



DUSG Meeting Minutes
6:30pm, Thursday 23rd February 2023

****Please note these notes are adopted as reference and do not constitute actual confirmed quotes from individuals in attendance. ****

Attendees:

Colin Stewart – SLO,

DUFC: Mark Ogren – Chairman, Luigi Capuano – CEO, Tony Asghar – Sporting Director, Liam Fox – Head Coach, Ryan Edwards – Club Captain,

DUSG: Arthur Hayburn – Season Ticket Rep, Claire Leslie – Arab Trust, Sid Loftus – Fans United, Scott Innes – Federation, Andy Baxter – Foundation, Dennis McGurk – Foundation, John Lindsay – Season Ticket Rep.

Colin Stewart: Welcomes the group and congratulates the two Season Ticket representatives.

Luigi Capuano addresses the room. Asks that respect and professionalism be maintained as has been at all previous DUSG meetings.

Mark Ogren addresses being misquoted following the Dundee United AGM.

- Highlights concern about his quotes being spun and taken out of context. Readdresses his commitment both financially and work ethic.
- Values and cares about supporters, the staff are just as angry and unhappy about our current on field situation.

Q. (Directed to Mark Ogren) At the previous DUSG meeting you told us the club told were not planning for relegation and in fact that wasn't even being discussed. Is there is a contingency plan in place for relegation and the championship

A – Mark Ogren

Mark Ogren gave a summary of how the club operates its budget process and explained how events throughout the season can dictate change, however he clarified that club was prepared for all eventualities including reacting to all eventualities.

Luigi Capuano then further clarified:

This discussion took place in October. Clubs put plans in place from the turn of the year irrespective of league position.

A budget for a football club is created via club-controlled income, projected matchday revenue including season ticket sales, and central distributions. Assumptions have to be made in certain areas but of course, the club builds it budgets based on the reality of all eventualities with the aim remaining to excel and achieve all our goals whatever they may be.

Mark Ogren reiterated his stance on where the club is now compared to where it was. Stated club has to look to be financially stable and if you look at the metrics across the club, we are in a much better position than we were. Every decision has had the best interest of the club in mind.

He again stressed that boycotting does not help. Our model is based on revenue and ultimately squad will be determined by fans.

Q Scott Innes – We knew the squad wasn't good enough, that's why we asked at the time?

A – Luigi Capuano:

We don't sit three months into the season and plan a budget for the next season. Most people would acknowledge we assembled a strong squad in the summer.

Tony Asghar:

a budget was determined by our 4th place position – not confirmed until May. Not that we never saw it coming but the manager at the time then leaves, which changes things.

We're close to the transfer window and appoint Jack Ross who could sustain our top 6 position. The budget that we set had changed as he wanted players of a high quality. This was delivered and when Jack left the window was closed.

Liam Fox is appointed as he understands and knows the players. There is a positive reaction to the World Cup break where the manager can work with the players and spend more time.

On the January window, we expected movement both in and out – there has to be room financially for a squad. Nobody more than myself and the gaffer want players in – but if they do not fit with our financial abilities then it is impossible. We won't sign anyone who won't make us better just to have a body in the door.

In the summer we bought assets that are a good level but also allow us to reinvest.

Sid Loftus – If we bought these good players (which he agrees with), why has it gone so wrong?

A – Ryan Edwards

It's completely on the players. Foxy was here and was a massive part in our success. You all watch the games, and our performances haven't been good enough.

Liam Fox adds:

Addresses inheriting the squad after some real shocking results. Confidence takes time. Emphasises his anger and upset regarding the current situation and clarified that nobody puts more pressure on anybody in this group than me.

Highlights many reasons for the poor run of results. Admits it has been a slow process but we all have belief in the group.

EVERY manager wants players in January. But they must be financially viable AND make us better. We looked extensively and there was no one. That may be difficult to hear but that is absolutely the reality.

Scott Innes – Conveys concern regarding our first-team striking options

A – Tony Asghar

We can't guarantee game time that to someone who isn't better than what we have – it has to be right for us as a club.

We've spoken openly with the players already in the building. We need them to put their body on the line and utilise our squad.

Liam Fox adds stated that decisions made in the January transfer window were made on his recommendation and based on his belief that every player has to meet a certain standard.

Dennis McGurk – would have preferred a comment from the club.

Liam Fox again stressed that sometimes there are reasons that a club cannot comment on certain things and gave examples of this.

Claire Leslie – ArabTrust addresses fans' concern about relegation or Mark Ogren putting no more money into the club.

A – Mark Ogren

It was taken out of context, and stop any talk of administration. Reaffirms his commitment via current investment but stresses that this football club needs to be self-sufficient.

Sid Loftus – asks Liam Fox what his plans are to take us forward.

A – Liam Fox

Has daily communication with all necessary parties. Believes there is evidence of an upturn.

Fully believes in turning in performances and results until the end of the season. If he didn't believe or the board didn't believe, he wouldn't be here.

I'm consistent, the players have clarity although we know the league table is a metric that fans will judge us on,

Dennis McGurk – We've been told by Mr. Asghar and Mr. Fox to trust the process. It's bottom of the table performance with very little passion being shown on the park – with one goalkeeper and one striker for the run-in.

Dundee United fans have no trust in this on field process, and as Mr. Asghar and Mr. Fox appear welded to it, when do their positions become untenable?

A – Tony Asghar

The Chairman decides if my position is untenable. Outlines a number of examples to contradict Dennis' point. Also addresses academy graduate structure which has been largely successful over his tenure.

Dennis questions late substitutions and the late subs of academy players

A – Tony Asghar

Outlines the different phases of AG developments, injuries, loans etc all play a part and the kids won't play if they aren't fully ready. Again emphasises the success of the academy and the monies obtained through sales and various add-ons.

A – Liam Fox

Addresses late substitutions – sometimes we are planning a change and an occurrence in the game changes our plan as evidently shown during the St Johnstone game. We aren't making subs for the sake of it – each decision is calculated.

Claire Leslie – Demonstrates concern at an appeared lack of togetherness

The team spirit or the camaraderie, it doesn't seem like a you know, like a movie has been in the past. They don't seem to be playing for one to looking in the look like individuals.

A – Ryan Edwards

Insists the team are together, otherwise, players are moved on. The group in there is full of character and experience and we are a unit – close in all senses.

Asks the audience to name players who supposedly 'don't care' before exclaiming it is the worst insult you can have as a footballer. Highlights his personal circumstances alongside other players – insists absolutely no one is going out on the pitch to underperform.

Addresses care/ desire is shown in different ways. Players aren't going to go around being violent putting in bad tackles or purposeful fouls to show they care – that isn't how football works.

Dennis McGurk – feels United get rolled over; is it because of tactics?

A – Liam Fox

some of our performances have been washed over – Hibernian, Hearts (1st half), Celtic, plus many others. Admits last minute results are what fans take away despite if the performance deserves more – which is understandably the key benchmark.

But does insist that there is no lack of character and fight.

Emphasises his own demands and pressures which people don't see.

Just because he is not animated on the touchline fans feel he is perhaps too soft

insists that he doesn't have to scream and shout on the touchline for that to be the case..

Luigi Capuano discusses caring – the fact that there have been multiple DUSG meetings, and while the circumstances of this one are different given the position the club is in.

Also points out that the Head Coach and Captain had a choice to attend tonight. That it is the right thing to do, however, if they had said no then DUSG reps would have been unaware.

Upon being asked, both the HC and Captain were instantly agreeable to come and front the situation up.

Sid Loftus – he appreciates this and it says a lot to him that they have chosen to attend.

Claire Leslie – points out our win % is 25% and that is why the fans are worried.

A – Liam Fox

Accepts that this point is true and is a more than valid comeback, and it is the only stat that matters, however, he does feel that there is no acceptance of the position where we are in.

We are working every day to get to where we want to get to, and because the league is very tight and the margins are small, personally feels we have been unlucky with certain decisions that have impacted games and results.

Tony Asghar addresses the final part of Denis McGurk's question about the Sporting Director position and Head Coach position becoming untenable.

Tony Asghar makes clear that he is not going anywhere.

Scott Innes interjects, referencing that Tony made clear a previous manager had left because he did not fulfil the needs and objectives that were set, and that if this was the same for Tony Asghar that he would also leave the Club.

Tony Asghar points out that this is true, however, the job is not complete, and we are still fighting to achieve a higher position. Tony outlines he has a job to do and a job to finish, and that he cannot leave a Club bottom of the league, that he would not run away.

Continues that he cares about the club, no matter what anyone says or whatever the perception is, he cares.

Accepts that the league position is fundamental for any success or perceived position of strength that the Club is in, but apart from that the club is in a good place with good people, assets and infrastructure in place.

Tony Asghar points out that when Liam Fox took the Head Coach job, under immense pressure, he took on a squad that was low on confidence following bruising results that needed picked back up.

Tony Asghar makes an important point about why Dylan Levitt signed for the Club despite offers of vastly increased wages in the English Championship – because of his love and relationship for the fans, because of how welcome his family were made by the fans.

Tony Asghar points out he is happy to take flak from supporters, but he needs the players and the manager to be supported and backed.

Claire Leslie – does Tony Asghar agree that players have not performed as well as they could have this season – is it tactics or what is the reason?

Ryan Edwards responds – Every player has fallen below the standards and performance levels from last season and below what should be expected.

Tony Asghar accepts that the standards and expectations are not being met by individual performances and also collect and that all players would openly admit that as was alluded to by the Captain.

John Lindsay – asks about the immediate concern regarding the Goalkeeper situation ahead of Saturday's match vs Ross County FC.

Liam Fox responds – Mark Birighitti's injury was not as bad as first appeared. Both Goalkeepers have trained this week.

JL asks about the rumour broken in the press about a Goalkeeper coming in from America.

Tony Asghar– We are looking at this option and this would be in place for next week, but not Saturday's match.

Sid Loftus – Lewis Neilson Question – Who made the policy decision for how to proceed? This decision was wrong and who was responsible for this decision that has potentially cost the Club hundreds of thousands of pounds?

Tony Asghar– We are still in an ongoing legal process regarding a dispute on what the Club believe was a process followed correctly.

No matter how our football administration process works at the Club, I am accountable.

Luigi Capuano – Points out that the club still firmly believes that we have a strong case, and outlines the rudiments of FIFA training compensation which provides background to the Club's position.

SL – Is the case any further forward?

Tony Asghar– This process could take months/ years. This boils down to a communication of how a contract is offered and agreed. The Chairman then emphasises the club's position and belief on the issue.

JL – Clarifies a) that the Club's position is that it followed due process surrounding rules set by FIFA and b) that the Club has mitigated so that this can't happen again in the future?

Tony Asghar– That is correct.

LC – As soon as there is more news, we will update the fans.

Davie Lowe – Taking into account we have signed good players and in relation to the wages paid at the club, are there any Players with relegation clauses in their contracts to protect the Club should the dreaded happen?

Tony Asghar– I can't discuss contracts, however what I will say is that we have several players who are out of contract this summer, and that others with international caps perhaps may not want to play in the league below.

Tony Asghar– We will begin tentative plans in relation to budgets next season that will all be relative.

Luigi Capuano– Emphasises this point. If the Club was to change a division, then there would inevitably be movements that would see the squad change.

JL – Prior to signing Loick Ayina, there was a discussion about an Academy player that was to be coming up into the Squad.

TA/Liam Fox – Sam Harding and Greg Petrie are two centre-backs that have both had injury trouble but have been on the bench and trained with the first team, Liam Fox has been impressed with what he has seen with them.

Claire Leslie – Is there any update on Craig Moore, who looked very good when we saw him at Ibrox last season?

Tony Asghar– He and Lewis O'Donnell have both had a couple of niggling injuries and have been fluctuating more between the U18s but we do have positive hopes for both.

Scott Innes – Is there any particular reason why we seem to have picked up a high number of hamstring injuries recently?

Liam Fox – Absolutely that has been concerning and something we are looking at, everything taking into account all the factors that could be contributing how much running I am asking the Players to do during the week and on matchdays, how the Players are eating, recovering, when we are and aren't training. We are looking at the GPS data and monitoring, and sometimes it can just be unfortunate, but it is definitely something we are looking at.

John Lindsay – Further question around the transfer budget that was not spent in January, are the Club actively looking for free agents that may be out there to bring in if the right opportunity comes up?

Liam Fox – I am always looking for Players and asking, every manager wants to improve their team.

Tony Asghar– We are always looking and the manager has a clear type about what he wants.

Liam Fox – I am very clear with the type of Player I want, I am different to Jack, different to Tam, I am clear on what I think this Club needs. I will say this in front of Tony and the Chairman, but I have only been able to bring 2 players in, every manager wants their own Players to be judged on – I was aware of this and aware of the challenge. I believe in the group and I believe we can get to where we want to, but every manager always asks for time to bring in Players and get to where they want to.

Chairman – I was speaking to a former player last night who said that Jim McLean had a difficult first few years, and that the Board at the time supported him and gave him time, and that the successes that he eventually brought would not have happened without this faith.

Denis McGurk – It took Jim 8 years to win his first trophy, there was a patience that built up the camaraderie among the squad over time. The hope is always that when the Club buy a Player, that they will make the team better.

Liam Fox – There is always a risk element whenever a Club buys or brings in a Player. I need the team to look like how I want it to look like, this doesn't happen overnight. The culture needs to change, day to day, how we work, and I know this is difficult to hear when we are bottom of the table, and I understand that, but I do think we are making progress.

Claire Leslie– Respectfully – How are we making progress when we are bottom of the table?

I understand that and it is a valid point, but how we work every day, the demands I put on the Players, what I expect.

When I talk about progress, if anyone in this room (only DUSG reps) wants to come in for a week, and spend time seeing how we work, seeing how I work then I'd show them.

I understand a lot of people will wonder what we do every day, but I am confident in how we work that I would be more than happy for you (referring again to DUSG members only) to arrange to come in and spend two, or three days with us.

Claire Leslie – Tony you will recall that we spoke two years ago about entertaining football and I am still waiting.

Tony Asghar– Absolutely, but just now I would rather results than entertaining football.

I think when Jack came in and was tasked with playing attacking football, maybe we got carried away with the Alkmaar result at home and we suffered as a result of that.

Tony Asghar– One of the reasons Foxy was proposed to the Board was that the Players have bought into his methods. Yes, results don't lie and we are bottom of the league, but the boys know where we need to get to and we ask you to stick with us.

Ryan Edwards – Like Foxy says, with the process and the methods we have, there is enough experience in the dressing room and in the group that we can get through this.

I hope the manager doesn't mind me saying this, but he asked the other day, is there something we are not giving you but there isn't, we would have gone to him as his door is always open.

It couldn't be any clearer to the Players what we have to do, and if anything there is massive guilt on the Players that we are not repaying the Club, the staff and the fans.

You will be sick of hearing Players coming out in the press every week saying the same thing, it's repetitive. You want and need to see it on the pitch and we are still more than confident that we are able to turn it around.

We all care, and we all want to be back in the top six, fighting for cups and European places. It is up to us to get through this and go again next year.

To be clear, we are taking responsibility for this and we are not going to sit back and hide behind the Manager, Sporting Director or Owner.

Colin Stewart – Thanks everyone for a really respectful, open and frank discussion. Addresses the final chance for questions.

Tony Asghar– This is all based on trust, and you guys have lost trust in what we are telling you and what we are trying to do, and honestly, I have no ill will at all about that, you are quite right to be like that as you pay good money.

At the end of the day, it's up to us to change it and we need to do that, we need to win games and get going.

There is nothing we can say, should have would have could have, we need to get results. I know that until then, I know we won't get that trust, and then we can have another day like Ross County at the end of last season.

Davie Lowe – Ultimately, we are defined by results, and as fan it is frustrating when we sit there, like St Johnstone on Saturday, and we see Players get up to the halfway line, stop and turn it back – fans just want to see Players go for it a bit more, but I know it takes time.

Tony Asghar– That is not unreasonable to say, we say all the time about being ruthless and being brave and you are right about that.

Davie Lowe– First half of the game at Tynecastle, we were immense.

Liam Fox – That is the Dundee United we all want. Every game is different but we have seen flashes of that, we all want to see more of that and we know we need to show it more.

Tony Asghar– The media jump on all the negativity, social media is what it is but the media jump on everything – if I was a fan on a Saturday night I would be the same!

Colin Stewart discusses the next meeting along with the discussion on Season 2023/24 season ticket packages which will be outlined with the DUSG.

Luigi Capuano – Outlines the process for this

Meeting closes.