

The Coca-Cola Football League Championship Table

	P	GD	PTS
1 Sheff Utd	12	13	30
2 Reading	12	14	27
3 Luton	12	8	24
4 Wolverhampton	12	6	19
5 Watford	12	5	19
6 Leeds	11	3	18
7 Crystal Palace	11	5	17
8 Southampton	12	3	17
9 Ipswich	12	-5	17
10 QPR	12	-4	16
11 Stoke	12	-7	16
12 Cardiff	11	1	15
13 Norwich	12	0	15
14 Preston	12	-2	14
15 Burnley	12	2	13
16 Derby	12	-1	13
17 Hull	12	-1	13
18 Coventry	12	-3	12
19 Leicester	12	-3	12
20 Plymouth	12	-7	12
21 Brighton	12	-5	10
22 Sheff Wed	11	-5	10
23 Millwall	12	-8	10
24 Crewe	12	-9	9

So how are we doing this season (The Secretary's "Rant")

written 09/10/05

After 11 games we sit in sixth position with 18 points from 11 games. If we win our game in hand we go into fourth position, conceivably six points behind Reading in the second automatic promotion position. To date we have won 5, lost 3 and drew 3. Our losses have come at home to Ipswich, away to Cardiff City and away to Sheff Weds. In two out of the three games we should have won. Against Cardiff City we comfortably lead 1-0 when Jermaine Wright and David Healy missed easy chances to sew up the game. Cardiff scored through Koumas and a dubious penalty award, and Leeds were denied a certain penalty at the other end when a Cardiff player handled on the goal-line. We deserved nothing from our trip to Hillsboro when inexplicably the players did not perform, and should have been ashamed of their display. Against Ipswich we had almost double the chances we had against Derby County (a game we won 3-1) and yet the forwards did not convert any of them. Perhaps a concern is the first goal for Ipswich, when Cresswell stepped out of a challenge that then exposed the lack of pace in our central defence. Gregan missed a tackle at the end line and Butler switched off for the cross allowing an easy header for Sam Parkin. The second occurred when Leeds were chasing the game and Crainey didn't step out for offside leaving Parkin with a simple chance for his double. It is impossible to defend the players when they missed so many chances from 19 shots on goal including a missed penalty. Games like

this do occur. Look at the amount of chances Man United missed against Blackburn Rovers that same day. They went on to lose 1-2 at home to 13/1 Blackburn.

What perhaps is a concern is the lack of pace in our central defence. Harding (pic'd below) at left back has started the season disappointingly and was at fault for goals against Millwall and Brighton. He will learn and become a better player for it. I would persevere with Crainey and Kelly in the full back roles for now. Kelly seems to have come back to his form of old. In central defence I would personally prefer a pacey player along side Butler, and that player would be



Kilgallon. I think that Butler and Gregan are too once paced. That said I'm sure the manager would point to the statistic which indicates that no other Championship side has kept more clean sheets than Leeds. This may be so, but against Brighton, a game I attended, I thought their lightening wingers caused us endless problems, particularly from corners we had won. They broke at breathtaking speed and scored 3 goals on the back of it.



However, Hulse (pic'd left) and Healy had enough chances to win several games. These chances must be converted to win matches. Instead of easily being 4 goals up we found ourselves 0-2 down.

On the left wing Eddie Lewis is impressive. On the right, I prefer Richardson but Steve Stone will be a big attribute when he returns after Christmas. Derry and Douglas are the preferred two in the centre, but as I said at the start of the

season we lack an Idiakez, ie. a ball playing central midfield player who can open up a defence with a clever pass. Up front Healy and Hulse are as good as what is around, but they will have to start converting more of their chances. On the bench we have plenty of options to change a game, particularly with Blake and Cresswell (when he comes back from injury). I expect 20 plus goals from Rob Hulse if he stays fit. I think he is that good. (my best 11 when fit below)

Am I disappointed so far ? At times yes, but over all not really. If one is to be disappointed and whinge over



defeats to Cardiff City, Sheff Weds and Ipswich one can't be equally disingenuous by ignoring good wins away to Norwich City and QPR and at home to Wolves. This league is a steeplechase. I think we need to go on a run and win five or six on the bounce, and I think we can do that. Sheff United have come out of the blocks super quick, but I think apart from Ifill and Jagielka there are none of their players I would rather have. Does this mean that their manager is getting more out of his team than our manager is with us ? Too early to say. In the past Sheff United have dropped like an anchor, especially when cup competitions come around, but this season I think it may be different.



There is no love lost between Blackwell and Warnock, (pic'd above in happier times) but Sheff United will be there at the end though. In a way there are parallels between this season and the year (1998/99) we won the old Second division (read on further in the magazine for how that season went).

What about the others ? Reading and their Charlton like start will end after Christmas like it always does, and I don't believe Luton Town nor Watford have the strength in depth to sustain their challenge, although hats off to both of their managers for the way they started the season and the exciting brand of football they play.

Some people suggested that Adie Boothroyd has gotten more out of Marlon King, Mattie Spring and Clarke Carlisle than Kevin Blackwell. Perhaps that may be true currently, but I recall Clarke Carlisle causing us many problems last season with all too frequent lapses in concentration, eg the penalty at Burnley being a prime example. A needless OG already cost his side dearly against Sheff United this season. Marlon King "wouldn't get a kick in a horsebox" one Louth member famously commented. He started this season brightly, as has Michael Ricketts with his 3 goals for Cardiff City on loan. Would you swop either for Hulse or Healy ? I think not. Other environments with less pressure than playing for Leeds United sometimes can relax players and help them regain their lost form. Whatever about Spring, whom I personally like as a footballer, Ricketts and King got plenty of chances already with Leeds United, as has Jermaine Wright who has found a new lease of life on loan at Millwall.

I still believe the usual suspects of Sheff Utd, Wolves, C Palace and possibly Southampton will be there at the end and while I don't agree with all of Kevin Blackwell's selections I am confident that he is doing okay currently and I see no reason why Leeds won't be up there with the others come the business end of the season.