

## The EFL Trophy – STAR'S Position

The STAR Board has taken the view that the changes made to this competition for 2016-17, now called the Checktrade Trophy, are mis-conceived and should not be supported. Many other supporters' trusts, other supporters' organisations and individual supporters are of a similar view and attendances at the matches played so far have been startlingly low.

As Reading are putting out an age-limited side we have not treated these fixtures as first team games and have not provided an away travel service, as is our general policy. On 9th November Reading have their first home match in the competition against Yeovil. Again we will not be treating this as a first team match and will not be opening STAR Base in the evening.

In our very recent survey 50% of members supported STAR's position, 36% opposed it and 14% didn't know or didn't care. However it is likely Reading will progress out of the group stage into the knock-out phase and there will probably be more supporter interest in the games. The survey indicates that the proportion of members (and non-members) endorsing us continuing our stance should Reading continue in the competition falls to 35%.

The Reading FC management have said to us quite directly that they view participation in the competition as of great benefit to younger, non-first team players as it gives the experience of playing against League first teams and before a larger crowd than they would normally experience. The club's management has asked us to encourage supporters to attend the match and support the team.

We understand this is a benefit to the club and we respect its view; nevertheless we believe it is more important for us to demonstrate to the game's authorities our opposition (as STAR and as part of the network of supporter organisations) to the concept of mixing lower league clubs with age-limited / B / nursery sides.

Going forward, we're faced with three difficult and imperfect choices:

- STAR maintains its stance of non-support knowing the value that the football club places on the competition and that it is likely that a majority proportion of the supporters would become interested in the competition. To do so we could be accused of intransigence.
- STAR abandons its stance of non-support for the Yeovil game and also its credibility and solidarity with the supporters' movement in general. To do so we could be accused of infidelity to our principles.
- STAR makes its point of opposition with regard to the Yeovil fixture, knowing that the point about this one year experiment has been well made by others too, and then accept the views of the club and of interested supporters, if the club should progress. To do so we could be accused of inconsistency.

We believe that supporters should make up their own minds on what value they put on each of these arguments, whether to support our young players or to hold back in support of a larger idea endorsed by fan groups across the country. If we progress in the tournament STAR will assess on a game by game basis what support we will give in terms of publicity and away travel – and stand ready to be called inconsistent in what is an impossible situation.