

'Fans' Day' at Highbury - Sunday February 1st.

27/01/04

Story by Paul

Many things will be said about 'Fans Day' in the next week, but to me it represents one thing: a positive step in the right direction.

Everybody reading this has, at one stage or another, complained about the atmosphere (or rather - lack of!) on matchdays at Highbury. We've all done it, and we're right to, because it's embarrassing. The atmosphere at home games has gone from poor to appalling over the last few years, while we've all stood in the pubs moaning to each other about 'middle class fans' and 'tickets being too expensive'. But you know what? It's all bollocks. It's all just excuses. How many of us have actually tried to do something about the problem? How many of us have got up off our arse to do something pro-active?

Well now, at last, somebody is.

Yes 'fans day' is the club's initiative, but they've approached us - the fans - through the atmosphere forum, to help them try and get it right and do it properly. The club are listening. Listening to what we, as supporters, want to see changed; and we can make an improvement, but it's up to us to do that.

Football has changed, and we can choose to change with it, or get out of it. 'Fans Day' is one small step on a very long road to putting a bit of passion back into Highbury. We're not going to be there much longer, so let's make the most of it. Let's enjoy our last years together at The Home Of Football. Don't wait to see if things change at Ashburton Grove, because the problem will just get worse.

As a fan, and your representative on our club's atmosphere forum, all I can do is urge you to show a bit of positivity when you turn up at Highbury on February the 1st. for "Fans' Day". We're all in the same boat, all fighting the same corner, and we all want the same thing: more noise at Highbury.

So wear all the red you own and get to the ground early, learn all the new songs, check out the new banners, and stay in your seats at half time for Tony Henry. But most importantly of all - SING UP FOR THE ARSENAL. Support Fans' Day, and be grateful that something is finally being done to turn things around. After all, it can hardly get any worse! We've got no excuses anymore and no more right to moan. This is our time, and our chance to wake up the Highbury Library. We can use it as a good opportunity to make an improvement, or we can ignore it, laugh at it and go straight back to square one.

It's your Club. It's your Stadium. It's your experience. It's up to you!

The club themselves are promoting the day heavily - Here's their press release:

Our match against Manchester City a week on Sunday (February 1) has been designated as a 'Fans' Day' here at Highbury - giving all supporters a chance to show your true colours and sing for a win.

Supporters are encouraged to wear red and also to participate in a number of activities with the aim of enhancing stadium atmosphere and fans' participation at matches.

A group of supporters approached the Club to discuss ideas in the hope that the fabled Highbury Library can be transformed into a more lively Highbury. There have also been regular discussions at our Fans' Forums as to how matchdays can become more atmospheric occasions.

Amongst the events taking place will be:

Karaoke in the North Bank - The North Bank faithful will have the chance to sing their favourite tunes in the build up to the match, warming up for a full Highbury chorus from the terraces as kick-off approaches. We'll also provide song-sheets.

Half-time Henry - Popular opera singer, Tony Henry, will provide half-time entertainment singing terrace favourites including Dean Martin's 'Volare' - the tune to 'Vieira' of course.

Dress to Impress - Images of supporters' participation during the day will be shown on the Jumbotrons and if you can catch the eye as being particularly committed to your Gunners colours, you could win a player's warm up shirt!

The players, more than anyone, understand the importance of creating a great atmosphere at Highbury - the supporters can be the team's twelfth man. Gunners skipper Patrick Vieira is right behind the initiative: "One of the great things about English football is the atmosphere you get at matches. As players, when you can really hear the support from the stands it is definitely an inspiration and I can honestly say that the louder the Arsenal fans are the better - and I know that's the opinion of all of the lads.

"Sometimes I know it is suggested that Highbury is not one of the country's loudest stadiums but when the atmosphere is good here, there's nowhere better and any ways of making matchdays livelier and louder here at Highbury are a great idea in my opinion."