

CHARLTON APATHETIC

ROSS MICHAEL KEEN is convinced nothing will change at The Valley despite the takeover



January is a time for change and that is especially true for Charlton Athletic fans. For Charlton – the club that people forget exists or, if they do remember, recall them fondly like one might remember former Blue Peter presenter Katy Hill – have just been taken over by Roland Duchatelet, a Belgian entrepreneur and politician who owns a further five clubs across Europe including Standard Liege.

As a Charlton season ticket holder for over a decade I, unlike other Addicks fans living in social media, am indifferent about the news.

This is sadly derivative of my feelings on football in general of late – especially since dropping out of the Premier League.

But I do feel this strongly: Surely a football club shouldn't be owned by someone who comes from miles away? Charlton Athletic is not a commodity and the notion of a football club being a 'business' is inherently uncomfortable.

I'm not naive enough not to understand that that is how it is in 2014, but I can't share the fans excitement about this revelation of new ownership, and can't see why the Valley masses have equated this to automatically being a good thing; not one person on Twitter for example seems apprehensive or even slightly concerned.

Are they all thick? Or am I so jaded?

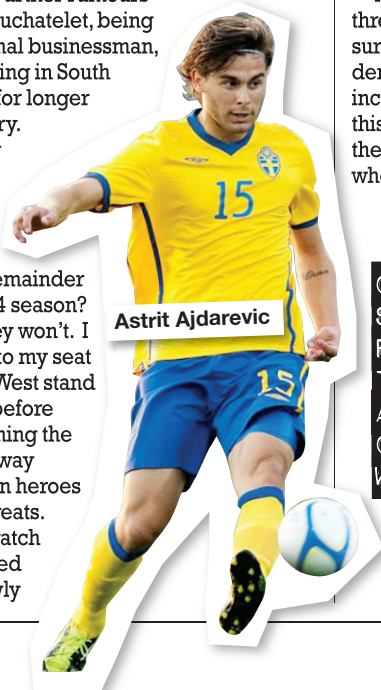
Within hours of the official confirmation a new attacking midfielder Astrit Ajdarevic arrived at The Valley on loan from Standard Liege and goalkeeper Yohann Thuram-Ulien, cousin of former French star defender Lilian Thuram, has followed.

Internet talk suggests the takeover will operate in a similar vein to the Watford/Udinese set-up. Further rumours suggest Mr Duchatelet, being an international businessman, won't be settling in South East London for longer than necessary.

So just how will the new owners impact on Charlton fans for the remainder of the 2013-14 season?

In short they won't. I will still take to my seat in the Lower West stand half an hour before kick-off scanning the faces of the away team for fallen heroes and rising threats.

I will still watch the Jimmy Seed Stand fill slowly



Astrit Ajdarevic



Roland Duchatelet

with the away support, seeking out the token topless man and the hardcore ultras wearing the garish 1994 away kits.

I will still turn to the North Stand at five to three as the drums start, and feel the same surprise and pride as I always have at how densely populated the crowd is (especially in increasing comparison to the rest of The Valley this year). I will still clap politely out of time to the Red Red Robin. I will still feel that the man who sells the crisps at half time to 'disabled

fans only' is doing himself out of a job when he turns away two small non-disabled Charlton children with his prejudiced views on who should and should not have easy access to crisps and hot beverages (don't worry boys, he doesn't even sell Salt and Vinegar).


I will still feel disappointed when Charlton struggle through another game without troubling the opposition goalkeeper. I will still try and convince myself the next day that 'we only need three wins in a row to move up to 17th; we're not doing too bad really...'

And that is what makes Charlton Athletic. Not the owners. Not even the players or the management.

It's the fans and the atmosphere; the individual rituals and experiences – the memories and the passions that they create.

Cardiff City are still Cardiff City regardless of the whims of a billionaire and Charlton Athletic, whatever happens, will be the same.

Johnny Thunders said, 'You can't wrap your arms round a memory.'

That may be true. But you can support a football club based on one. Everything is going to be fine. 

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