

So the results are all in, we know who's playing where next season ... and we're all pissed off that the Taxi has fucked up a potentially great season next year. Tommy Gun's left to pick over the ruins, and try to rebuild a semblance of a *football* team for next year. So far, he looks as though he's going to make a pretty good fist of it, so all we can do is hope, pray, watch a bit of psuedo soccer, (aka the World Cup), and read the following depressing stats of last season, as we look forward to the likes of Macclesfield, Plymouth, Colchester, Northampton and .... and Manchester City, a revitalised Fulham, Stoke City, Notts County, as well as derbies against Luton, Millwall, Gillingham (well it is for me!) and Wycombe. Mmm, perhaps not such a bad year!

Anyway, to keep you all amused, I've reviewed our complete record of last season. It's not really worth reading to be honest!

At the end, you'll find a complete schedule, along the lines of Rothmans, of all the games we played, together with opponents, results, attendances, teams and substitutes. I've summarised the appearances and goalscorers here :

#### Appearances

	Debut	League		League Cup		FA Cup		Total	
	1997-98	Apps	Subs	Apps	Subs	Apps	Subs	Apps	Subs
Parkinson		36	1	5	-	5	-	46	1
Bernal		34	-	6	-	5	-	45	0
Primus	*	36	-	6	-	1	-	43	0
Lambert		33	1	6	-	3	-	42	1
Asaba	*	31	1	7	-	3	-	41	1
Swales		26	5	6	-	5	-	37	5
Booty		24	1	4	1	5	-	33	2
Williams		25	3	4	2	1	1	30	6
McPherson		24	-	6	-	0	-	30	0
Hodges	*	20	4	5	1	4	1	29	6
Houghton	*	20	5	5	1	2	2	27	8
Morley		17	6	2	-	5	-	24	6
Hammond		18	-	2	-	4	-	24	0
Davies	*	17	1	1	-	3	-	21	1
Caskey		19	4	1	1	0	1	20	6
Meaker		16	5	3	-	0	2	19	7
Mautone		14	-	5	-	-	-	19	0
Bowen	*	11	3	0	1	5	-	16	4
Lovell		8	7	-	-	2	1	10	8
Legg	*	10	-	-	-	-	-	10	0
O'Neill (L)	*	9	-	-	-	-	-	9	0
Howie	*	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	0
Gray	*	7	-	-	-	-	-	7	0
McIntyre	*	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	0
Crawford	*	5	1	-	-	-	-	5	1
Bodin		3	1	1	-	1	-	5	1
Robins (L)	*	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	0
Sandford (L)	*	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	0
Colgan (L)	*	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	0
Wdowczyk		3	3	1	1	-	-	4	4
Fleck	*	3	2	-	-	-	-	3	2
Kelly (L)	*	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	0
Bibbo		2	-	-	-	1	-	3	0
Brayson	*	2	4	-	-	-	-	2	4
Roach		0	8	1	4	-	-	1	12
Holsgrove		1	1	0	1	-	-	1	2
Glasgow		1	2	0	-	0	-	1	2
Thorp		0	3	0	-	0	1	0	4
Smith		0	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Ashdown	*	0	-	-	-	0	-	0	0

#### Goalscorers

	Total	League	LC	FAC
Asaba	12	8	3	1
Morley	9	5	1	3
Williams	8	6	2	0
Hodges	6	6	0	0
Lambert	4	3	1	0
OG	4	3	1	0
Meaker	2	1	1	0
Bowen	1	1	0	0
Brayson	1	1	0	0
Lovell	1	1	0	0
O'Neill	1	1	0	0
Swales	1	1	0	0
Houghton	1	1	0	0
Primus	1	1	0	0
Booty	1	0	0	1
Parkinson	1	0	1	0
Roach	1	0	1	0
McPhersor	1	0	1	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	56	39	12	5

Ben Smith and Jamie Ashdown appeared in the first team as non-playing substitutes during the season.

\* = player making full first team debut during 1997-98 (In the case of Jamie Ashdown, he didn't actually get on the field).

Total number of players taking part in first team games 40  
 Total number of players taking the field in first team games 38

A total of 19 of the 40 players used made their debuts for the Royals this term.

As you'd expect, Parky was the top man. Such was his performance that during all 46 games, he wasn't even substituted once. A worthy player of the year frankly. Apart from Parky, who were the other successes of a pretty dire season? Nicky Hammond proved, to me at least, that he's a top rate keeper. I'd never rated him until this year, but he made me eat my words with a string of wonder saves. God only knows how many more games we'd have lost if he'd not been around. In my opinion Steve Swales and Martin Williams are worthy of a mention, coming out of their shells following the Quinn/Gooding years. Nice to see Jamie Lambert finally establish himself as a first team regular. Up to this season he'd made 51 full apps, with a further 51 as sub! This year's 42+1 makes him a regular in my book.

Sadly the disappointments far outweigh the successes. Despite being the second highest appearance maker, Andy Bernal is now too old for this class of football, ditto Trevor Morley and Ray Houghton, and possibly Keith McPherson.. Carl Asaba has a long way to go to justify his price tag, although Darren Caskey looks to be a lot more interested in the Royal's cause. Whatever happened to Neville Roach and Byron Glasgow this year? I was hoping that they would flourish a bit, but they're young enough to come good soon. Lee Hodges remains an enigma, some games playing out of his skin and looking a vital part of the team, other times looking completely out of his depth. Of the 29 first team starts he made, he was substituted an amazing 14 times.

I don't think it's fair to pass judgement on the new players yet. Gareth Davies certainly won the fans over with his never say die attitude, sadly it doesn't look as though Tommy Gun is going to keep him. Bowen and Legg are exactly what they were described on the list as, ie journeymen players, who will make up a squad but never be vital. Can't see TB keeping them to be honest! Of the group that TB brought in, it's even more difficult to pass comment. So I won't, suffice to say they'll be around longer than some of the remaining squad. Linvoy Primus seems the pick of the new bunch, although he does need to improve on his consistency, some games playing like a collosus, others like, well not as good! Worth 1.7M? Of course!

Any records broken this season then? Well I've noted already in previous articles that we reached the fifth round of both major cup competitions for the first time this year. Our average home league attendance of 9676 is the best since the 9711 of 1969-70, and the 11117 of 1961-62. The 14817 souls who crammed (hardly!) into EP for the last ever league game, was the highest since the 14853 who saw us beat Wolves back end of last season! Before that the highest league attendance was 15054 against Pompey in Easter 1979. The last time we had consecutive league attendances of 14500 or more was back in 1969-70 for the visits of Orient (!) (17886) and Halifax Town (!! ) (15160). Who knows, with the opening of The Mad House as our next match, we stand a pretty good chance of it being 3 in a row above 14500, which hasn't occurred since 1961-62.

Our league record was pretty dire wasn't it!



Any records broken this season then? Well apart from reaching the 5<sup>th</sup> round of both cups you mean? How about 40 different players named for 1<sup>st</sup> team fixtures. 5 loan players used in a season, (probably not a record but who knows!), 19 YES 19 players making their 1<sup>st</sup> team debuts for the club!!! And for me the real pits – 16 defeats on our last 18 games!! Then there was Tommy Gun's 7 signings on the last day of the transfer "season"! (You seriously telling me he wasn't working for the Royals a good few days before he was formally appointed!!)

So there we are. A shade later than I'd hoped, but still a pretty dire campaign. If you can stomach more, try pointing you browser at <http://www.sys.uea.ac.uk/~mrg/stats/d1/leaguestats.html>. (With thanks to Lee Redpath from the Royals mailing list). Must confess I've not had the bottle to actually look at it yet, it's too sad!

Hope this little series has been entertaining. I'm off to try to move house, (again!), from sunny Dartford to equally sunny Epping Forest. Will catch up with you all again next season – if you can still stomach my ranting and raving! Have a good one, and see you at Sheff Wed!! (The only team apart from Everton who we've never scored against at EP!!)