

Southend United FC tops the league in national chant competition

Get On announces winner after live 'chant-off'

The Get On campaign today announced Southend United FC fan Terry Cockell as the winner of its search for a new football chant for the nation. England football legend John Barnes and Barnsley FC's poet-in-residence Ian McMillan chose Terry's chant, sung to the tune of 'The Wombles' theme, from the nine finalists. The finalists were whittled down from hundreds of entrants from across the nation, who battled it out in a live competitive 'chant off' in central London today to claim the chant champion crown.

The competition was launched in February to tap into the nation's writing talents, and show just how creative with language football fans can be. It is part of the Government's Get On campaign to encourage adults to recognise the ability that they have with words in their day-to-day life and inspire those who need to brush up on their English skills to do so and gain a qualification.

John Barnes and Ian McMillan also announced the launch of a new chant competition to mark the launch of the new football season, challenging fans to show off their literary talents by sending in their written chants, or by uploading a video clip to YouTube of themselves performing their entry. The winner of this year's competition, Terry, will also be joining Barnes and McMillan in judging the new season's entries.

John Barnes, famed for his *World in Motion* rap, commented:

"Chants are a great way of getting behind your team and can make a real difference to the players on the pitch. I was really impressed by the level of skill and imagination shown by all of the entries, and Terry's in particular stood out because it was witty and I can see it working well in a crowd. I'm looking forward to seeing next year's entries, which I hope will be even more creative than the last!

“Having good language skills is important in all walks of life. Away from the pitch, it can help you get on in work, earn more money and help your kids with their homework. I’d advise people to make the most of their skills by taking advantage of the free courses – find out more by calling 0800 66 0800.”

Mark Davies, spokesperson for Southend United FC said: “We were thrilled to hear that a chant about Southend United and our beloved Dougie Freedman won such an important competition, congratulations to Terry and son Callum on their inspiring work. Terry’s chant showed great creativity and we want to encourage any Southend United fans who think they can match Terry’s skill to enter this years’ competition at www.direct.gov.uk/geton.”

Football pundit and poet Ian McMillan added:

“There is no hard and fast rule for creating a good chant, but it helps to keep it simple, use rhyme and repetition for emphasis, and of course rhythm is key. Terry’s chant had all this and more, and I can just see the crowds at Southend United FC singing it around the stadium. I want to encourage all football fans get their creative juices flowing for next season’s competition!”

In recognition at being crowned chant champion, Terry performed his chant in the recording studio with John and received an England football shirt signed by current England players, courtesy of The FA. The eight runners-up, who included fans of Cheltenham FC, Fulham FC, Tottenham Hotspur FC, Southampton FC, Liverpool FC, Hyde United and Sunderland FC, also won Championship, League One and League Two football tickets, courtesy of Coca-Cola.

Terry said “There were a lot of great performances on the day, but I feel like I’ve done Southend United proud! I hope that my chant will inspire other fans to take a look at their skills and see if they could do with improving them by enrolling on a Get On course. I’m ecstatic to have won, and can’t wait to teach my fellow fans the chant!”

A host of football players, organisations and pundits, including Liverpool's Fernando Torres, Manchester United's Ryan Giggs and The Football League Trust, lent their support to this year's competition, and the entries came flooding in. Liverpool fans proved to be the most dedicated, with the highest number of entries, however Terry's chant stole the show in the live final.

To enter the 2009/10 competition, visit www.direct.gov.uk/geton.

- Ends -

For more information or interviews/images of John Barnes, Ian McMillan and Terry Cockell please call Joanna Clarke/Hannah Ashby/Phillipa Jose/Joanna Heath on 020 7544 3130 or email firstname.lastname@fishburn-hedges.co.uk.

Notes to editors

The winning chant

"Underground, overground signed on a 'free,
He's Dougie Freedman of S.U.F.C,
Scores goals for fun he's a blue through & through,
Better watch out 'cos he'll score against you".

[to the tune of 'Wombles Theme']

Entered by Terry Cockell, Southend United