



SWANSEA CITY SUPPORTERS' TRUST

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Programme Notes – Plymouth Argyle, Saturday 3rd February 2024 – Adam Lewis writes:

Welcome back to the Swansea.com Stadium for today's match against Plymouth Argyle. The Swans have faced a difficult run of fixtures recently, playing promotion hopefuls Leicester and Southampton, as well as Premier League Bournemouth in our last three outings, and the run doesn't get much easier with today's visitors. Hopefully the team have learned some hard lessons from our recent games and can replicate some of the excellent play we saw against Leicester, but this time cut out some mistakes and sustain the intensity over 90 minutes.

One thing that will be front and centre for many supporters' today is to see our new players in the flesh after the January Transfer window closed on Thursday night. Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to formally welcome Ronald, Charles Sagoe Jr, and Przemyslaw Placheta to the club and the city. I think it's fair to say that most observers of our team in the first half of the season would have said we were crying out for some pace, especially as we look to implement Luke Williams' preferred style of play. Hopefully the new additions will bring that. I'd also like to send best wishes to those who have headed out of the club in January, especially Brandon Cooper, who has left the club permanently. It's always sad to see players who have come through our Academy leave, but it is part of the game, and we wish him the very best.

This January certainly felt quieter and less dramatic than any in recent memory across the pyramid, something backed up by the numbers. The Premier League had the lowest spending in three years (£96m total), and Championship clubs brought in just 79 players. This is a 20% reduction on last year, and much of the activity happened late in the window this year.

It's clear that Financial Fair Play is on the mind of every club at the moment – in a trading economy, many clubs must sell first in order to buy, and when the Premier League clubs aren't actively recruiting from the Championship, the flow of funds and players as a whole reduces. Swansea City are not immune to this. As a fan, I always want to see us bring in exciting players who will get supporters off their feet and help deliver better performances and results. However, with my Trust hat on, whilst I still want to see improvements, I believe these must only be brought in under the condition that the additions do not harm the longer-term compliance of the club with the strict FFP regulations. It's so easy to get swept up in the emotion of what happens in the 90 minutes on the field, but the bigger picture and a clear strategy is so vital to achieving sustainable success.

We know some fans will be unhappy with the business done in this window, and inevitably the Trust have received some of the flak for that (even though we are not actively involved in player recruitment). However, we have continued to discuss with the club the importance of expectation management, consistent communications, and transparency about the plans and the financial situation that the club finds itself in. It's not a secret that the club runs at an annual deficit of more than £10 million, and this must be plugged to ensure that we have a club at all. That does mean sometimes that spending on players is restricted.

Off the pitch, I'm delighted to share that our Matchday Experience Working Group has been formed and will be meeting later this month to discuss the recommendations of our report. The group will be tasked with building out these recommendations and identifying other initiatives that will improve the atmosphere and experience in and around the stadium.

We know the wheels are in motion within the club, and we have also seen some things happen in the pre-match build-up, including in our game against Southampton. There is never going to be a magic bullet, but we must continue to trial different things until we find what works best. All we ask from supporters is that they give this every chance to succeed, and where things aren't quite working, that they engage with us constructively with suggestions. It's all too easy to jump on social media platforms and forums and just start complaining – **that helps nobody**. I ask that you channel that time and energy into working with us and embracing the ethos of what the Trust and club are trying to do, even if it's not 100% aligned with what you want personally. That is truly the only way this can succeed. There are some brilliant examples of clubs who have nailed their matchday experience, and we want to learn from them, without losing the authenticity that makes our club so unique. If you have any suggestions, please email them to supporters@swanstrust.co.uk

Enjoy today's game, and let's back the boys to bring home the points.

Adam