recognised globally. The sunflower was chosen as a sign of happiness, positivity and strength. It means that just by wearing a lanyard, that you don't have to keep explaining. People recognise immediately that you may need a little more time, patience, understanding and support.

We think the world of our supporters. We are an inclusive, community club, and this is just a very simple and easy way to show them that we support them right back, we are here to help, and that everyone is very welcome to our games.

For more information regarding the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme and how you can be involved, please visit www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com

*statistics from the Hidden Disabilities Store website
Kelly Anderson, Equality & Diversity Director

Torquay United

I submitted a report to the club in September and Dom Mee attended the SWDFEF Forum in Exeter, along with myself. The club were looking at what other funding was available and whether they could get better estimates for the cost of putting a roof on the away section. To-date I haven't heard anything. We currently have £1,500 out of £3,500 required on account. It is a shame because it would have been good to get the roof on before the winter. When we played Yeovil, on New Year's day, two of their disabled supporters had to sit out in the rain. - Sam Balsdon (The Supporters Club).

Yeovil Town DSA

The DSA held their Christmas meal on Monday the 2nd of December in the Alec Stock Suite. We had a fantastic night with 64 guests attending and we invited 5 guests who came along and put a smile on a lot of people's faces, so a big thank you to Darren Sarll (Team Manager), Terry Skiverton, David Mills (COO), Mark Jones and The Jolly Green Giant.

A big thank you to Jethro and Peter for running the raffle for us again this year, where we raised a further £305, but I am not sure if they were getting a backhander from the Team Manager as Darren won TWICE.

Congratulations to Mrs White on winning a signed YTFC football, after having her number drawn by Darren at the start of the night.

Mike Rowsell seemed very happy with his prize, let's just hope he hasn't been drink driving.

The Food as always was superb, so a big thank you to all the staff.



Mrs White & Darren Sarll



Mike Rowsell & his Vodka

Level Playing Field (LPF)

DSA Christmas Party Review by Liam Bird - LPF Fans Liaison Officer

I visited two Christmas parties held by DSAs over the festive period. The Fulham party is reported here with the Swansea party reported on within their own report of events.

As Andy Williams once said, “It’s the most wonderful time of the year.” If Andy was a football supporter, he should have sung “it’s the most frantic time of the year” with an average of 4 match days over 2 weeks, it becomes football overload, but for some DSAs the frantic planning for the festive seasons starts a little earlier.

DSA’s up and down the country have held Christmas and Festive events that brought their respective sporting family together to enjoy an afternoon/evening of festive fun.

Two DSA’s did just that and Fans Liaison Officer, Liam, was there to witness the smiles on faces and to defend his choice of a football team!

Editor’s Note: For those of you who don’t know, Liam supports a team called Forest. I believe that they are based in Nottingham!!).

“Fulham DSA has only been in existence for a very short time but has achieved a considerable amount in its short time, so it was great to see the hard-working DSA committee relax and enjoy a well-earned evening off from discussing access and inclusion at Craven Cottage.”

“From a new DSA to an established DSA with one thing on its mind this Christmas. Getting everyone singing!

I make a quick shout out to MUDSA who held a very special Christmas event this year as it marks the 30th Anniversary of MUDSA, making it the hottest ticket in town! I wasn’t able to attend the MUDSA Christmas party, but you can read all about MUDSA Christmas bash via this link.

<https://mudsa.org.uk/mudsa-christmas-party-2019-2/>

Happy new Year from everyone at Level Playing Field, and here’s to making 2020 an excellent year for access and inclusion in sport.

Level Playing Field (LPF) (continued)

DSA Christmas Party Review by Liam Bird - LPF Fans Liaison Officer



MUDSA Christmas Party held on December 17 2019



Yeovil Town DSA

Double Header of Awards for Yeovil Town Awards for both player and volunteer of the month

Yeovil Town's Courtney Duffus and Disabled Supporters Association representative Sharon Swain have been awarded National League's player and volunteer of the month for December 2019.

Courtney hit red-hot form in December, hitting doubles against Welling United, AFC Fylde and then a hat-trick against Torquay United at Huish Park.

Sharon has continued her hard work for the club, working with the Disabled Supporters Association, continuing to make Huish Park a safe and positive environment for everyone.

Congratulations to both Courtney and Sharon who join Darren Sarll (September Manager of the Month) as Yeovil Town's National League monthly award winners this season.



Yeovil Town DSA

My name is Simon Penny and as well as supporting Yeovil Town and being a DSA member, I play cricket for Somerset disability team.

Our home ground is at Taunton Deane just behind Vivary park. Training is at the centre of excellence in the Somerset county ground.

We are a mixed bag of players with various abilities and skills and our disabilities are all different but that doesn't stop us from playing and having fun.

We won all our matches and for the second year running we were in the semi finals up in Nottingham, up against a stronger team who beat us. We have an awards evening to celebrate all our accomplishments

I won the managers player award for all my hard work and commitment, Tom Abel the Somerset captain came along to present the awards.

I am vice captain of a younger team called the dragons, this is a game with slightly different rules aimed to encourage and include both girls and boys.

I also play bowls for the visually impaired and wheelchair basketball.

I am quite happy to talk to anyone interested in my activities.

Contact Simon via Email: orchidmiss@hotmail.co.uk or Tel: 01935 592785





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