

GUERNSEY ATHLETICS FOOTBALL CLUB

FOUNDED 2008

AFFILIATED TO THE GUERNSEY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LBG 2008

CHAIRMAN: DAVID NUSSBAUMER

VICE CHAIRMAN: JEFF VIDAMOUR

24th December 2008

Guernsey Athletics Football Club Media Release

In November, The GFA Clubs issued a media release with a number of questions about the proposed new football club for Guernsey. The board and management of Guernsey Athletics, for a number of reasons, were not in a position to respond to those points initially but have now been affiliated to the Guernsey Football Association and are able to provide the following answers:

- 1. Will the players receive any form of payment under contract? Is so, this will prevent those players, under the current rules, being selected for Island representative games, including the annual Muratti competition and possibly the National Systems Cup (where contract players are not allowed);*

There are no plans currently to contract Guernsey Athletics players.

- 2. The withdrawal of the island's better players from the local club structure will seriously weaken the local game, and is likely to reduce standards at a time when the clubs, in support of the GFA's Development Plan, are trying to develop standards overall;*

On the contrary, Guernsey Athletics believe that its involvement will only strengthen local football by enabling the best players to develop to even higher standards. Our players will compete in the local leagues also, helping to raise standards there when they will compete against local clubs. Inevitably there will be some movement between clubs which can only help improve the game generally locally.

- 3. Do the players realise that by committing to and competing in the Kent League (or similar) there will inevitably be clashes with Island training and representative games, which may preclude the players being selected for Island teams? How will this improve the game locally?*

The Kent League is sympathetic to all their clubs and is prepared to accommodate requests to avoid fixture clashes with games like the Muratti. Guernsey Athletics will also work with the GFA to ensure, as far as possible, to avoid such clashes.

- 4. Entering into a league in England (the Kent League has been suggested) will involve a considerable commitment to travel at weekends and sometimes mid week. How will this fit with individual work commitments?*

This is something that each individual will have to manage depending on their employment but is no different to the Islands cricketers, rugby players etc. Those sports people in Guernsey that want to compete, develop and test

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themselves at the highest level inevitably find that this involves competing off Island e.g. Heather Watson, Alice Loveridge, Lee Merrien, Ann Bowditch, Dale Garland, Alison Merrien and Matt Le Tissier. Many of these leading sporting stars devote their own holiday entitlement to compete around the world.

5. *A considerable amount of sponsorship will be required to finance the new team and in particular the extensive travel costs, including the possibility of paying the expenses of Kent League teams who travel to Guernsey. The GFA clubs are concerned at the drain such sponsorship may have on funds needed by the clubs and by Island representative sides, where travel and other plans are in place across the age ranges but it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract sufficient sponsors to make this possible;*

Guernsey Athletics are currently engaged in very positive dialogue with a number of companies who are interested in supporting the club. At present, none of these are currently sponsors of any GFA representative side or GFA affiliated club i.e. should they support Guernsey Athletics, this will be new money into the local game. The board feels a successful Guernsey Athletics will only enhance the game of football locally, making it more, not less attractive, to sponsors. The introduction of the Premiership and Champions League has brought more money into the UK game for all clubs by enhancing the profile of the game as a whole.

6. *The GFA clubs spend a considerable amount of time, money and effort in developing football and teams across the entire age range, starting at school reception year for both boys and girls. It is disappointing to see that these development plans may be used by Guernsey United to take from the system the better players when they reach age 18 (or 16 if Guernsey United are able to introduce the full child protection controls and procedures required for any under 18 players), without contributing to the development of those players from the early ages;*

This is not true - Guernsey Athletics has already stated its intention to enter a side into the Development League for the 2009/10 season and fully intends to extend the number of Development sides across the various age ranges, in due course.

7. *The choice of the name Guernsey United is very misleading, and can easily be confused as being the Island representative team, which it is not. The clubs strongly feel that this name should not be permitted; no more than an English team could call itself England United. This is particularly relevant if the new club cannot achieve the initial and ongoing player commitments in sufficient numbers to create a realistic squad of players. Will they then be drafting in players, possibly semi-professionals with little or no connection to Guernsey, from the UK to make up the squad numbers, but effectively operating under a club name that implies a Guernsey Island representative team?*

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The board have listened to these views and have renamed the side Guernsey Athletics Football Club as a consequence which has been accepted by the Guernsey Football Association who also have Guernsey Rangers and Guernsey Rovers affiliated to it which has yet to cause confusion with the national side.

8. *It has been suggested that the new club could enable players to enter the FA Cup. In practice this would start with the FA Vase, which is in fact available to all Guernsey clubs, subject to funds being available for travel and other costs;*

This is true and the board of Guernsey Athletics can think of nothing better than the possibility of competing with other Guernsey based sides in the FA Vase. What could be better than an all Guernsey FA Vase Final at Wembley? The board would be delighted to see other Guernsey sides enter the FA Vase too.

9. *Will Guernsey officials (referees and assistants) be available for Guernsey United's home games, when the GFA are already struggling to provide sufficient qualified officials for local league and cup games? If not, will that mean importing officials from the UK with all that means for paying expenses, etc? How will that improve the performance of local officials?*

Kent League officials are appointed by the Football Association and are usually qualified to Level 4 whereas the highest level an official officiating locally can attain is Level 5. Assistant referees are usually appointed locally though which gives Guernsey officials the opportunity to be involved and learn from officials at a higher standard and ultimately to work towards Level 4 qualification if they so wish. Guernsey Athletics is sympathetic to the current shortage of officials in Guernsey though and has allowed for all officials to come from the UK if necessary.

10. *Will the new club plan to contribute in any way at all to the full Guernsey football infrastructure already supported by the existing GFA affiliated clubs, or does it simply intend to draw upon the fruits of the extensive contribution made by the clubs for a relatively small number of better-quality senior players?*

As already outlined in the answers to previous questions, Guernsey Athletics intends to be a fully contributing club like the other GFA clubs.

11. *For a new club to seek affiliation to the Guernsey County FA without planning to play in the leagues organised by the Guernsey FA, or otherwise contributing to the development of the local leagues, is somewhat unusual to say the least.*

As noted earlier, Guernsey Athletics intends to run Development league sides, starting from 2009/10.

For queries on this press release, please contact:

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