

FANS' FORUM

Club owners profit from own agenda

THE interview with Simon Grayson (*NLP*, July 6) included many interesting comments.

However, the assertion that "all owners in the football industry are putting money into the club for a reason, and most of the time it's to keep those clubs alive" is not an argument that stands up to close inspection.

Owners are concerned about self-promotion, promoting their business or making a profit. In recent years a number of fairly high profile teams have disappeared altogether. This is because on the one hand football has become more fashionable, but on the other hand the money is concentrated in the top division.

In 2023-24, the Premier League made an aggregate profit of £0.5 billion.

This leads to owners chasing the glamour, and in a few cases chasing profits. With increased crowds in recent years, owners are tempted to take bigger risks.

The only safety valve supporters have is fan ownership. My club, AFC Wimbledon, had an owner that financed a youth team to get in the First Division.

When he realised that Wimbledon FC couldn't compete financially with the big clubs in the Premier League he looked to move the club to Dublin or elsewhere.

I am aware chasing success currently makes fan ownership unappealing to many fans, but it is the only way the needs of the club are guaranteed to be put first.

STEVE SPARKES
via email

All positive news comes in summer

I USUALLY stop buying *The Non-League Paper* during the summer and wait until the new season before I pick up on it again.

This year, I have bought *The NLP* every week since the end of the season and I am so pleased that I have.

No relegation battles, no fights for promotion places, but lots of positive comments about teams far and wide.

New managers, new players, hopes for the forthcoming season, very few downbeat stories, which I hope will

soon reverse themselves (good luck, Morecambe and York City).

What a shame that soon they will be playing again. From the second week of the season, games will be described as 'crucial', with 40 or so league games still to go. I am a convert – the best football news comes in the close season.

Good luck to everyone in 2025-2026 and thank you, *NLP*, for spreading positivity and joy.

DR STEPHEN K DONOVAN
Swinton, Manchester

Lenell needs to check his sat-nav

NEW signing Lenell John-Lewis described Boston United last week as a "one-club" town.

How hilarious it would've been if he'd have turned up for the

pre-season friendly away at Boston Town on Tuesday night expecting to board a plane to America.

LEE KEMPSON
via email

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Francis DUKU

FORMER NON-LEAGUE DEFENDER

AND THE SPORTS CIRCLE FOUNDER

THE SPORTS CIRCLE

WE'RE ALL BIG NLD WINNERS

TERRACE HERO: Non-League Day is a time to showcase to the community, as Havant's Devante Stanley demonstrates

PICTURE: Dave Haines



AS the CEO of Non-League Day, it's great to see it get bigger every year – and we're confident that 2026 won't be any different.

The announcement on Tuesday that the coming season's Non-League Day would be on Saturday, March 28 quickly generated lots of interest on social media accounts and to get that date out there early is a positive.

As usual it will tie in with an international break and hopefully encourage Premier League and EFL fans to sample what Non-League has got to offer. By that stage of the season there are likely to be some crucial games and,

if fingers crossed, the weather will be getting better.

As a team we will discuss ideas for next March. Last season, the tie-in with the Essex Senior League ground-hop worked really well and we will again be open to ideas and suggestions.

We are a team of volunteers working on this so it's good if clubs can take the lead with their plans and we can then support them.

Lifblood

What we really want is for clubs to create an experience for those new, or returning, to Non-League football. Whatever ideas they come up with to generate interest, can

they make it a memorable day so that the spectators want to come back?

Clubs tell us that they like to be at home on Non-League Day and, on the other hand, others tell us they are disappointed to have missed out if they're away.

Last season's stats give an indication why. At Steps 1-4, 139 out of 163 home teams posted above average attendances. Maldon & Tiptree had an increase of 209.1 per cent, while Dover Athletic (161.8) and Berkhamsted (152.1) also saw a big jump from the norm.

The total attendance at Steps 1-4 was 149,060, an 11.9 per cent rise on Non-League Day 2024.

The numbers were really good and a lot of money was also raised for Prostate Cancer UK, our official charity partner.

We will continue to support clubs as best we can to shine a light on Non-League. It is, after all, the lifeblood of the game, the foundation of our national game.

Non-League clubs are by nature more accessible to people in their local communities. Once people visit their local club, they often realise what it has got to offer – and what they can offer it.

If we can encourage more people through the door on Non-League Day, everyone will be a winner.

Savage and Sparky add to drama

THE release of the National League fixtures this week will have whetted the appetite of players, management staff, directors and fans up and down the country.

You look for that opening fixture, that first run of games, the key holiday games.

It just makes it more solid

– the season really is on the way again.

And something that is set to give the National League a bit of extra kudos is the arrival of a couple of big-name managers in Mark Hughes and Robbie Savage.

They come from vastly differing fortunes. Former Manchester United star

Hughes was unable to keep Carlisle in the EFL last term having taken over in February with the Cumbrians in big trouble, while ex-Leicester midfielder Savage led Macclesfield to NPL Premier glory before moving to Forest Green Rovers.

There are a lot of good managers at National

League level already, but their arrival raises the profile massively. You will potentially have players from higher levels who want to play for Mark Hughes or Robbie Savage.

It can only add to the quality of the league and should be a huge benefit all round.