

**RTPI North East Football Tournament, for the Fabian Gray Memorial Shield,  
held at Soccarena, Durham, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

## **Pickles to the rescue!**

The legal eagles from Ward Hadaway swooped to take the 2011 Fabian Gray Shield for the first time in their history in this year's RTPI NE football competition. The tournament returned once again to the chilly atmosphere of Durham City's Soccarena, now the competition's spiritual home.

With some established names surprisingly absent this year, it was a chance for new teams to stake a claim for the coveted trophy. Many wondered whether this would be the year that one of the big unitaries of Northumberland or Durham would mount a challenge, especially with Durham fielding 3 teams. South Durham looked the strongest of these sides on paper and fulfilled their promise early on, on the back of a plentiful supply of goals from the dependable left boot of Chris Baxter. South Durham would have had an even better record in Group B had it not been for the otherwise reliable Paul Hopper having a 'Robert Green moment' in goal as England and Lyle scored direct from the kick off. Sometimes it is possible to watch too much World Cup, especially if you're watching England. However, like last year, South Durham's challenge again fell at the semi-final stage, following a controversial goal from Baxter being ruled out by the referee as an infringement.

Chaotic scenes followed the conclusion of the group stages when the organisers attempted to decide which team had finished as best runner up of the 3 groups, and would take their place in the semi final. This process mainly appeared to involve the referees, pursued by an agitated mob, running relays to and from Reception. Easington's goalkeeper Peter Coe had already got changed, was told to come back to play, and then told to get changed again, when it was finally announced that Stockton had qualified, on the basis of a mathematical equation that was explained but nobody seemed to quite understand. Stephen Hawking had already left for the night.

Following the reforming of Blur and the re-emergence of William Hague, the 90's revival continued in this tournament with the re-emergence of the golden goal. Long considered a 90's relic and a failed experiment last seen in Euro 96, both this year's semi finals were settled by dramatic golden goals. South Durham's defeat by Ward Hadaway was followed by a high quality Newcastle City side narrowly losing out 3-2 to Stockton.

When the excitement had died down and most of the spectators had given up and gone, it was left to Stockton and Ward Hadaway to decide the championship in a good spirited final. Once Ward Hadaway had taken an early lead, and with their defence being ably marshalled by the commanding Sean Waller, the match never looked in doubt. The performance was expertly masterminded by the long serving Dave Brocklehurst, who seemed so confident in his side that he didn't even feel the need to get changed. Ward Hadaway took revenge for their last appearance in a final when they were on the wrong end of a 6-0 scoreline.

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The jubilant winners receive their trophy from David Stovell, RTPI NE Chair

The Scott Wilson Fastest Goal trophy went to England & Lyle's Jeremy Good, who scored with his second attempt, after 2 seconds. The top goalscorer trophy was shared for the first time between Stockton's John Dixon, and Nick Southern of Ward Hadaway. The trophies were presented by David Stovell, this year's RTPI North East Regional Chair.

Unfortunately there was no trophy to present to this year's Player of the Tournament, Ward Hadaway's Russell Ward. The trophy was rumoured to have been smuggled through customs and out of the country by a previous winner who has felt it necessary to emigrate to Australia. The RTPI is now considering whether to follow the lead of The Ashes and commission replicas of the trophies to ensure their future security. Meanwhile, police in New South Wales are understood to be undertaking a forensic search for the trophy, using a DNA clone of the 1966 World Cup canine hero Pickles. Let's hope we can report a similarly happy ending to this mystery in a future edition of RTPI Northern News.

### FINAL RESULTS

#### Semi - Finals

NEWCASTLE CITY	2	V	3	STOCKTON
SOUTH DURHAM	2	V	3	WARD HADAWAY

#### Final

STOCKTON	1	V	3	WARD HADAWAY
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