

## **REdaction update**

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Story by Ben

Well I don't know about the rest of you Gooners but I'm glad to have the Premiership season underway after the relative dross that was Euro 2004. One thing that was particularly enjoyable was seeing the influence the fans had on their team.

Any coincidence then that Otto Rehhagel's men performed so surprisingly well on the pitch with 3000 nutters in togas roaring them on? I'd like to think not!

The image of twirling scarves and eccentrically clad wildmen may never carry over into the world of English football but, over the summer, RedAction have looked at ways to capture a part of that fun-loving spirit and bring it to The Home Of Football. While most fans have been basting themselves on beaches or staggering in and out of foreign bars, the RedAction lads have been thinking of new initiatives for this season.....as well as staggering in and out of foreign bars. It was quite a task to think of how to better the previous year's initiatives of Fancy Fulham, the North Bank Knees-Ups, the tier banners, beer promotions et al but we racked our brains and drew inspiration to match the efforts of last year.

As some of you may know, Gooners were recognised last season by the FA as being the best fans in the Premiership in terms of behaviour, attitude and respect towards our hosts and, as a result, we were given an award of £20,000 to spend on the fans. RedAction had previously spent several hundred pounds from their own pockets to support previous initiatives and now we have a budget to strive for even bigger and better ideas. So what's on the cards for 04/05 then?

Well.....after catching several pre-season friendlies and resisting the urge to spend all £20,000 in Amsterdam, we've got:

### **More North Bank Knees-Ups**

The three last season (Man City, Charlton, Leicester) went down a storm and everyone had a great laugh dusting off old songs and trying out new ones on stage! Due to restrictions in facilities, we couldn't do any in other parts of the ground but the North Bank seems to be ideal for it! The plan is to do about ten this season, which will be publicised on posters and will replace the usual pre-match bands that come onto the concourse stage.

### **Giant Flags**

The Gooner fanzine (two members of which are on RedAction) displayed a 15ft by 18ft "We Are The Arsenal" flag at most away games including Europe which you may have seen and the plan is to make a couple more. One we're currently looking at is one for David Rocastle. After initially getting permission from his family, we then had to decide what to put on it. We've settled on a silhouette of his face and no narrative as we felt no single comment was quite appropriate. Keep an eye out for that one!

The Community Shield match also gave RedAction the opportunity to air the giant shirt flag to Cardiff. It had been stuck in the darkest depths of Highbury for over a year until one of us asked "Remember that giant O2 home shirt we had? What the hell happened to that?!". After a bit of detective work, we found the flag and brought it to the Millennium stadium where we spread it out over the Gooners on the Upper North Stand tier. We quickly found out that Arsenal fans aren't that sharp when it comes to figuring out what to do when a flag goes over their heads. The flag went upside down and back to front before eventually being rotated the right way up! BBC and Sky showed it and, by all accounts, it was an impressive spectacle nonetheless! Maybe next time eh? Apparently, at full time, four lads managed to convince the stadium stewards to part company with the flag and promptly pilfered it! So if you see four men with a home shirt the size of a tennis court around, please ask them to hand it back to the club. Thanks!

## “Greatest Moments” Montage

Well we all know how watching this great team on screen makes us feel and there have been some legendary chapters of football history written by Arsenal teams down the years. We've been working for several months with Granada to compile a montage highlighting Arsenal's greatest moments from the 70's onwards and we're close to airing the final version just before kick off at one of the August home games. It's taken months to perfect and the end result is stunning so make sure you don't miss out on it!

## Transition To The New Stadium

You've either been stranded on the moon or stuck in Tottenham's trophy cabinet for the last four years if you don't know we're very close to moving to our new 60,000-seater stadium. One of the ideas the club's having for seat allocation is to distribute interactive CDs to gold members so they can choose their new seat. We anticipate that this will only leave Gooners even more segregated than they already are. We want to get fans to choose which block they want rather than specific seat and also send a survey out finding out what type of fans we really have and grouping thousands of like-minded fans together. Arsenal fans have never been so different - some want to sing, some want to watch the game in peace, some bring their family along and don't want to hear swearing. Whatever category you fall into, it's undeniable that each type's out there and they don't mix well with each other. We want to section fans within the new stadium so everyone enjoys their match-day experience more than they currently do while, of course, making the new stadium more vocal than Highbury currently is.

## Rattles and Scarves

For those of you who went to Cardiff this year, you may have heard some of the old-fashioned football rattles going off in the crowd or in The Gatekeepers pub. This was an idea we had and though we'd try out for a day. The results? Erm.....well let's just say footy rattles belong to an era long gone but we live and learn, right?

Scarves were one thing that were very visible during Euro 2004; not only to wear your team's colours but to swing them in the air in unison. The Portuguese seemed to be the masters of this and when 20,000 of them decide to do it, it has an effect you can't possibly ignore. The green and crimson wave of energy that surged above the fans was both intimidating to the opposition and inspiring to the Portuguese players. Something for us to look at during the colder games when more of us take out scarves with us as it was too hot in Cardiff!

## Feedback Boxes

RedAction are very aware of the cynicism among fans. Our article in The Gooner back in April done much for our credibility as before it, we heard comments like “Who are these tossers?!” and “I bet they don't even go to games!”. Now, of course, most fans know who we are and that we do our mileage! We are simply die-hard fans who have worked to get a platform with the club and are using it to improve things at Highbury. In that spirit, we're putting feedback boxes in various tiers so we can get an idea of how other fans feel about our work as well as any suggestions for improvements and how to spend the £20,000 given to us by the FA. Unfortunately, free Carling is not an option. Trust us – we've tried!

Other back burner ideas include something with the end of Highbury in mind. Have you been in the East and West Lower recently? My Gawd it's depressing! We plan to get in touch with local schools to get a group of 11-16 year-old Arsenal fans together and paint murals in the stands to brighten the place up. It's currently a lovely shade of concrete grey and could possibly be a reason why they all seem so depressed over there. I feel suicidal just looking at them so maybe a lick of paint in the stands will cheer them up a bit!

On a final note, can we mention how magnificent the support was for Everton away? The 3000 Gooners present were aching to see their beloved team canter onto the turf once more and they appreciated it in spades when their desires were fulfilled! The home support was non-existent and whether that was due to Rooney missing from the team sheet or Kenwright's recent attempts at appeasing the fans....well...who gives a shit?! The incessant noise from the boys in red and white and the Fat Boy/Grandad banter was a joy to experience! The

football wasn't bad either, I guess. We all know Thierry Henry appreciates good support more than anyone and his gesture at the end of walking up to us and thumping the badge on his chest and roaring was his little way of saying "Nice one, lads!". A great start to the season and let's hope there's a lot more of that display of passion and pride to come from us!

That's the round-up for now! - There'll be RedAction updates from the official website, match-day programs, The Gooner fanzine and here on Arsenal World. In the meantime, enjoy the football and get behind the lads!