

Editorial

The past twelve months have been a period of change for Philosophy Football FC. But it has not been change for change's sake. The attraction of novelty soon wears off if it is not underpinned by a firmly held set of values. Those values of dissent, experimentation and internationalism remain at the heart of this club. This newsletter explores these values. Personal accounts, reflection on past glories and the retelling of the events of the past season all witness how the club has changed by reaffirming its core principles.

Fed up with big business dominating football?

If you play to a good standard and share the ethics of fair play and internationalism, PFFC is interested in hearing from you for Sunday matches in London and European tours.

Contact Geoff Andrews (geoffandrews1@hotmail.com) or Ally Clow (allyclow@hotmail.com)

That was the year that was

Last season lasted nine months, with a few lows, many highs, a tournament win and a return to the Grafton League. **Owen Mather** picks over the bones

Pre-season

After a number of training sessions in Hyde Park, we were invited to compete in a charity 5-a-side tournament in Brixton. Here PFFC recorded one of its most bizarre days.

Despite some decent football, we never adjusted to the speed or ability of our opponents and lost all our group games. However, somehow we were put through to the knock-out stages. Drawn against the winners of the other group, who no doubt thought they'd hammer us, we hatched a plan based on a type of Trotskyite football 'entryism'. Having masqueraded as also-rans, we then revealed our true spirit and potential. We won our quarter-final 5-3, our semi-final on penalties, and proved durable enough to win the final 1-0, thanks to a golden goal in extra time. Rina said

we peaked just like the Italian World Cup side in Spain 1982. Others told us we were bloody lucky! Myself, Andy, Dodo, Rina and some of Andy's skilful pals took possession of the John Adamson Memorial Cup, toasting each other with a fine bottle of sake.

The league

The season started at Regent's Park in September against Quinine with debuts for Francesco, Isaia and Matt. Playing on a Sunday morning on grass against friendly opponents, having hung up the nets, evoked nostalgia. This vanished once we kicked off, as we finished on the wrong end of a 10-6 thriller. Our first win came next, beating Arup 5-2 with the assistance of debutants Will and Lawrence. This was also the final league game for Conrad, German powerhouse and Player of the Season 2008/09. Terrible weather meant we had to wait for more than a month before our next match, sneaking a 1-0 win against old rivals Grafton courtesy of Matt, who would dominate the league scoring charts.

After a winless March, losing to the rather unsporting Falcons and Sporting Tooting, we met Grafton again in April. The 3-1 win saw the return of two PFFC legends – Rob the Cat and Raj – and took place in the East End's charming Weavers' Fields. On a

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Player profile: Ally Clow

Goobar Fox considers a player who has been at the forefront of PFFC for the best part of a decade

JOINED THE CLUB after moving to London from his native Scotland and sending his 'footballing CV' to the Gaffer. First appeared in a red shirt in Brussels, scoring twice in the team's victory over a side representing the EU.

SPEEDY AND SKILFUL winger on the left or right of the field, he has also starred in central midfield, up front and even in defence.

YOUNGEST EVER and longest-serving captain of PFFC, taking the armband after only a year at the club. Led the club to its third successive title in probably its best incarnation, and guided the team through some tough years in the corporate midweek London Football League.

POPULAR WINNER of the Players' Player of the Season award for 2005/06.

SPEARHEADED the club's cultural reawakening, organising events centred around music, film and food. Organised Slow Foot tournament in Italy at Europe's premier cheese festival.

MUSIC FANATIC who worked at HMV for many years, played bass in several bands, and was instrumental in the production of the Thinkers' Tunes CDs.

LEFT CORPORATE LIFE this year in search of more creative outlets, developing cultural apps for the iPhone and other devices. All in all, very much a 21st-century Philosopher.



Editor: Joe Boyle
Sub-editor: Goobar Fox
Designer: Dr T Design

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brilliantly sunny day, Lawrence netted a hat-trick. Post-match, we decamped to Brick Lane and settled on plastic seats by a grilled fish stall under a bridge of the East London line, savouring our victory with some chilled continental lager.

After the winter delays, we finally ended our season in June. First we met Deportivo in the most disappointing game of the season. With only seven players available, we had no option but to concede the game. Deportivo lent us some of their substitutes so we could play a friendly but we lost that game 1-0, effectively beaten twice within 90 minutes.

The return fixture with Sporting Tooting was bizarrely never completed, for reasons that remain a mystery. We did end the season – as late as 13 June – on a happy note, beating Arup 4-2 in Battersea Park. This was followed by a trip to the Paya and Horse, a nearby Serbian pub, to watch the World Cup match between Serbia and Ghana.

This nine-month league campaign was the longest in PFFC history.

The cup

Thanks to the convoluted cup competition dreamed up by Barry, PFFC needed to play two games in a group stage to progress to 'the next stage'. This scenario never materialised, after October's 4-1 defeat to Deportivo at Wormwood Scrubs and a 8-0 thrashing by MASH in February. The latter of these involved a trip down memory lane for some as we played at the Coombe Lane ground in Raynes Park, home to our old adversaries Old Wimbledonian Strollers. OWS's midfield maestro Julian is now MASH's player/manager and he'd surrounded himself with young, fit twenty-somethings to do all the running. Still, he was gracious in the bar afterwards and appeared genuinely pleased to see us again. If that wasn't enough, they still had that massive ceramic elephant head above the bar. Result!

The friendlies and 3-sided match

November saw friendly matches against academic teams. The match against UCL Chemistry at Regent's Park became the first PFFC match to be abandoned, with the score at 1-1, due to a torrential deluge. The referee called a halt to proceedings and ran off before any of the players knew what was happening. Dave made his debut and scored for the opposition, who turned up short of players. A week later in Perivale, Philosophy duelled with Philosophy as we took on KCL Philosophy department and crushed them 14-0 with a record-equalling eight-goal haul for Conrad and a hat-trick for Lawrence.

The election month of May saw arguably PFFC's greatest triumph of the season with our involvement in an experimental Situationist three-sided match, organised by Whitechapel Art Gallery. The winner was the team who could forge meaningful alliances and concede the fewest goals, a task we successfully completed, after initial confusion, winning 3-2-0. Not only was Filippo busy at the Bernabau writing our online match report, supplied by Ally via text, but we hit the headlines of both the *Hackney Gazette* and the *Enfield Independent*!



Photo courtesy Michael Hylton and Daniel Weill

The not-so-famous five

During a World Cup summer, PFFC limbered up for their return to the Grafton League with their eyes on a 5-a-side title. **Will Errington** recounts the ups and downs

Our season began with the FIFA World Cup still a week away. Rooney was still an idol rather than an adulterer, Fabio was fabulous and confidence was high that Saint Gerrard would lift the coveted trophy. PFFC's hopes matched those of England: we had the title in mind.

Our first fixture was against eventual runners-up Racing Maylan. A squad larger than that for some Sundays turned up, meaning some missed out. Gaffer Dave stood aside and bellowed instructions from the line, clipboard in hand. We won well, 4-0, Matt Turner inspired in goal, saving a penalty and setting up goals from his accurate throwing. The only dark note was Felix's injury, which ruled him out for the rest of the tournament.

The next three results changed the mood. A draw and two losses strangled hopes of silverware before the season was half-way through. Only four players turned up to one of these. The following week was better. We fought back against eventual league winners Academicals to draw 4-4. It proved we were the equal of anyone in the league, as long as enough players turned up. Thirty minutes of non-stop 5-a-side without being able to rotate the team gave us little chance against full squads.

Defeats in the next two games snuffed out lingering hopes of a late charge to claim the title. With five games left, we were second bottom. Next up was a double-header against Traf FC and Jets, teams with similar records to us. We would be playing an hour of 5-a-side so needed a strong squad. Dave badgered and cajoled and nine turned out. This allowed us to play virtually a fresh team in each half of both games; 5-0 and 5-2 wins propelled us two spots up the table.

The penultimate week of the season brought another double-header with fourth spot still possible. However, a 3-1 defeat to Traf FC left us needing to win the second to avoid the bottom three. Tequila Party Gnomes were title contenders and fancied an easy three points. The match was spirited and contentious but we won 2-1 via a dubious winner.

The final week was about getting a good squad together, hoping to put clear daylight between us and the lower end of the table. However, Kilburn Grange failed to show. We were awarded the win and fourth spot was ours. It was a bit of an anticlimax not to win on the pitch but we celebrated at Mosob in Maida Vale on Dave's recommendation – a good one.

We played well in a few matches, poorly in others but mostly we were undone by having a small squad. So, a season of glorious mediocrity and what-ifs.

New players, old virtues

*PFFC may be in a period of change, but certain values haven't changed, as recent recruit **Matt Prout** explains*

As I put fingertips to keyboard, an array of football club takeovers is making the headlines in this football-loving land. From Liverpool to Notts County, it appears no club is immune from ill-conceived takeovers. This is where Philosophy Football FC has a voice, both on and off the pitch. It can fight for an era craved by increasing numbers of people, in which football progresses from its current state of fatigued commercialism to a dynamic and humble purity more in tune with its origins and with its supporters.

I joined PFFC in September 2009, since when the team has undergone a lot of change. This has seen many longer-term members step back from playing and a few newcomers – such as myself, Will, Dave and Lawrence – enter the fray. The squad has been further boosted by more recruits in the current season. In my first season I felt the team's enduring enthusiasm on and off the pitch. This enthusiasm is infectious, whether winning in Weavers Fields or losing on Wandsworth Common. After all, it's not just the playing that counts, it's the messages we convey to others that are crucial.

Towards the end of a mixed season in the league, May 2nd saw us involved in an unusual match, organised by Whitechapel Art Gallery. This challenged the conventional bi-polar model of football by placing three teams on an hexagonal pitch in a Situationist-inspired game. As photographers from the gallery and the *Hackney Gazette* snapped away, Philosophy were motivated by the large drop in opinion polls for the Mandelson-spun red team. They took on the hollow Lib Dem–Tory coalition, which quickly crumbled. Will life imitate art in the months to come? Philosophy led principled drives towards the Tory goal, requiring no shady deals to be done with the Lib Dems in the nearby smoke-filled changing rooms.

PFFC is a diverse and thoughtful team, drawn together from various parts of the world. It is fantastic to be part of such a dynamic group in the heart of the capital. The team is all the richer as a result of its complexity. Viva Philosophy Football Football Club!

Intelligent design ... Sartre

*Shirt designer **Hugh Tisdale** explores how the Philosophy Football movement has captivated the world and invigorated the PFFC squad*



Albert Camus's words "The moment I am no longer more than a writer, I shall cease to write" tell us much about his motivations, and this goalkeeper and boxing fan certainly found plenty of physical inspiration beyond his typewriter. *Philosophy Football* was born thanks to a wonderful football quote from this bravely experimental author. But it is the shirt inspired by an insight from his friend and rival, Jean-Paul Sartre, that I wish to highlight here.

"In football everything is complicated by the presence of the opposite team." This succinct identification of the perils of football management (or should that be gaffership?) up and down the amateur and professional leagues first appeared in our selection in December 1998. An immediate success, the design has remained in our inventory ever since. It has appeared on the pitch for the team, despite the garment colour, thanks to the excellent taste of Rob the Cat. On red it would have received greater exposure on the field, but the uncompromising black background and revolutionary French colours were intrinsic elements of the typography.

From the beginnings of the team, through low points such as the infamous Battle of Mile End, up to the current season, Sartre's words remain entirely relevant. PFFC management may add that the non-presence of some of our own manpower occasionally makes the problem considerably worse. Never mind, without opponents our efforts wouldn't amount to a hill of beans. Remember, lads, no matter how difficult the test, without those bastards opposite us, we are nothing!

Another chapter ...

*Manager **Geoff Andrews** considers how dissent remains essential to the club's philosophy as it enters a new era*

It is now over 15 years since Philosophy Football FC kicked off our first game, at Battersea Park. Then, we were strong on ideology but a bit variable when it came to marking up at corners. There was more awareness of formations and styles in the texts of Marx and Gramsci than of the application needed during 90 minutes of collective effort on a Sunday.

It is probably reasonable to say that over this period, during which we have lurched from winning the wooden spoon to winning championships, we have been philosophically consistent in our aims and values: embodying a dissenting spirit which both promotes internationalism and opposes the corporate dominance of the game. We have floated constructively in the fertile boundaries between tradition and modernity, defending the simple pleasures of the beautiful game while engaging, albeit with some hesitancy, new technological developments. This is not only a preference for such causes as video technology for referees, but also the way we organise ourselves as a club. We were quick to move to email in organising the team for match days, embraced internet-booked low-cost flying for our many tours, and even adopted *Guardian*-style interactive commentaries, texted from the touchline and transmitted on our website in real time. Now, our story will be told through Twitter, podcasts and Wikipedia, among other outlets.

Nor is this a reflection of generational changes in the club. Some of our most nervous and reluctant 'eplayers' are the youngest. As the club has expanded, it is apparent that many of the technologically versatile are our older players. These so-called 'legends' are also many of those who play deepest, philosophically speaking. Their continual involvement in the club's activities is crucial to maintaining the balance between striving for success on the pitch and keeping the wider culture of dissent alive.

A picture tells a tale

PFFC's first major silverware came when they won the Grafton League in 2002. **Joe Boyle** looks back at the team that secured the title on a cold night in Crystal Palace



The team that beat Dolphin Raiders 5-3 at Crystal Palace contains players from PFFC's earliest days and some who continue to play now: a link between the club's past, present and future traditions. So who were these players and where are they now (from the back row, left to right)?

Paul Kayley Hertfordshire-based IT specialist, was a supremely fit centre-back who, as club captain, brought a calmness and air of solidity around which to build the team.

Ian Coyle Journalist who introduced Filippo Ricci to the club. Centre-back, strong in the air. Now back in native north-west.

Jason Friend of Raj who arrived right at the end of the season. Played three, won three, picked up a winner's medal and was never seen again.

Neil James London-based Kiwi who still turns out for the club. The most prolific striker in PFFC's history.

'Cornish' Al Johns Barrister, poet, crooner and right-winger. Still appears from time to time, particularly on tours.

Brian Bannister Fearsome Liverpoolian centre-back. Brought steel and aggressiveness to this sometimes too polite side.

Geoff Andrews Founder, manager, left-back, academic and writer. Still heavily involved. No Geoff, no PFFC.

Rob Adams Inspirational goalkeeper who recently returned to the Sunday side. Thespian, lecturer, speedway nut.

Marco 'Uno' Capecelatro Cultured Italian playmaker. All the team's best play came through him. Now back in native Rome, where he plays in a band.

Goober Fox Midfielder and webmaster who led many of PFFC's off-field cultural activities. Now retired to rural Hampshire.

Owen Mather Marauding left-sided player who remains a heartbeat of the club both on and off the pitch.

Marco 'Due' Fontana Midfield dynamo whose speed and technique perfectly complemented Marco Uno's more cerebral style. Still London-based and giving tentative signs of a playing return.

Raj Chada Ulster-born barrister and Labour politician. Midfield enforcer who chipped in with the odd, crucial goal. Still involved, mainly with Legends events.

Joe Boyle Solid and dependable right-back. Writer, now based in Cardiff. Editor of season Reviews and now newsletters.

Stefan Howald Swiss striker who was involved from PFFC's earliest days. Writer and activist, quick beyond his years. Represents the club's politically engaged soul.

Filippo Ricci Italian sports journalist now living in Madrid. A left-back who re-energised, re-populated and, occasionally, rebuked the side into action.

May I recommend..?

Many of PFFC's happiest hours have been spent drinking. Cultural Secretary **Goober Fox** suggests five of the best places players have frequented for a post-match refresher

The Volunteer, Baker Street NW1

Typical London boozier, always warm on a wet winter Sunday. Haunted by a ghost, apparently, and haunted by PFFC after home matches prior to 2001, often until closing time. You could smoke in those days too. Beer 7/10. thevolunteernw1.co.uk

The Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker Street WC1X

Corner pub with a private upstairs room. Site of many Christmas parties over the years, with Cornish Al singing Sinatra, a pub quiz, stacks of food and then some of Jez's 8mm films. Memorable. Beer 6/10. uniontavernlondon.com

The Alma, Old York Road SW18

Grandiose Victorian pub to which the team heads for lunch after the annual Legends match on nearby Wandsworth Common. Again, a private upstairs room, and fantastic food. Beer 8/10. almawandsworth.com

The Edinboro Castle, Mornington Terrace NW1

Has once again become the regular boozier following home matches at Regent's Park. Excellent garden for warm days, pool and darts. Beer 7/10. edinborocastlepub.co.uk

Mesón Bilbao, Malvern Road NW6

Not actually a boozier, but they have booze. The perfect place for a cold beer or glass of tinto, and fabulous food too. Became the post-match venue of choice when we played at Pad Rec after a few months going to the crowded Warrington with its curly sandwiches (now owned by Gordon Ramsay, bizarrely enough). Signalled PFFC's transfer from pub team to bistro team. José welcomed us as his own. Has hosted club parties (and what parties they have been) in recent years. Beer 7/10, wine and food 9/10.