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LOYALTY POINTS

There were several questions about loyalty points:

It's becoming more difficult to accrue sufficient loyalty points to attend away games. Year on year, I'm getting to go to less games which in turn makes it more difficult to get the points. We used to get more points for less attractive fixtures, now it seems that a Gold Member who isn't on any of the cup schemes has little chance of getting to the more attractive games.

Priority for ticket allocation appears to be 'how much are you prepared to pay' and not 'how loyal are you'.

Is the Club continuing with the divisive policy of having the Gold and Platinum Memberships next season? I think it's disgraceful that people can buy 'loyalty' points and jump the queue for away and big cup-tie tickets.

By introducing this payment, the Club is distorting the loyalty point system that has been in place for a number of years. How does paying £50 make a supporter more 'loyal'?

Club response: This has been discussed at previous meetings. The number of loyalty points awarded for different matches has always been a debated subject. Historically, the number of points allocated was based on day of the week, kick-off time, time of the year/stage in the season, standards of opposition etc. In recent seasons, we have started to use loyalty points as a way of influencing supporter behaviour. Examples include awarding a higher number of points for purchasing tickets to home Cup matches in the early rounds to incentivise attendance. For the current season, and aligned to the changes in the membership offering, we have standardised loyalty points for all matches – 10 points for a home match and 20 for an away match. The only exception is for overseas pre-season matches.

Our challenge with home Cup match attendance has been addressed to an extent by our success in the FA Cup last May and also the changes made to the Cup Scheme programme whereby supporters are given priority on tickets for away matches and high demand matches in the latter rounds (Semi Final/Final) by being signed up to the respective Cup Scheme. Supporters are still being rewarded for matches that they attend but we'd accept that there will have been a degree of 'queue jumping' by supporters who signed up to Platinum Membership v Gold Membership. As you would expect, demand for all matches (home and away) has increased as on-pitch performance has improved and inevitably, for a number of the higher demand matches, tickets have sold out at a high points level. It's also worth remembering that a Platinum Member who has attended every match this season and is registered on the three Cup Schemes will have received in excess of 2,500 points. This directly impacts on the points required on the opening day of sale. We would also state that whilst a small number of away matches this season sold out at a high loyalty point level, for over 60% of away matches played to date, all Gold and Platinum Members had an opportunity to purchase tickets as they were ultimately placed on sale to Blue Members. These matches obviously presented an opportunity for Gold and Platinum Members to secure additional loyalty points and move up the ladder.

During discussion, those supporters present at the meeting felt there was no strong support for abandoning the differential points that the Club allocate tickets on. If someone was paying around £2000 for home and away games, then another £50 to get double points was a minor cost, although it did mean those supporters attending fewer games, partly because they could not get tickets, could possibly drop further down the queue.

The lack of communication of the decision to stop loyalty points for attending EDS home games. It has been a slap dash operation from day one; constantly having to chase to get points added and there have been a number of problems on the night such as scanners not working, staff writing supporter numbers on scraps of paper and on some occasions, staff not actually turning up at all. So let's make sure that the new auction points reward scheme is run on a much more professional basis.

Club response: The Club accept this has been far from ideal this season and recognise it has been an inconvenience to supporters. We did allocate loyalty points for a number of matches played. Factors that have since contributed to this not working as effectively as it could are the IT systems in operation at Ewen Fields; the technology can be intermittent and a large number of supporters purchase on the night, generating manual uploads which can be open to error. A number of supporters also purchase tickets for these matches with no intention of attending (i.e. just to add to their loyalty points). Taking all these factors into account, we made the decision at the beginning of March to no longer award loyalty points for the EDS matches. We accept the communication of such information can be improved. However, to reward those supporters that purchase in advance from the Etihad Stadium Ticket Office, we will award auction credits to bid on the recently launched auction website.

TICKETING

A few years ago the Club hosted a service called Seat Exchange or Ticket Exchange (can't remember which). People who had Season Tickets but couldn't go to the games could sell their tickets through Seat Exchange. That service was removed some time ago. Does the Club have plans to reintroduce this service?

Club response: This has been raised a number of times at previous meetings and also included in some of the recent supporter surveys. The benefits of such a service are greatly enhanced when the stadium is regularly sold out, which we have seen happen this season. With this in mind, we are actively exploring opportunities and any announcements will be made in due course.

During discussion, it was reiterated that junior tickets could be upgraded to an adult (up to a maximum of 3 times per season). For evening games the normal Family Stand criteria is relaxed, though children will still be present so appropriate behaviour is expected. Should adults be detected trying to use a junior ticket, a stadium ban may result.

Is there any information on season ticket prices/renewal dates? Can the Club tell us if they're changing the setup beforehand as last year they sprung it on us?

Club response: Whilst the Membership scheme for this season was new, we do feel this was effectively communicated within the Membership renewal pack and the FAQs that are on the website. At this stage, we have no plans to change the Membership products (Blue, Gold, Platinum, Superbia). However, the benefits and enhancements are under review as is the case ahead of every new season. We are currently working on the pricing and timelines for the 2012/13 Season. We would anticipate communication of prices in early May. Anyone who purchased a Blue Membership this season is automatically placed on the Gold Membership wait list.

STADIUM

At the Porto game, the block next to us was full of Porto fans. Why couldn't they be in their own section? I asked a steward about it. He said it was nothing to do with him. I asked why there wasn't a visible stewarding presence between their fans and us. He said they were corporate guests and they were well behaved. This seems pretty naive to me, when they were all allowed to wear colours.

This was reinforced at the meeting by a complaint about Sporting Lisbon fans who jeered arriving City players from 'R' spiral; during the game, because of their antagonistic and provocative behaviour, there had to be very heavy stewarding and a police response.

Club response: In all European competitions, the Club is required as a regulation of UEFA to provide up to 200 best available 'category 1' seats to the away Club for corporate supporters, sponsors and player guests. This agreement is reciprocated when we travel abroad. By UEFA's own rules these seats should be between the half-way line and the 18-yard box. Whilst this would clearly be an issue in domestic competitions due largely to the heightened level of risk presented, in UEFA competitions, the level of risk is generally much lower. That said each and every case is still assessed on its own merit.

Having met with the opposing Club and Portuguese police, and having reviewed previous intelligence on the behaviour of SCP fans abroad the decision was made to allocate away fans, from the groups specified above, into block 223. On the night it is clear from supporter feedback and stewards' reports that the Lisbon fans were much more animated and vocal than in previous rounds, driven on in part by the score line and ultimate result. This in turn antagonised home supporters in that area.

During the match additional police and stewards were deployed to the rear of the stand as a preventative measure to monitor the situation and intervene where necessary. The situation was monitored closely by Event Control at all times, although taking into account the area, we were mindful not to appear heavy handed as this might have inflamed the situation further.

Whilst it is a requirement for the Club to provide these tickets to UEFA, it is clearly not the norm in the UK and has the potential to cause some friction, as was experienced on the night. Whilst every care was taken during the planning phase to ensure that we had good intelligence on the behaviour of Lisbon supporters, it is evident the situation in block 223 had a negative impact on the enjoyment of the match for some fans in that area, particularly as the away sector was not sold out. We will be writing to UEFA to outline our concerns ahead of next season's campaign with a view to relocating these supporters to a less contentious area.

Can the Club confirm that the proposed move of away fans to East Level 3 has been scrapped?

Club response: It has. The experiment at a couple of Champions League games did not have much impact on atmosphere, and there is little appetite for further trials, given the operational difficulties caused and limited support from members of the South Stand and East Stand.

Is the Club going to pursue the safe standing debate?

Club response: Some Clubs are interested in a pilot scheme, but as yet there's no sign that the Premier League, Football League or Football Association will seek a change in the law. If this stance from football governing bodies changes, the Club will consider taking part in a trial.

Smoking in the toilets; could portable card readers be used on the turnstiles to let people out and back in, at half time?

Club response: Tickets do not allow double entry. It was again emphasised that there is a minimum three-match ban for anyone detected smoking (and for the cardholder if someone else is using their card). Non-uniform stewards are used to identify smokers in toilets and we believe the process is robust.

We are lacking a museum and have been for some time. When last asked, we were told that space was an issue. With the National Football Museum opening in Manchester later this year, would it not be possible to engineer some form of partnership with them where we could have some of our exhibits on permanent display there?

Club response: A significant amount of work has been done in this area and there are plans for a physical showcasing of our heritage exhibits. More detail will be announced in due course.

I asked at a previous PoB meeting about somewhere during the day where we can buy refreshments at the Etihad Stadium. Is there any update?

Club response: The squash centre is open, and when the museum facility is open, there will be some facility to purchase food and drink.

The usual one of hopeless bar staff and running out of drinks pre-match. Staff shrugging their shoulders and walking off when you inform them that the white wine is supposed to be served chilled from the fridge. Some of them also have no understanding of how to pull a pint. At the game v Blackburn, I watched one person for 10 minutes at half time. He served two people - badly. We are on the middle tier Colin Bell Stand, block 223.

Club response: Whilst feedback from supporters has improved this season in relation to catering, we still have issues with delivering great service consistently. It's useful to have feedback, and to have the block number so this can be properly addressed and ensure we consistently get this right rather than it being hit and miss.

When the third tier is closed: one supporter was moved elsewhere but didn't receive communication of this; they do not have a mobile or email address. How does the Club communicate to supporters when they don't have such details? And if the third tier is then opened, can people move back to their "own" seat?

Club response: In relation to the communication and lack of, this should not happen again. We have identified that some letters were missed for some of the UEFA matches and a change in process has now been implemented. It is important for supporters to note that it would be beneficial for them and the Club to have an up to date email and/or mobile on their account, as it does allow us to communicate such messages quickly and efficiently.

In relation to moving supporters back to their seats should level 3 re-open, this is administratively difficult to facilitate. That said, we have always worked with supporters and should we be contacted at such times to assist with a relocate then we would assist. It is important to note at this stage that a supporter's regular seat may not be available and they are, as always, required to sit in the seat that has been allocated to them for that particular match.

When will there be an improvement in phone and WiFi reception within the stadium?

Club response: The phone signal has been boosted (but 40,000+ people trying to use 3G is a big ask). There's no public WiFi yet, although talks are live with operators about potentially funding network improvements to extend our match day services to supporters.

AWAY GAMES

Fireworks going off at away games, set off by City supporters. Can the Club give us an update on this?

Club response: The Club has twice been fined by UEFA over use of fireworks, which are explosive devices and very dangerous, especially in confined spaces. Arrests have been made in connection with recent incidents. Clearly the potential for fireworks to cause harm or injury to supporters cannot and should not be underestimated, nor should the fact that incidents such as these can potentially damage our Club's reputation and its standing with UEFA.

We recognise that the vast majority of supporters travelling to away games in the UK and Europe do so with the sole intention of supporting, but we do kindly ask all fans to be mindful of their conduct at all times.

In Porto, we were sat by two vile City fans who kept using racist, homophobic and xenophobic language. I reported them to one of our travelling stewards. He told me he was unable to do anything about it. I asked him to report them to the Portuguese police. He said there was no point. When City are reporting Porto fans for similar abusive behaviour, I feel we should sort our own fans out first.

Club response: This is very disappointing. Our stewards are there to assist our fans – they were helpful to one family who were told their 3-year-old child could not enter the ground. But they have no powers to require the away Club or police to act against other supporters. If such fans are identified and the stewards are made aware of who these supporters are, any appropriate action may be taken once we return to the UK.

Fans were treated unfairly when they, through no fault of their own, arrived late at Anfield for the Carling Cup Semi-Final match against Liverpool (traffic delayed due to a motorway accident). Has the Club spoken to Liverpool FC about this incident?

Club response: Our fans were treated poorly. There seemed to be no communication about the delays to stewards or police at the ground. Turnstiles were slow. We have had discussions with Merseyside Police about the arrangements. We have subsequently fed back to Liverpool's safety office to express our concerns and we have been advised by Liverpool FC that all supporters that raised their concerns have received a reply direct from them.

MISCELLANEOUS

Unsociable kick off times eg 5pm for the Porto game. There were lots of gaps in the seating, as a lot of people could not make the game. There is no point in staging a game if people cannot get there. I urge the Club to lobby UEFA on this to avoid such unsociable kick off times in the future.

Club response: The Club did lobby UEFA, but their rule is that no Europa League match can clash with Champions League games. Another local team has precedence because of their longer European record.

The Chelsea game was moved from Monday to Wednesday and the possibility of postponement was known for weeks before it became necessary. Can there not be contingency arrangements to advise of the proposed rescheduled date(s), rather than having to wait for an official announcement?

Club response: We will take this up with the Premier League.

The lack of buses after games (another reason for people to leave early), what can be done about this?

Club response: This is up to Stagecoach. There is a physical limit on how many buses can wait on Ashton New Road, but we will speak to the company.

Has the Club taken on board any items from the recent Football Supporters Federation road show, "Watching football is not a crime"?

Club response: Peter Fletcher was on the panel, but most of the attention and criticism went to the police representatives.

Can the Club include the day of the match on the website fixture page, as opposed to just the date?

Club response: In order to add details of the day of the week and the TV broadcast channels to the fixture page, we would need to rebuild the page, taking it offline. This will be (and was already being) looked at ahead of the 2012/13 Season.

The next meeting of Points of Blue will be early next season.