



MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

THE LEAGUE STORY SO FAR

CHAPTER 15

INJURIES GALORE



BY
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This Chapter is dedicated to the supporters of
Macclesfield Town Football Club

I thank Peter Hilton, the club's official photographer, for all his help in
providing photographs included within this chapter.

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Macclesfield Town Football Club – The League Story so far which was
published in August 2009, copies of which can still be obtained from
Macclesfield Town Football Club.

Chapters 13 and 14 can be accessed as a free download from the club's
official archive web site www.silkmenarchives.org.uk

In line with the book, this chapter concentrates on recording events on
the field of play, although a selection of the off-field happenings have
also been included, to provide a historical record for the club and
supporters. It provides a factual summary, and does not, by design,
include any policy decisions made behind the scenes. In view of the
team's relegation to the Blue Square Bet Premier League at the end of
the 2011-12 season, this chapter concludes the club's 'League Story'.

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CHAPTER 15: 2011-12

INJURIES GALORE

Disappointment

An extremely disappointing playing season was affected by numerous player injuries coupled with contrasting results before and after the turn of the year, which resulted in the Silkmen completing the season in bottom place in the npower League Two and relegated to the Blue Square Bet Premier League after 15 interesting and, at times, extremely enjoyable seasons. In complete contrast, behind the scenes, there were more beneficial changes and projects than the club had embarked on at one and the same time in recent years.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sponsorship

Always an important aspect of operating the club, the close season saw new sponsors welcomed to the Moss Rose. A three-year deal with Henshaws Waste and metal recyclers included the renaming of the McAlpine stand, the Henshaws stand, and the Mclroy Suite re-named as the Joe Henshaw Suite which incorporates Keith's Bar and the Mclroy Lounge. Henshaws signage was installed along the length of the Henshaws stand and facing the London Road/Moss Lane junction.

Peaks and Plains Housing Trust replaced the Cheshire Building Society as sponsors of the Family Stand (situated at the Star Lane end of the Henshaws stand) and also became the Community Outreach sponsors

The Stadium

The annual playing area maintenance included stripping the top 10 millimetres from the surface and laying 80 tons of sand with complete reseeding. Combined with this work, addition drainage was installed, where standing water had been a problem during the 2010-11 season at the Moss Lane corner of the pitch.

A considerable investment was made to improve the image of the Moss Rose together with the provision of additional facilities. The cost was covered from the good financial standing of the club, personal investment by the Macclesfield based members of the Board of Directors (who had also financed other improvements in recent seasons) and sponsorship from local businesses for specialised projects.

For quite some time the external image of the Silk FM stand and the main entrance area fronting London Road had a run-down look with peeling and fading paintwork. A complete repaint was undertaken by professional painters together with the installation of new signage by Tunnicliffe Signs, which has provided a significant improvement to the external image of the club. The club crest was embossed on the pathway outside the entrance to the Joe Henshaw suite on Moss Lane, and at the players/officials entrance on London Road, by way of a Thermoplastic which is heated and molten into the ground. A local manufacturer applied the crests free of charge. Yet again, Life President Roy Higginbotham carried out the re-painting of the changing rooms and the

corporate suite and, at the same time, the changing rooms were improved to a safe and appropriate standard for a power League 2 club.

During the close season a section of the concourse under the Henshaws stand was converted into two new facilities. Club merchandise had been sold from the club offices and had to be manually moved into the McIlroy lounge for every home match and returned at the end of each match day. A new club shop was built which provides another useful facility not only for the club, but also gives supporters easier access, especially on match days. In addition, a ticket office was constructed with three windows onto Moss Lane. A second ticket office for away supporters was provided adjacent to the away end on London Road, with a further office in the Silk FM Stand for supporters using the London Road side of the ground.

Also in the close season, plumbing, electrical and mechanical repairs in the kitchens, toilets and first aid rooms were undertaken. The groundside catering was taken in-house with all refreshment kiosks refurbished and re-equipped.

Two collage type photographs were installed: the first in the McIlroy Lounge celebrating the achievements of Frank Beaumont and the FA Trophy winning teams, and the second in Keith's Bar celebrating the careers of the late Keith Alexander and the late Richard Butcher, along with former Silkmen.

Marie Curie Garden and the Mosaic

In a further move to improve the external face of the club, these two projects were completed at the Moss Lane end of the ground.

The Marie Curie Garden on the Moss Lane Car Park was a joint project between Peaks and Plains Housing Trust and the club. The project was made possible through generous donations and work by Fairways Garden Centre (plants, bulbs and trees), Cheshire Demolition (sleepers/hardcore) and R Draper of Ormskirk who provided the top soil. As the Football League's chosen charity for the 2011-12 season, the garden has a 'Marie Curie' theme in the form of spring daffodils and overall has a football theme. Either side of an Indian Stone ball are two trees representing the goalposts, with a tree behind representing the goalkeeper, with an avenue of ornamental grass creating the path which the ball has travelled. The garden was officially opened by Macclesfield Mayor, Martin Hardy on Friday 19 August 2011.

A series of mosaics have been installed on the walls either side of the away end turnstiles depicting the history of the club from its inception through the years to the present day. A photograph of the final mosaic in the series is included on the front page to this chapter. In between the individual mosaics are silhouettes of football players, the images based on photographs in the League Story so far. This was another joint project between Peaks and Plains Housing Trust and the football club which was led by Debra Tracey a local Mosaic and Multi-disciplinary artist based in Bollington. Workshops were held and many organisations within the Macclesfield community took part in the project which was supported by several local businesses.

Working on one of the club's mosaics in Debra Tracey's workshop.



Both these projects have added excellent value to the overall impression of the exterior of the ground and provide valuable interest points.

Season Tickets

Yet again season tickets provided good value with the cost reduced by a further £10 per adult ticket (see Chapter 14 for comparative prices for the 2010-11 season), with supporters under 18 (previous season under 16) only paying £50 for a full season. Under 12's continued to receive a free season ticket although for those without a season ticket a charge of £3 on the match day and £2 for pre-purchase was introduced. A package of benefits was again provided for season ticket holders including a free subscription to Silkmen Player for the first 500 season tickets (excluding Under 12s) purchased. This meant that match commentaries could be accessed for both home and away matches. Everyone is most grateful to Ray Bamford and his family for providing the commentaries for home matches whilst Richard Pattrick and his family travelled the length and breadth of the country providing commentaries for all the away matches. For all pre-match meals in the McIlroy Lounge, matches were categorised either 'A' or 'B'

according to expected demand but unfortunately this idea proved difficult to implement and was basically abandoned during the season.

Appointments and Marketing

To take on some of the executive duties which chairman Mike Rance had been carrying out since the departure of Patrick Nelson, former Chief Executive, Jon Harris was appointed General Manager having previously worked for both Shrewsbury Town and Wrexham football clubs. To take charge of the club's commercial activities, Neil Boothby was appointed Commercial Manager. Neil was well known to supporters as he had often successfully undertaken the match day Public Address responsibilities.

To advertise matches to a larger audience a large advertising board at the southern end of the Silk Road was rented.

Provision of a town centre outlet for the club at the Visitor Centre in the former Town Hall ensured that merchandise was on display and available for purchase. In addition, a facility to purchase home match tickets was available at this location.

Silkmen Archive Web Site

Many football clubs have their own archive web site recording historical information about their club providing a valuable and interesting reference point which can be readily updated.



The archive web site for Macclesfield Town Football Club www.silkmenarchives.org.uk went live in September 2011 with further historical and current information added since then. Match records, season by season player statistics, player profiles and photos, achievements and more have been included in the site. Existing records have been incorporated and research has provided a significant amount of further material. A few Macclesfield supporters have provided valuable information and photographs, with historians from three of our local clubs kindly providing information and photographs for players who have represented both clubs. Further research is planned with a view to ascertaining and recording as much information as possible back to the inception of the club.

Cashless Turnstiles

Over the years the club had continued to operate cash turnstiles, but a decision was taken that no cash would be taken at turnstiles on match days, with all supporters purchasing a match day ticket from the ticket office either prior to match day or on match day itself, before passing through the respective turnstile. Whilst it is an accepted fact that change is not liked, perhaps it was for this reason, or a lack of understanding, that a significant amount of adverse comment was created well before the system had been implemented. Supporters attending away matches have, at some grounds, for many years had to purchase tickets before passing through a turnstile and more and more clubs have adopted the cashless turnstile operation.

The new system was introduced gradually, finally going totally cashless on 14 January 2012. On-line ticket sales were also introduced in October 2011 at www.mtfcdirect.co.uk allowing supporters to pre-purchase tickets, selecting the area of the ground and even select a specific seat in the stands. Tickets pre-purchased received a discount of either £1 or £2 per match depending on ticket category.

The system provided better overall facilities and options for supporters whereby they can purchase a Season Ticket, buy in person at the club office during the week, make a purchase for future matches at the ticket offices before a match (this saves an additional journey to the club), buy over the telephone, buy online and buy on the day. For the club there are operational benefits including increased security and the ability to track purchasing of tickets so that the club can respond more fairly, for example, when allocating tickets for any big cup match.

SEASON REVIEW

Playing Staff

As always there were many changes. Matt Lowe, Jason Beardsley and Ricky Sappleton were all released. Four players moved to new clubs: Tyrone Barnett (Crawley Town), Hamza Bencherif (Notts County), Paul Bolland (Mansfield Town), and Izak Reid (Morecambe).

New players signed were Jonathan Bateson (Accrington Stanley), Waide Fairhurst (Doncaster Rovers), Tom Fisher (Stockport County), John Grant (Barrow), Scott Kay (Manchester City), and Arnaud Mendy (Derby County).

Eight players had their contracts extended: Shaun Brisley, Lewis Chalmers, Jack Cudworth, Matt Hamshaw, Adam Roberts, Michael Thomas, Jose Veiga and Sam Wedgbury.

Three players were promoted from the youth ranks when they signed their first professional contracts: Greg Daniels, Elliot Hewitt and Jack Lane.

In addition, manager Gary Simpson extended his contract until the end of the 2012-13 season.

Cup Competitions

Macclesfield travelled to Championship side Hull City for the first round of the



Carling Cup. A goal in each half by in-form Emile Sinclair gave Macclesfield the shock win of the round. Macclesfield soaked up the pressure but Emile's two breakaway goals left the Hull defence flat footed with the Silkmen deservedly going through to the second round.

Striker Emile Sinclair scoring against Hull City in the Carling Cup

The first trip of the season to the Reebok stadium saw the Silkmen take the lead in the 11th minute by Sinclair who collected a through ball from Tony Diagne, used his pace and rounded 'keeper Bogdan to score. Bolton showed their intentions when the experienced striker Kevin Davies was introduced. However, the Silkmen held onto their lead until the 56th minute when Bolton debutant Tuncay levelled the scores. However, Bolton went on to win the match 2-1 when the vastly experienced Martin Petrov scored the winning goal in the 73rd minute. In 15 years as members of the Football League the Silkmen have never managed to progress beyond the second round in this competition.

In the **Johnstone's Paint Trophy**, Macclesfield received a bye in the first round and were drawn away at Crewe Alexandra for the second round. On a blustery evening, in a match which failed to catch fire, youngster Max Clayton gave the Railwaymen victory by a single second half goal.

But it was the **FA Cup** where Macclesfield had more success. An away tie saw the Silkmen travel to Essex where their opponents East Thurrock of the Ryman Premier League had reached the first round for the first time in their history. The home side missed many chances in the first half but the match turned when Carl Tremarco rifled home to give Macclesfield the lead just before half time. Two second half goals in four minutes by Matty Hamshaw and Lewis Chalmers gave the Silkmen a 3-0 victory.



Defender Carl Tremarco (facing the camera) celebrates scoring against Chelmsford City

For the second round there was another away tie and a second trip to Essex, this time to Chelmsford City. The home side took the lead in the first half but a terrific left-foot shot from close range by Tony Diagne in the second half forced a replay. This was played on Wednesday 14 December with a 20.05 kick-off so that the match could be televised by ESPN. Full-back Carl Tremarco rarely scores goals, but he broke the deadlock midway through the first half when he scored a brilliant solo goal, flying up the left wing and drove the ball along the ground across the 'keeper into the far corner of the net scoring his second goal of the season in this competition. Macclesfield controlled the match in the second half to progress to the third round for the seventh occasion during their time as a Football League club.

There was an element of disappointment when the Silkmen were drawn against Bolton Wanderers for the second time in a cup competition in the season. However, this was compensated for by drawing a Premier League side coupled with a home tie. Manager Owen Coyle fielded quite a strong Bolton side – Bogden, Robinson, Eagles, Petrov, Knight, Davies K (Ngog), Klasnic, Reo-Coker, Pratley (Davies M), Wheeler and Riley. 5757 attended this match, including 1850 Bolton supporters in good voice, witnessing a scintillating match from start to finish. The Premier League side took the lead in the seventh minute when Ivan Klasnic had an easy tap-in after the ball had travelled through a crowd of players. Macclesfield never gave up and from a Bolton corner, a lightening counter-attack involving George Donnelly and Colin Daniel saw Daniel scoring with a low drive past Bolton 'keeper Bogdan. In the 68th minute every Macclesfield supporter was in seventh heaven when Arnaud Mendy swivelled and from 25 yards out smashed the ball in to the top of the net to give the Silkmen a 2-1 lead.



Arnaud Mendy who scored a splendid goal against Bolton Wanderers

But just as everyone thought that a victory was on the cards and that the Silkman would be playing in the fourth round for the first time in their history, along came David Wheater to head home the equaliser for the visitors.

The replay, understandably, created a lot of interest with 2097 Macclesfield supporters amongst the total attendance of 9466. Many travelled on the six coaches efficiently organised by the Silkmen Supporters' Trust. Hopes were dashed when a defensive error right in front of the travelling fans allowed Kevin Davies to give Bolton the lead in 37 seconds. Martin Petrov extended Bolton's lead later in the first half. Macclesfield performed more strongly in the second half but could not find a way through the Bolton defence.

George Whiteoak, a member of Macclesfield's Youth team, made his senior debut in the 89th minute becoming Macclesfield's youngest Football League player to make a senior appearance at the age of 16 years and 115 days.



**The Reebok Stadium
– home of Bolton
Wanderers**

With Stockport relegated to the Blue Square Bet Premier League, there were insufficient league clubs to continue with the Cheshire Premier Cup competition, which had been set up solely for competition between Football League Clubs within the Cheshire Football Association area, resulting in all the Cheshire based league clubs being entered in the **Cheshire Senior Cup**. Having been given a bye in the first round, Macclesfield were drawn at home to Witton Albion in the second round, when the match belonged to Scott Bowden who scored all four Silkmen goals to give the home side a 4-1 victory.



**Scott Bowden
scoring one of his four goals
against Witton Albion**

The quarter-final at the Moss Rose was a disappointing match, especially as there were eight senior players in the Macclesfield side. Warrington looked as though they wanted to win but could not find the back of the net, nor could Macclesfield such that the score finished 0-0 after extra time. Macclesfield won the penalty shoot-out 5-3. The semi-final again gave Macclesfield another home tie. The Silkmen played some nice passing football without getting anywhere, in contrast to the visitors, Nantwich Town, who looked as though they meant business from the start and deserved their 3-0 victory. Nantwich Town went on to win the Cup against Stalybridge Celtic.

npower LEAGUE 2

Pre-season Friendly Matches

The first four matches were played away from home to give the Moss Rose pitch time to recover fully from the close season work. A 5-3 victory at Parkgate provided a good start followed by a 3-1 victory at Buxton, where all three Macclesfield goals were scored by defenders - Brisley, Tremarco and Diagne. Next up was Congleton Town where the Silkmen were fortunate to win by a single Arnaud Mendy goal. Nantwich Town treated the next fixture as a cup-tie and provided stiff opposition which included former Silkmen Matt Lowe and Danny Adams. Played on long grass, the home side were victorious 1-0.

At the Moss Rose, Macclesfield entertained Championship side Derby County when the Silkmen performed well to earn a 2-2 draw with Shaun Brisley and Emile Sinclair on the score sheet. Newly promoted Chesterfield were the next visitors. In a keenly fought match, Emile Sinclair's over-head kick gave the Silkmen a first half lead, however, Chesterfield (who included former Silkmen Whitaker, Gray and Lee) equalise before half time. A raft of changes by both sides at half time detracted from the game overall which then became a scrappy affair.

At Leek Macclesfield fielded a young side, but it was the home side who gave the better performance throughout the match, with former Silkmen fans' favourite Darren Tinson marshalling his defence and still playing as well as ever at the age of 41. Both Carl Tremarco and Tom Fisher were injured and had to be replaced during the match. Macclesfield were fortunate to win this match 1-0 with a 90th minute penalty scored by Macclesfield's penalty taker Lewis Chalmers.

The final pre-season match saw Notts County at the Moss Rose. There was a much improved performance by the Silkmen who secured a 1-0 victory by way of a Waide Fairhurst second half goal.

Waide Fairhurst celebrates his goal against Notts County with Elliott Hewitt



In July it was officially announced that the number of named substitutes for a league match had been reduced from seven to five, only three of which could be used. In Carling Cup matches the number of named substitutes remained at seven but was reduced to five for the Johnstone's Paint Trophy.

August

The month of August, as a whole, saw the Silkmen make a solid start, but this was not reflected in the first match of the season when Macclesfield were given a rare opportunity for an opening day home fixture. Relegated Dagenham & Redbridge were the visitors, whose 'keeper thwarted Macclesfield by some fine saves and even when he had been dismissed for handling the ball outside the area the Silkmen could not gain any advantage. A lack-lustre second half performance by the home side allowed Dagenham & Redbridge to steal a goal and victory. Making their debut for Macclesfield were Jon Bateson and Waide Fairhurst and their Football League debuts, Ben Tomlinson and Scott Kay. Fairhurst, who had made a dazzling start, was the subject of a serious foul which left him injured, and was out of contention until November. Little did anyone know at this time that player injuries would have such an impact on the team in the coming months. This match was designated a Family Fun Day with goodie bags distributed to the youngsters attending.

Facing Crawley Town in their first home Football League match was a difficult task which saw the home side victorious 2-0, the first goal being scored by former Silkman Tyrone Barnett.

Goals by Tony Diagne, a brilliant strike from just inside the Hereford half, Ross Draper and two by Ben Tomlinson both in the 90th minute, gave the Silkmen a wonderful 4-0 away victory at Hereford. A good performance against fancied Bristol Rovers ended 0-0 at the Moss Rose, but in the next home match against AFC Wimbledon Macclesfield took charge from start to finish. Two goals in each half provided another 4-0 victory. Shaun Brisley celebrated his 100th career league appearance by opening the scoring in the third minute.

After five matches a mid-table position of 13th with seven points appeared to give the Silkmen a good base on which to build.

On transfer deadline day, 31st August, speedy striker Emile Sinclair, who had been in superb form in the opening matches of the season, was transferred to Championship club Peterborough United for an undisclosed fee.

September

At Torquay, Macclesfield contained the home side in the first half, but the home side changed their formation to a more attacking 4-3-3 for the second half and scored three goals in 27 minutes without any response from the Silkmen.

Nat Brown and Carl Tremarco both signed one-year extensions to their contracts to June 2013. Striker George Donnelly signed a one month loan deal from Fleetwood Town, going straight into the starting line-up for the next match away at Cheltenham Town which the home side won 2-0. Colin Daniel made his 100th appearances for the Silkmen in this match.

At home against Morecambe, on a cool but dry Tuesday evening, the match started in explosive style when Ben Tomlinson charged forward from the kick-off, and struck a low shot from the edge of the penalty area to score the club's fastest-ever league goal (at least in living memory) timed at 6.7 seconds.



Ben Tomlinson in action against Morecambe when he scored Macclesfield's fastest ever league goal

However, then top-of-the-table Morecambe, who had put six goals past Crawley only days before, equalised 15 minutes later. The remainder of the match was fast flowing and exciting but neither side could find another goal.

To give them some match experience, first year professionals Greg Daniels and Jack Lane went on loan to Newcastle Town.

The home match against Northampton Town belonged to Ben Tomlinson when he scored two goals and was provider for the third goal scored by Colin Daniel only two minutes after his introduction from the substitutes' bench, to give the Silkmen a 3-1 win. Prior to the match a cheque from the Richard Butcher Memorial Fund was presented to the club by Richard's parents to provide additional equipment for the players' gym at the Knutsford Training ground.

John Grant's contract was extended to January 2012 and Steve Collis, goalkeeper, was signed until January 2012.

At Plymouth all the cards were stacked against the Silkmen, The home side started the match in bottom place with only one point, having failed to score in their last three outings and had not scored more than a single goal in any of their previous nine matches. It was designated a Fans' United Day in support of the club's difficult financial position and Carl Fletcher had just been appointed manager in place of the experienced Peter Reid. The result – Plymouth 2 Macclesfield Town 0. Lewis Chalmers made his 100th professional career appearance.

There was better news against Swindon Town at the Moss Rose although the visitors dominated the first half they found Macclesfield 'keeper, Jose Veiga, in fine form. Macclesfield won the match 2-0, with second half goals from George Donnelly and Ross Draper. This match was played on a Friday evening to increase the numbers attending, a move which succeeded with an attendance of 2317. With 14 points, the Silkmen were 16th in the League table at the end of the month.

October

This was a satisfactory month only losing one match. Although visitors Aldershot took a first half lead and had more possession of the ball, two goals against the run of play by Donnelly and Draper gave the Silkmen victory. George Donnelly extended his loan to January with a view of signing permanently. In the next match at the Moss Rose, Tony Diagne opened the scoring for the Silkmen in the 60th minute but Oxford grabbed an equaliser in the 94th minute to earn a 1-1 draw.

An unusual incident took place towards the end of the match when the fourth official indicated that player number 23 (Tomlinson) was to be substituted for Arnaud Mendy. The change had taken place but before play had resumed, Gary Simpson, Macclesfield manager, pointed out that player number 28 (Boden) should have been the player to leave the pitch. Fortunately the referee acknowledged the mistake and Tomlinson returned to complete the match with Boden leaving the field of play.

The match at Crewe was manager Dario Grady's 1400th match as a manager, but his team gave him nothing to celebrate when a 19th minute goal by Ross Draper gave the Silkmen a 1-0 victory, their first at Gresty Road. Unfortunately, during the match Ben Tomlinson was injured and was carried off on a stretcher. Initially the



Ben Tomlinson in action against Morecambe when he scored Macclesfield's fastest ever league goal

injury was thought to be bruising but a fracture coupled with ligament damage was later diagnosed keeping Ben out of contention until the beginning of January when he returned but suffered a thigh strain. Later, he was ill, and for the remainder of the season made very few starts and was often an unused substitute or was introduced from the bench as the second or third substitute.

A 1-0 home win against Bradford saw the Silkmen in 10th position, only one point away from the play-off positions. High flying Southend came to the Moss Rose and were victorious 2-0 taking them to the top of the table. Apparent changes of formation to the Macclesfield side throughout the match did not appear to help the players, which saw some of them playing out of position. There was some good news when Paul Morgan returned to the bench for this match. Paul had been unable to play as he was still recovering from the broken wrist he sustained towards the end of the previous season. A Family Football festival was held at this match with Halloween fun, fancy dress, face painting and scary cakes.

With 24 points the Silkmen maintained a useful 11th position.

November

At Burton, the home side took the lead after 11 minutes against the run of play but the Silkmen were reduced to 10 men when Vinny Mukendi, who came on from the substitutes' bench at the start of the second half, was dismissed after just 12 seconds having been adjudged to have caught Ryan Austin with an elbow. Macclesfield continued to attack but could not find the equaliser. Protests at Mukendi's dismissal, led to manager Gary Simpson and his assistant Glyn Chamberlain both being fined £500 by the FA after they admitted charges of improper conduct.

Tony Diagne celebrates scoring against Oxford United at the Moss Rose

A home 1-1 draw against Accrington Stanley when Macclesfield had taken a first half lead with a Shaun Brisley goal, was followed by a 2-1 defeat at Barnet who secured their victory through two first half penalties. Having only gained a single point during the month, the team moved down to 14th position.

During November Lewis Chalmers became the latest player to suffer injury when he picked up a groin strain which left him out of contention for quite some time. A hernia operation was carried out in the middle of January, but his recovery took time and included rehabilitation at Lilleshall Sports Centre. It was the middle of March 2012 before he returned to action.

Also, Elliot Hewitt suffered a groin problem and was rested for several matches in November and December. Having returned, he then played until the first match in March 2012 but then, having seen a specialist, underwent a hip operation which ruled him out for the remainder of the season.

December

The first league match of the month was a dour affair at the Moss Rose against Gillingham. Neither side creating many chances and ended in a 0-0 draw, again Macclesfield benefiting from the excellent form of 'keeper Jose Veiga. Continually losing possession of the ball at Shrewsbury did not help the Macclesfield cause, with Shrewsbury winning the match 1-0, although Macclesfield did their best in the final moments of the match in an attempt to score an equalising goal, but it was a case of 'too little too late'.

The 0-0 home draw against Rotherham was a hard fought match, Rotherham making many fierce shots on goal and hitting crossbar in the final minutes. Throughout December some supporters were becoming rather concerned that the team had not secured a league victory since 25 October, however, the year ended on a high note with a 2-1 home victory against Port Vale. The first goal was fortunate when Matty Hamshaw blasted the ball which cannoned off the underside of the crossbar onto the back of the diving 'keeper into the net.

Striker George Donnelly challenging for the ball in the match against Port Valee



The second goal was scored by George Donnelly, a brilliant solo effort when he took the ball all the way from the halfway line beating off a challenge from the sole defender. 4214 saw this match, including 2350 Port Vale fans, with the 13.00 kick-off delayed on the advice of the Police because of congestion outside the ground.

Finishing the year in 14th position with a total of 30 points, it was felt that this was a good position on which to build, with the likelihood of another relegation battle remote. These thoughts perhaps masked some warning signs. Senior players were out injured, only 23 league goals had been scored, eight of which came in two early season matches, it had taken two months to secure the latest victory and only five points had been added during the months of November and December.

January

The year started badly when it was announced that midfield general Ross Draper had suffered an undisplaced fracture of a metatarsal which left Ross unable to play until the end of March. His rehabilitation included time at the Lilleshall Sports centre. This was a real blow with a key player out of action for such a long time.

Accrington has never been a happy hunting ground for the Silkmen, and the first match in January continued in the same vein with a 4-0 away defeat. Macclesfield were undone at home to Torquay when the visitors scored from two second half corners, although Shaun Brisley pulled a late goal back for the match to finish 2-1 in favour of the visitors.

During the month fresh faces appeared at the Moss Rose. Striker Ben Mills signed from Nantwich Town, Michael Bakare came from Chelmsford City and midfielder Dwayne Mattis signed from Chesterfield. Moving the other way, Vinny Mukendi went on loan to Southport and Tom Fisher was loaned to Droylsden.

For some time midfielder Sam Wedgbury had been playing with a stomach problem which, in the end, was diagnosed as a hernia for which he had an operation.

Another narrow defeat came at Swindon who won the match with a second half goal. Towards the end of the match Nat Brown and Aiden Flint got in a tangle in the penalty area, with the assistant referee flagging for a foul which resulted in Brown being shown a red card just to add to the Silkmen's woes. Swindon's Richie blazed the penalty over the bar.

BBC Radio Manchester broadcast a live commentary of the away match against AFC Wimbledon, with the excellent Ian Cheeseman providing a lively and very professional commentary complimented by knowledgeable comments from Macclesfield's General Manager, Jon Harris. Macclesfield opened the scoring when newly signed Dwayne Mattis scored in the 58th minute on his debut for the club. This proved to be Dwayne's one and only appearance for the club as he was injured later in the match. The Silkmen could not hold on to the lead, Wimbledon equalising only two minutes later and secured all three points with a second goal in the 88th minute.

Captain Nat Brown, who was unfortunate to be dismissed at Swindon, in action at the Moss Rose



Marcus Marshall was signed on a month's loan from Chesterfield which was later extended after some fine performances. Jon Grant and Steve Collis were released having completed their contracts.

After the Wimbledon match, the injury list lengthened with Mattis, Morgan and Donnelly all sustaining injuries during the match. Paul Morgan was only making his third appearance of the season, which turned out to be his last as he never recovered and underwent surgery in March. With Brown suspended and Draper, Wedgbury, Chalmers and Tomlinson all out of contention through injury, the number of available players was stretched.

Cheltenham Town were the visitors to the Moss Rose for the final match of the month. The Silkmen took the lead when Matt Hamshaw curled a low teasing ball

in from the right which Marcus Marshall, on his debut, scrambled over the line in the 30th minute. Seven minutes later the visitors equalised, and two second half goals gave them a 3-1 win taking them to the top of the table. The rub of the green was not going Macclesfield's way. Cheltenham's first goal came after Macclesfield 'keeper Jose Veiga had been hit the in the eye and 'fouled', their second goal came from a move when one of the Macclesfield players appeared to have been fouled and their third was scored from a dubious free-kick.

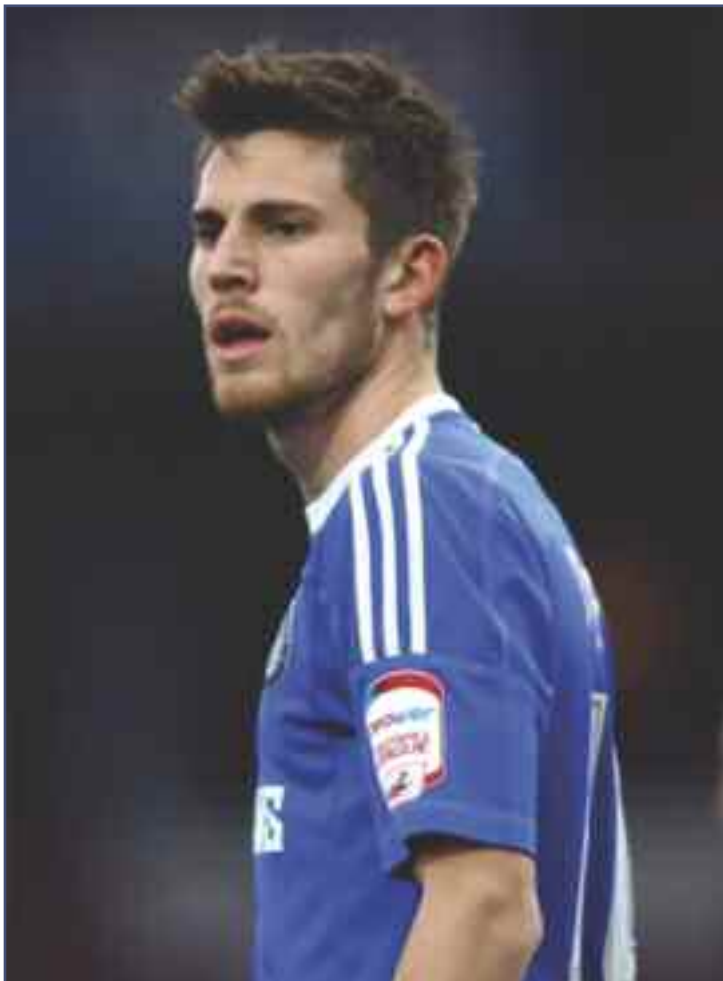
With no points gained during the month, the team slid to 19th position.

From Sunday 29 January to Thursday 2 February the players spent time at Club Deportivo Marino in Tenerife as an overseas training camp, which manager Gary Simpson was convinced would help the players to recharge their batteries, and be beneficial mentally and physically.

February

Northampton Town called off the first match of the month at the late time of 11.00 due to a frozen pitch, despite the fact that they had indicated the day before that they did not see any problems in the match being played.

Defender Shaun Brisley who, during his time at the club, had developed into a strong and reliable defender with the ability to skilfully clear up at the back, moved on loan to Peterborough United until the end of the season, when his move was made permanent in the 2012 close season. The fee was undisclosed, but reported to be record sum received for the transfer of a Macclesfield player.



**Popular defender
Shaun Brisley
deservedly moved to
Championship club
Peterborough United**

The second match of the month fell victim to adverse weather conditions when it was necessary to call off the home match against Plymouth Argyle on the Friday before the match was due to be played on the Saturday due to a frozen Moss Rose pitch

At Morecambe, Macclesfield lost 1-0 but there was some good news when Sam Wedgbury unbelievably returned to feature from the substitutes' bench only a month after a hernia operation. Matters did not improve when Aldershot visited the Moss Rose and secured all three points with a 1-0 victory. In this match the visiting 'keeper was in top form keeping the Silkmen at bay and Macclesfield defender Carl Tremarco was dismissed for a foul, thereby depleting resources further.

Vinny Mukendi returned from his loan spell at Southport and Tom Fisher also returned from Droylsden, but came back with an injury. At the same time, the experienced veteran defender Ben Futcher was signed on loan from Bury.

At Northampton, George Donnelly gave the Silkmen the lead in the 17th minute, but it only took the home side nine minutes to equalise, and then a killer blow came on the stroke of half-time when they took a 2-1 lead. They extended their lead to 3-1 in the 52nd minute with Ben Tomlinson pulling a goal back, however, the Silkmen could not find an equaliser with final result 3-2 in favour of the home side. Macclesfield 'keeper Jose Veiga played for much of the second half hampered by injury.

Goalkeeper Steve Collis was re-signed as cover for the injured Jose Veiga, but Collis injured a shoulder during training and was ruled out for the next match. On the day before the next match, goalkeeper Richard O'Donnell was signed on an emergency loan from Sheffield Wednesday. Richard remained with the club until the middle of April.

Mark Connelly, Ireland Under-21 international was signed on a month's loan from Bolton.

Macclesfield picked up their first point since the end of December at Oxford courtesy of an own goal by Michael Duberry, his third of the season, the match finishing 1-1. Another point was gained when Plymouth, relegation contenders, came to the Moss Rose for the re-arranged match. For long periods in the first half Macclesfield found themselves camped in their own half, but they hung on until the interval. In the second half, the Silkmen created chances but the visitors were playing well and took the lead in the 71st minute. Just when all looked lost, with grim faces all around the Moss Rose and with the away supporters chanting 'staying up, staying up', George Donnelly met a Marcus Marshall cross to head into the top right hand corner of the net to rescue a point well into additional time.

With only two points on the board this month the team slipped down to 20th position. Having only gained two points in two months and with only a single victory under their belts in four months, the writing was clearly on the wall for everyone to see and questions were being asked whether, in view of the side's form, we were going to be involved in yet another relegation battle, and if so would the trap-door open on this occasion.

March

In relative terms the month started better. A backs-to-the-wall match with the Macclesfield defence standing up to the pressure, and on-loan 'keeper Richard O'Donnell keeping the Silkmen in the match, made sure of a further point at Bristol Rovers in a 0-0 draw.

At the Moss Rose, Hereford, also relegation contenders, took a two-goal first half lead, their first goal coming after 13 seconds. Macclesfield looked under the weather and Carl Tremarco seemed to be man-marking their leading scorer. A second half change of formation from 4-5-1 to 4-4-2 gave the Silkmen the means to pull two goals back, through Sam Wedgbury and a brilliant shot by Matty Hamshaw in the 2-2 draw.

Another draw came at the Moss Rose when high flying Crawley Town scored in the 37th minute and extended their lead only two minutes after the re-start. This was another match when all looked lost, but Vinny Mukendi, making his first start for the Silkmen since December, pulled a goal back in the 85th minute from a Matty Hamshaw free-kick from the right which had not been dealt with by the Crawley defence, and after both Diagne and Mendy had had shots blocked, the ball fell to Mukendi.



Young striker Vinny Mukendi scored an important goal against Crawley Town

George Donnelly came to Macclesfield's rescue in additional time, Nat Brown having pushed forward, collected a long ball which he fed to Donnelly who smashed the ball into the top corner of the net to earn a 2-2 draw and Macclesfield's fifth consecutive draw. Despite these performances the team remained in 20th position.

Two more loan signings were made: striker Matt Smith from Oldham and midfielder Matt Ball from Norwich City, the latter, unfortunately, was never used.

A visit to bottom-of-the-league side Dagenham and Redbridge saw the Silkmen play with a lack of application and enthusiasm, but the home side demonstrated that they really wanted all three points which they achieved by way of 2-0 victory. The score-line could have been greater if the home side had converted chances when they often fizzed the ball across the Macclesfield goal. This victory sent them on their way to retaining their Football League status.

On Sunday 18 March, the day after the defeat at Dagenham, manager Gary Simpson was asked to 'stand down' after the disappointing run of form. The manager at Burton Albion had been dismissed the day before after six straight defeats, although Burton were relatively safe in the league. Also Northampton, another club who had struggled, some weeks before had changed their manager after which their league position had improved.

The following day Brian Horton was appointed manager until the end of the current season. Brian had been appointed late in the 2003-04 season in similar circumstances and successfully kept Macclesfield in the Football League, but at that time he had a more settled and experienced squad of players.

A difficult start for Brian with a 4-2 defeat at Rotherham which saw Macclesfield in 22nd position, but only on goal different from Dagenham and Redbridge and Hereford United who both also had 35 points. Prior to this match, a minute's applause was held for Fabrice Muamba who was, at the time, recovering at the London Chest Hospital, having collapsed with a heart attack and remained unconscious for a considerable time, during the FA Cup tie between Tottenham Hotspur and Bolton Wanderers the previous weekend. Subsequently Muamba made a steady recovery but, unfortunately, he will be unable to continue with his professional football career.

Zac Aley, a left-sided player was signed on loan from Blackburn Rovers.

Another side battling for their Football League status was Barnet who were the next side to visit the Moss Rose. The Silkmen started well, but an enforced change of Tomlinson for Donnelly seemed to lose some pace up front. Macclesfield rarely looked like scoring and, in a match which they really needed to win, they only managed a 0-0 draw which took them to 23rd position. This was the second match of the season to be played on a Friday evening attracting a gate of 2123.

The last match of the month saw Macclesfield chalk up their 19th consecutive match without a win when they visited Gillingham who were victorious by two goals to nil. The position was looking bleak with only 36 points on the board and a relegation position of 23rd in the table.

April

Against high flying Shrewsbury at the Moss Rose, the visitors took a first half lead which they extended in the 83rd minute. With a brilliant strike, Arnaud Mendy pulled a goal back two minutes later but Macclesfield's hopes were dashed when the Shrews scored a third goal only a minute later to win the match 3-1 and take them into a play-off position.

At Port Vale, a missed penalty by George Donnelly and a goal for Vale by Yates saw the Silkmen lose by a one goal margin.



In the next match 1600 Crewe fans bolstered the attendance at the Moss Rose to 3434 with Macclesfield taking the lead with a first half penalty. Fortunately for Macclesfield Lewis Chalmers, Macclesfield's recognised penalty taker, was on the pitch for this match and made no mistake in converting the penalty. Crewe pulled a goal back before half time and extended their lead in the 58th minute, however, a determined run down the left wing by Ben Tomlinson, having collected the ball in his own half, saw him pull the ball back to centrally placed Colin Daniel who equalised for the Silkmen with a fierce shot.

In front of a crowd of 10106, including 258 Macclesfield supporters, the match at Bradford City produced a disappointing first half with neither side impressing. Macclesfield never started in the second half and throughout the match they gave the Bradford 'keeper what must have been one of his easiest games of the season. An unnecessary free-kick was given away by Macclesfield close to the corner flag, with play from the free-kick resulting in Macclesfield conceding a goal when the ball deflected into the net off the unfortunate Ben Mills. Bradford's victory secured their Football League status but Macclesfield found themselves at the foot of the table, three points adrift with two matches to play.

Marcus Marshall on loan from Rotherham United, who gave some impressive performances during his time with the Silkmen seen here playing against Port Vale.

Ben Mills (number 29) attacking the ball at Bradford City



The final home match of the season was against Burton Albion. Macclesfield rued their missed chances in the first half when they had to play into a strong wind, and failed to break down Burton in the second half despite deploying three, and at times four, forwards. Two late goals gave Burton a season double over the Silkmen. With both Hereford United and Barnet earning victories, Macclesfield were relegated for the second time in their history, on this occasion to the Blue Square Bet Premier League (National Conference) having been members of the Football League for 15 years.

Brian Horton left the club by mutual consent with assistant manager Glyn Chamberlain placed in charge for the final match of the season. All the remaining loanees were either recalled by their club or returned to their home club, including Ben Futcher who was given a new role at Bury as Development Coach.

The curtain finally came down on Macclesfield's Football League experience (hopefully for the time being) at Southend whose 2-0 victory earned them a play-off position, the Silkmen completing a season in bottom place with only 37 points having failed to secure a single victory in 2012 and only chalking up seven

points. The Silkmen wore a unique Voi Jeans white shirt solely for this match, with the shirts auctioned off after the end of the season.

The supporters voted goalkeeper Jose Veiga Player of the Year. This had been a difficult season for Jose, but without his excellent performances the goal tally against the Silkmen would have been much higher. The players voted the hard working defender Carl Tremarco as their Player of the Year.



Supporters' Player of the Year, goalkeeper Jose Veiga, with Chairman Mike Rance at the Awards Evening.

In spite of the trials and tribulations, the Silkmen supporters kept their faith with the highest attendances recorded since the 2007-08 season. The club officials had played their part in the increase by moving two matches to a Friday evening to achieve higher attendances, and by encouraging future Silkmen supporters by distributing tickets to local schools.

The Future

And so to the future, whatever that brings, with a new manager, many new players and a return to a league which bears no resemblance to the Conference from which Macclesfield gained promotion in 1997, as it now includes many former Football League clubs, all of whom are vying for promotion.

(All statistics and player profiles for the 2011-12 season are recorded on the web site www.silkmenarchives.org.uk)



Macclesfield Town Football Club Squad 2010-2012



Back Row

Paul Morgan, Adam Roberts, Lewis Chalmers, Ben Tomlinson, Jon Bateson, Ross Draper, Tom Fisher, Emile Sinclair, Colin Daniel

Middle Row

Patrick Slattery (Assistant Kit Man), Paul Etchells (Kit Man), Sam Wedgbury, Elliott Hewitt, Shaun Brisley, Jose Veiga, Nat Brown, Vinny Mukendi, Jack Cudworth, Tony Diagne, Jack Lane, Arnaud Mendy, Paul Geaney (Team Masseur), Nick Reid (Physiotherapist)

Front Row

Michael Thomas, Matt Hamshaw, Scott Kay, Glyn Chamberlain (Assistant Manager), Gary Simpson (Manager), Waide Fairhurst, Carl Tremarco, Greg Daniels