

ARSENAL SUPPORTER

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ARSENAL INDEPENDENT SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION NUMBER 6



ROBERT PIRES AISA PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2002



**ASHLEY COLE WINS
YOUNG PLAYER
OF THE YEAR
FOR THE SECOND
SUCCESSIVE YEAR**

Thank you to everyone who took part in the AISA Stadium Survey. Arsenal managing director, Keith Edelman, has suggested that we meet with the Club later this month to discuss the results. In the meantime, if you haven't yet joined AISA, we would be delighted if you would use the form on page 2 to do so.

AISA AGM – 23 MARCH

The AISA annual general meeting will take place at 1pm on Sunday 23 March, at the Hen and Chickens pub, directly opposite Highbury & Islington station.

The main item for discussion will be the results of the AISA stadium survey. All welcome.

Other Items to be discussed are:

- Ashburton Grove – update on the public enquiry
- Arsenal Supporters' Trust – launch details
- Official Fans Forum – talking shop or a genuine dialogue?

JOIN AISA!

AISA is made up of Arsenal supporters throughout the UK and beyond. We strive to give a voice to fans views and to articulate opinions through a constructive relationship with the Club.

Membership costs just £5 per annum (£4 standing order, £2 concessions, £10 overseas).

I apply to join AISA

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS**

Surname _____

First name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email (h) _____

Email (w) _____

Phone (h) _____

Phone (w) _____

Mobile _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____

in payment of full/concessionary/overseas membership (payable to Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association)

I enclose a further donation of £ _____

to support AISA work, making a total of £ _____

OR

I would like to pay by standing order

The Manager _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Insert the name/address of your bank/building society

Please pay to the Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association on _____

Insert the date of your first payment due now

the sum of £ _____

and the same amount on 1 July each year thereafter until further notice £ _____

Account number _____

Sort code _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association

Account number 65066801. Sort code 08-92-99.

Co-operative Bank plc, Business Direct, King's Valley, Yew Street, Stockport SK4 2JU.

Reference (office use only)

Return to AISA Secretary, 11 Tannington Terrace, Gillespie Road, London N5 1LE.

PROGRESS WITH

STEVEN POWELL REPORTS ON THE RESULTS OF

Well, here it is – the results of the biggest ever independent survey of Arsenal supporters' opinions. Nearly 1,300 Arsenal fans responded.

The response rate would make a commercial public opinion research company deliriously happy. Unsurprisingly, we all seem to care about the biggest step the club is to take since moving north of the river from Woolwich in 1913.

'OO ARE YA!

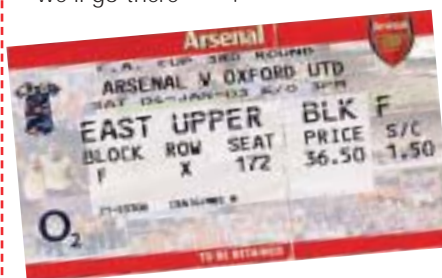
This is a football survey so the first question we should ask is " 'Oo are ya! ". The answer is a very good representative spread. Nearly half of respondents were current season ticket holders. Over half of those who weren't are on the waiting list so would like to be (no more worn out fingers dialing Ticketmaster on sale days!).

Nearly half of the non-season ticket holders were on the Ticket Registration Scheme with a third of those who weren't on the TRS waiting list.

The geographical spread of respondents was broadly in line with that for all Arsenal season ticket holders and TRS members. Over one in ten lived in Islington, nearly a third elsewhere in Greater London, over a third in the Home Counties (reflecting the general post-war migration to the suburbs). Over two in a hundred travel in from further afield in the UK with a further two in a hundred being from overseas.

There was a decent spread of ages responding too. Congratulations to the fifteen under 18s who let us have their opinions. Who said teenagers are all Kevins and Perrys? The single biggest group of Gooners responding (nearly three out of ten) were aged 36 to 45, a reflection perhaps of long-term season ticket holders. Over a third of respondents were under 45. Over one in six were over 55.

Over one in ten of respondents were women. Worryingly, 26 of you didn't appear to know what sex you are. I don't think we'll go there****.



TICKET PRICES

So what did you think? First up were ticket prices. The clear message is that you all want the new ground

to be affordable to all. Nearly four in ten wanted the lowest price to be between £10–15 (as it was at Wembley for the Champions' League games). That figure was just beaten (by five votes) by £15–20. One in seven thought it should be £20–25.

At the top end of the ticket prices more respondents believed the top price should be kept below £50 (supported by six out of ten) rather than £50–75 (under four in ten). A few loadsamonies (22 to be exact) want a top price of over £75. Given that the question specifically excluded the 7,000 corporate/club seats there are clearly a few Gooners with seriously full wallets!

The overall message, given that most people want prices lower than current is that Premiership footie is a bit on the expensive side.



TH TRADITION

OF THE AISA STADIUM SURVEY



Moving on to the vexed question of "banding" games into A or B (or more categories) and charging more for the "glamour" matches those who thought the club should "probably" do this rather than "probably not" were in the majority by two to one.

This is one of those questions that tend to get very different answers depending on how you pose it. Ask people if they want cheaper tickets for the less glamorous games and they tend to say yes. Ask about more expensive seats for big matches and they say no. We asked:

"Would you support the concept of cheaper tickets for "category B" games and more expensive tickets for "category A" games?"

The answer to this is, probably, yes, according to our results.

There was no disputing opinion on cheaper tickets for pensioners, children and students. Over nine in ten of you said "yes" to this.



"OH, WHAT AN ATMOSPHERE!"

This is a question which has finally registered on the club radar. The matter has recently been discussed at the Fans' Forum and a vote has also taken place on a short list of six theme tunes to build up the pre-kick off buzz. If I may be permitted a personal note here, whoever chose the short list has done us no favours at all - "Simply The Best"? "1812"? Do me a favour. We'll be a

laughing stock if we go with one of these hackneyed old clichés. No danger of some original thinking?

Over eight out of ten of you thought the club needs to take active steps to pump up the volume and adrenalin.

The single most popular suggestion of those specified in the survey was music as the teams come out. Next were organized displays (giant flags, streamers, etc). At number three ("is Perry Groves!" Sorry, that just slipped out) is "singing areas".

In the cellar were organized cheer-leaders. There was an "other" box in this question which invited Gooners to let us have their own suggestions. A separate analysis has been carried out here, and the Club has had the benefit of receiving all your ideas.

NAMING RIGHTS – NIKE SOCCER CITY?

Naming rights for the stadium (a la "Reebok" or "McAlpine") has caused a lot of debate already. Only 48 of you said the club should "definitely" do this. "Definitely not" was supported by nearly 7 out of 10.

Of those against naming rights over 8 out of ten said they were "strongly" against it or were against it "over my dead body". On the one hand the answers might have been different if we'd have asked something like "if the club could keep ticket prices down by selling naming rights*" or "in return for £10-20 million towards the new stadium would you support naming rights".

This is a question worth returning to in the future. With the advertising recession at the moment what the club can get for naming rights is likely to be lower than a while back. Given the lack of real discussion and consultation over the new badge the club is going to have to win hearts and minds in this area if it's to avoid upsetting many supporters.

TICKET REGISTRATION SCHEME AND TICKETMASTER



If there's one part of the Arsenal experience that some Gooners like sticking pins in it's Ticketmaster. The company gets more stick than Peter Storey used to hand out from some of our number. We set out to find out what TRS members really think.

We asked TRS members to tell us how they preferred to apply for tickets. Just over one in seven like to stroll down to the ground for tickets, an option currently available for most big League and Cup games, but not for any Champions' League game, or if you live a long way from the ground.

Those preferring the post to Ticketmaster just edged it (by 250 to 221). Of those who use Ticketmaster, you didn't give them quite the kicking that some might imagine. On the other hand their standing is less than stellar.

Only three out of a hundred found their service "excellent", just less than six out of a hundred "good" and a further one third thought they were "average". At the other end nearly one in four thought them "poor" and a further one in five "below average". Overall about D+ with PLENTY of room for improvement.

What you certainly don't like is Ticketmaster's charges. Only six of you thought they were "good", a stonking three of four of you thought them "expensive" or "very expensive". If you don't like these charges then don't even think about using them

to book concert tickets (£2.25 per ticket plus £1.50 postage and packing).

On this most of you are agreed upon is that it's important the club continue to offer tickets through several methods. Three out of four said this was "important" or "very important".

We were surprised at how many fans wanted the upper limit on season tickets raised so high from its current total of somewhere around 23,000. Nearly nine out of ten of you want to see it upped either to between 28-33,000 (40%) or more than 33,000 (48%).

It may be that there might have been a different response if we'd have pointed out in the question that season ticket levels won't have to rise much above the current level for the virtual guarantee which current holders have that they'll get a Cup Final ticket will disappear.

Over nine out of ten of all of you, season ticket holders or not, think current season ticket holders should have priority in relocation to the new ground.

BOND HOLDERS

Of the 200+ Arsenal Bond holders who responded over half "definitely" want to "roll over" their rights and privileges to Ashburton Grove (the club has the right to buy back bonds at par when we leave Highbury). A further 40% will "probably" or "possibly" want to do this.

Nearly a quarter would "definitely" convert their Bonds into shares in the club with a further half of Bondholders "possibly" interested in this option. Nearly nine out of ten Bondholders think it's "essential" that the club consult with them on this before making a final decision on what to do. Of the rest all but two think this is "desirable".

SMOKING

It appears that smokers like me are going to suffer even more than at present. The club recently consulted supporters on this. The results were a rout for the non-smokers. Our survey confirmed this. Six out of believe smoking should probably or definitely not be allowed at Ashburton Grove.

SAFE STANDING

This set of questions produced some interesting responses. Over one third

of you (34%) think Ashburton Grove should definitely have a safe standing area similar to that at major German grounds, and slightly more (37%) also voted "possibly" to this question. Only two out of ten were definitely or probably against this.

The single most popular reason for supporting safe standing was that it allowed those who wanted to stand to do so without annoying those who preferred to sit. Next up was improved atmosphere in the ground, followed by cheaper ticket prices, then safety. Bottom of the list for reasons to support safe standing areas was "I prefer to stand".

Of those of you against standing, the biggest reason was "It's a throwback to the past. We should move on", followed by policing issues, then "I prefer to sit". Encouragement of bad behavior and safety issues brought up the rear.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

The last two questions in the survey were about consultation with supporters over the new ground. A whopping 85% of you said the club should "definitely" consult widely with supporters about the sorts of issues raised in the survey. Add in those who said "probably" and you have 98% which is a majority in anybody's book. For completeness I should report that two of you think the board should definitely NOT consult supporters. I'm with them. If I was the board I wouldn't talk to me!

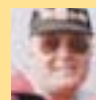
The more interesting outcome was which methods the club should use to consult. We named six. By far the most popular were:

Questionnaires mailed to season ticket holders/TRS members supported by 986
Questionnaires in the matchday programme supported by 937
Meetings with supporters' clubs/associations supported by 905

So there you have it. The biggest ever independent survey of Gooner opinion. Some interesting stuff and food for thought for the Club we hope.

More of the detail and the outcomes will be discussed at our meeting on Sunday 23 March. Hope to see you there!

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