



**MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB  
THE LEAGUE STORY**

**CHAPTER 16  
SEASON 2018-2019  
THE GREAT ESCAPE - AGAIN**



**BY  
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## OVERVIEW

Having been crowned champions of the Vanarama National League in 2017-18, Macclesfield returned to the English Football League in the Sky Bet League 2 after playing at non-league level for the previous six seasons.

This season can in many ways be compared to 2006-2007 but without the FA Cup success. A Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) manager was appointed part way through the season at a time when both teams were rooted to the bottom of the Football League, seven points adrift of safety with the position looking hopeless; a relegation battle was fought but Football League status was retained on the last day of the season. Both matches ended with a score line of 1-1 with the teams completing the season in 22<sup>nd</sup> position.

In Cup competitions Macclesfield were knocked out of the FA Cup in the first round by a non-league club, they reached the third round of the Carabao Club (FL Cup) and the second round of the Checkatrade Trophy (FL Trophy)

Overall Football League attendances increased, averaging 2391 per match (1839 for the 2017-18 season) with an increase in home fans to 1710 (1456) and away supporters to 681 (181).

Off the field there were financial problems throughout the season with players and backroom staff receiving their pay late and a Winding up Order in the High Court had to be defended on more than one occasion.

The Silkmen Supporters' Trust, having been viewed as a rather benign organisation over the years, became a more pro-active unit taking the owner to task on more than one occasion and withdrawing financial support towards the end of the season.

## OFF-FIELD

### Chairman

It was announced at the end of the season that Mark Blower was leaving the club following five years of exceptional service operating the club on behalf of the owner. There was no announcement of the appointment of a successor.

### Club Staff

There were several appointments over the season.

- **Bob Trafford** – was appointed Media Manager, which meant that he had to relinquish his responsibility for the Star Lane End independent web site. Also appointed Fan Liaison Officer.
- **James Beckett** – moved from the role of Media Manager to Commercial Manager.
- **Graeme Hewitt** – appointed goalkeeping coach. Joined the club following several appointments: as a Coach Educator for the Premier League for a short period and goalkeeping coach for the Welsh Football Trust, The New Saints, Everton Academy, Everton Ladies, Football Association of Wales and Bangor City, combined with Owner/Coach of Goalkeeping Merseyside from August 2005. Left club in January 2019.
- **Dougie Prindle** – appointed First Team Coach having recently been with Egerton FC. Owns DP Sports Performance, a firm which specialises in football youth development and also aims to recycle as many players back into the system as possible. A qualified FA coach with experience of playing at Youth and Academy level with Manchester City (1997-2003), professional level with Bury (2003-04), and semi-professionally with numerous teams across all levels from Conference to the Evo-Stik League (2005 to present).

- **Kyle Fairgreave** – Sports Therapist. Holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Sports Therapy. Prior to joining Macclesfield worked in the Staffordshire University Sports Therapy Clinic, was Sports Therapy Assistant at Hanley Town FC, and was then with Port Vale FC, initially on a placement and then as Graduate Sports Therapist.
- **Ben Smith** – Sports Analyst. Holds a BSc degree in Sports and Exercise. He started out as an Assistant Performance Analyst at Lancashire Cricket Club before moving to Manchester United where he was Academy Performance Analyst Intern, and then spent time at Bury FC firstly as the Under 18s team analyst and then Head Academy Analyst.
- **Danny Walker** – returned to the club as groundsman.
- **Kevin Green** – Chief Executive – brought a wealth of experience to the appointment having worked in areas of the game from the Northern Premier League to the Champions League. In 2001 to 2004 he was one of eight UK representatives on a UEFA European Club Forum. Manages a Football Development Programme in a Derbyshire based school. Left the club towards the end of the season.
- **Ged Coyne** – in October 2018 moved from the position of assistant groundsman to that of Kit Man.
- **Paul McGuire** – became the club’s Youth Development officer.
- **Sian Robinson** – employed as the Club Receptionist from November 2018 on completion of a Master’s Degree in Criminology and Sociology. Has a connection with the club through her father who has worked in the Club Shop.
- **Mark Kennedy** – following the appointment of Sol Campbell as manager (see Season Review below) was appointed First Team Coach in early December 2018 but had left by the end of December
- **Andy Cole** – former England player appointed as striker coach in January 2019 on a part-time basis.
- **Kieran Wollard** – appointed goalkeeping coach in January 2019. Assumed that he replaced Graeme Hewitt although there was no official announcement by the club. Kieran has played for Blackburn Rovers, Accrington Stanley, Wrexham and Prescott Cables. He holds a degree in Sports and Exercise Science and at the time of his appointment was involved in coaching Manchester United Academy goalkeepers.
- **Shaun Goater MBE** – the former Bermudian International and Manchester City player appointed as a part-time coach for the Under 18s team to assist manager Jim Hall.

Departures during the year, in addition to those mentioned above, were

- **Rob Heys** – in July 2018 it was announced that the former General Manager was no longer employed by the club.
- **Bill Gorton** – left the club by mutual agreement in July 2018. Bill started with the Centre of Excellence some 20 years ago, progressing to goalkeeping coach and for the 2017-18 season was a coach under manager John Askey.
- **Byron Jenkins** – announced in July 2018 that he was leaving the club. Another long serving member of the football staff who had been with the club for 15 years, firstly with the Centre of Excellence, progressing to first team coach under manager John Askey.
- **Tony Brown** – Kit Man and former logistics man left the club in October 2018.

### **Farewell**

Every year we have to say farewell to former staff and supporters who have died.

- **Ron Slater (August 2018)** – his sudden death was announced on 6 August 2018. Ron had been a supporter for very many years and was a Vice-President. Advised the club with the CCTV and PA systems and at the time of his death was providing advice on the stadium upgrades required following promotion to the English Football League.

- **John Brookes (August 2018)** – For many years John was a director of the club and undertook a significant amount of maintenance work on the stadium. Told the story of the times when, after a match, the club chairman would approach all the directors telling them to empty their pockets as there were insufficient funds to pay the players. John also ran European Travel for several years, providing coach transport for supporters to away matches, on occasions subsidising the cost out of his own pocket.
- **Eddie Brown (October 2018)** - who was manager of the club from January to September 1974.
- **John Rayner (October 2018)** - former chairman of the Silkmen Supporters’ Trust and provided the club with advice based on his knowledge of the construction industry.
- **Mick Holgate (February 2019)** – A former goalkeeping coach at the club and Centre of Excellence Manager. Personable to everyone he met, he oversaw the Centre of Excellence for 14 years before its demise when Macclesfield were relegated from the Football League. Following his time at Macclesfield he moved to Blackburn Rovers as their goalkeeping coach before taking up a similar role at Barrow FC.
- **Gerry Ball (April 2019)** – Gerry was a well-known Macclesfield supporter over his life time.

### Season Tickets

The Early Bird purchase of season tickets was split over three phases as follows

	9am 16 February to 23.59 16 March	Midnight 17 March to 23.59 20 April	Midnight 20 April to 23.59 12 May	Midnight 13 May onwards
<b>Seating</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	
Vice President	£560	£660	£660	£660
Adult	£320	£340	£360	£400
Senior	£240	£255	£270	£300
Under 25	£80	£85	£90	£100
Under 18	£50	£50	£50	£50
Under 12	£30	£30	£30	£30
<b>Standing</b>				
Adult	£240	£255	£270	£300
Senior	£160	£170	£180	£200
Under 25	£80	£85	£90	£100
Under 18	£50	£50	£50	£50
Under 12	£30	£30	£30	£30

Concessions (Senior 65 & over/Under 25/Under 18/Under 12) were required to provide proof of age (as at 1 August 2018) on application.

Payment methods – Cash, Cheque, Bank Transfer/Bank Card via Paypal (option to pay by bank card)

At the time of the announcement of season ticket prices, the club stated that if promotion to the English Football League was achieved they reserved the right to re-assess the price of match day tickets. Having gained promotion to the EFL the cost of match day tickets were set as follows:

<b>Seating</b>	
Adult	£22
Over 65	£17
Under 25	£12
Under 18	£6
Under 12	£3
<b>Standing</b>	
Adult	£15
Over 65	£12
Under 25	£12
Under 18	£6
Under 12	£3

Half season tickets were on offer incorporating all eleven home matches starting with the New Year's Day match against Tranmere Rovers as follows.

<b>Ticket</b>	<b>Half Price ST</b>	<b>Saving</b>
Vice President	£285	
Adult Seated	£172	£70
Adult Standing	£130	£57
Over 65 Seated	£130	£35
Over 65 Standing	£85	£47
Under 25	£43	£89
Under 18	£26	£40
Under 12	£13	£20

Season Ticket holders were given a separate 'money off' voucher booklet before the match on 25 August 2018 for use throughout the season.

In response to promotion back to the English Football League season ticket sales increased to 719 in comparison to 567 sold for the 2017-18 season.

In November 2018 an interview with the Chief Executive revealed that there had been some misuse of the system for concessionary tickets for Under-18s and Under-25s. Proof of age would be requested in future, Under-18s by way of school identification card and the Under-25s by way of personal identification documents – eg. driving licence, work identification document, photocopy of the personal details page of their passport.

### **Sponsorship**

For the home kit, in two shades of blue, *the main sponsor* was Zaki Artict Management who specialise in managing music artists and also cover high end concierge for an eclectic range of performers. While they were only formed in November 2017 their aim is to be a leading player in the music industry. *The shirt back sponsorship* was provided by Macclesfield College who, as part of their sponsorship, provided staff for the McIlroy Lounge on match days. In return the club gave the College ten under-25 season tickets to be awarded to students. Proseal were the *short sponsors*. This company undertakes flat roof repairs, roof coating work, windows, doors and conservatories as well as fascias, soffits, gutters, driveway installation and security doors for garages.

The black and grey away strip was also sponsored by Zaki with Black Sheep Utilities who provide a utilities portfolio for businesses, sponsored the back of the shirt with Proseal also providing sponsorship for the shorts.

Macron were the manufacturers with Couture providing the training kit. Mid Communications provided screensavers of the shirt design.

Stands continued to be sponsored:

**Moss Lane Stand** – Big Brand Ideas.

**Main Stand (London Road)** – Weston Park Care Home

**Star Lane End** Premier Estates

Other club partners were Macclesfield Audi, Cheshire Demolition, Spiral Print, Goodwins Auto Salvage Ltd, Mid Communications, Bollington Insurance, Bowland Stone, Focus Fitness UK, The Good Estate Agency, Holmes Naden, Professional Football Scouts Association Education and Sondra Sports.

There was an interesting change to the selection of match mascots. Any child between the ages of three and 12 who purchased a full 2018-19 home or away kit was eligible to be entered into a weekly draw. The prize included two adult and one mascot match day tickets, a programme, tour of the ground as well as a chance to meet the players and walk out with them onto the pitch. Entries were drawn on a random basis with parents required to sign a photo consent form.

Match day and general sponsorship continued to be available with details set out on the club's official web site.

#### **Financial Matters**

- **Accounts for the year ending 30 June 2018** were available in April 2019 showing that club made a loss of £249,567 (2017-18 Profit £179,747). Following the announcement in November 2017 (see Chapter 6 of Back to the Non-League Scene page 5) that some loans had been written off and others converted into share capital, the balance sheet has a completely different look but there are concerns
  - The Bank Overdraft had increased to £121,132 (£38,815)
  - Total Creditors falling due within one year £893,636 (£457,462)
- Other figures of note
  - Called up Share Capital £3,740,095 (£2,099,166)
  - Share Premium £476,676 (£267,170)
  - Total Assets less Current Liabilities -£36881 (£503.013)
  - Net liabilities -£64463 (-£1,676,975)
  - Debtors falling due within one year £44,020 (£117,642)
  - Ramy Limited were due £195,975 (£1,676,975)
  - 19 December 2005 a debenture was created in favour of Ramy Limited.
- **Other Points**
  - On 8 December 2018 a Debenture was signed by the club with AIB Bank over the fixed and current assets of the club executed under Chapter A1, Part 25 of the Companies Act 2006.
  - A Winding up Order on Macclesfield Town Football Club Limited was heard in the High Court on 11 December 2018. There was no statement from the club relating to the outcome of the Hearing. On 20 March 2019 the club faced a Winding up Order for the second time. The club issued a statement that the petition had been lodged by HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) some weeks ago and the issue was

subsequently resolved in full. As a result of the petition being lodged, a third party creditor had added their name (reported elsewhere to be £16,000) however, an agreement had been reached with the matter to be resolved as a matter of priority. For a third time the club found itself defending a Winding up Order in the High Court on 8 May 2019 with £73K owing to HMRC and £20K to Egerton Sports for use of their facilities for training. The Order was deferred to 26 June 2019 but the club's owner stated that the HMRC debt had been paid.

- Player and Staff wages were paid late on several occasions with manager Sol Campbell publically stating that he had not been paid for two months at the end of the season.

## The Stadium

- **Ground Upgrades**
  - Enlargement of the Away Changing Room, individual facilities to be provided for female officials and enlargements of the dug-outs, all to be completed before the first home league match of the season.
  - Enhancement of the power of the floodlights required to meet Football League regulations but as the mobile 'phone mast was causing difficulties the club had been given dispensation by the EFL until April 2019 to complete this work. The first attempt to undertake this work had failed as did a second attempt in January 2019 as the casing was cracked resulting in water seepage thereby fusing the lights. At this time there was a plan to undertake this work by the end of the season, however it would appear that the work remained outstanding.
  - On the London Road side of the ground new gas boilers were installed and electrical systems were updated with new emergency lighting installed. This work was carried out by volunteers or on 'mates' rates.
- **Silkmen Supporters' Trust and Silk Lotto sponsored initiatives**
  - New computers were provided together with software and installation for the club office.
  - Purchase of radios for stewards.
  - A contribution of £3,000 towards the cost of insulation for the McIlroy Lounge.
  - Chemical tank mix for pitch maintenance to promote grass growth.
  - Two new pie heaters for the refreshments bars in the Star Lane End and Big Brand Stand.
  - £2,800 raised by way of the Silk Pledge during the 2017-18 season.

## Media

- iFollow, the EFL official communications system, offered the following packages
  - Match Pass – mid-week matches streamed live - £10 per match (over the season six matches were streamed live).
  - Free Pass – behind the scenes content and weekly club newsletter.
  - Monthly Pass – included live audio match commentary - £4.49
  - Season Pass – included live commentary for all matches – £45.00
- There were four web sites providing information about the club
  - The official web site for the club [www.mtfc.co.uk](http://www.mtfc.co.uk) which having been promoted to the English Football League was generated by the EFL although, in the main, facilitated by local media staff.
  - Fans on Line, or better known as Wraggs to Riches, provided a Message Board for fans and again became the main site for fans' comments although more and more comments are being made on Facebook. The web site address is [www.https://fansonline.net/macclesfieldtown/mb/index.php](http://www.https://fansonline.net/macclesfieldtown/mb/index.php)

- The independent web site <https://starlaneend.com> was introduced by fan Bob Trafford at the start of the 2017-18 season proving to be a great success but when he was appointed the club's Media Manager he had to relinquish control of the site. There followed problems signing into the forum resulting in significant fewer postings with supporters reverting back to the Wraggs to Riches Message Board. Bob regularly posted interesting articles but these virtually vanished, with the main item being ten points for the most recent match, the site lost much of its initial appeal. In May 2019, at the time that the annual hosting fees were due for payment, it was announced on Facebook that the site had been closed down.
- The archive web site [www.silkmenarchives.org.uk](http://www.silkmenarchives.org.uk) continues to operate as an independent web site providing historical and statistical information, profiles for all players and managers over the years including their latest known club or occupation, a photo archive together with an annual review following on from the book 'The League Story so Far' published in 2009.
- A Media Room was created on the London Road side of the ground providing a place where media personnel can gather before a match to obtain all necessary information before starting their work.

### **Community Sports Trust and Youth Team**

It was announced in August 2018 that the CST had become fully integrated with Macclesfield Town Football Club. Their work continued to cover many areas – Healthy Hearts Workshops in schools, Care Homes supporting the Movement and Games in Chairs programme with Community Participation Officers visiting elderly residents suffering from dementia, After School Clubs with various activities including Multi Sports, Football, Girls Only Football, Athletics and Premier League Stars and Little Strikers helping nursery children to learn vital functional skills.

The Macclesfield Football Academy Football team enjoyed a successful season reaching the third round of the National Cup, topping the league and reached the final of the Macclesfield and District Cup

As part of Project 21 the Under 18's team managed by Jim Hall were champions of the Mid Cheshire League Division One and won the League Cup 9-3 against Witton Albion under 18s.

### **Silkmen Supporters' Trust**

Notable points during the current twelve months have been the appointment of life-long supporter Andy Worth as Chairperson, taking control of the Super Silk Lotto, financial contributions towards club expenditure (see above) and having been seen in the past as a rather benign organisation taking a more pro-active role on behalf of supporters.

There have been a series of letters to the higher club officials often concluding with a deadline for a response. All communications from the SST and responses from the owner have been documented on the SST web site [www.sstrust.uk](http://www.sstrust.uk) which provide interesting reading covering a range of subjects including perceived concept of the owner's management of the club, late payment of staff and player wages, the state of repair of Butch's Bar and the closure of the London Road Terrace (see Review of the Season section). Towards the end of the season the SST Board threatened to consider requesting all volunteers to withhold their labour, an initiative which the Board withdrew in the greater interests of the club as there was a possibility that the club might have had to cancel a match which would have adversely affected the team's very real relegation battle. However, they withdrew the £500 monthly transfer to the club from the Silk Lotto and also withdrew all monetary support until the issue of the partial closure of the London Road Terrace had been successfully resolved, and this at a time when the club were obviously short of funds to pay staff and players.

## Other Issues

- All EFL clubs were given the option as to whether they produced a match day programme or not. Macclesfield made the decision to continue to provide a programme and organised a digital version which could be downloaded at a cost of £3.00, the same price as a hard copy.
- The EFL embarked on a two-year charity partnership with MIND.
  - The first initiative involved a new lettering design on the back of players' shirts incorporating the charities logo into the player's name across all 72 clubs in the Sky Bet Championship and Leagues One and Two.
  - Through the partnership, MIND worked directly with EFL clubs and their Community Sports Trusts to improve mental health support within the clubs and their wider communities.
  - The month of January was designated as RED January with MIND and the football community encouraging everyone to get active every day of the month to raise funds for MIND.
  - The club teamed up with Bollington based Scores Draw to produce a limited edition Valentine Day card at a price of £2.00, the proceeds being donated to MIND.
  - The club produced a video for Time to Talk Day (7 February 2019) with members of the staff and players emphasising how important it is to have a discussion about mental health to end mental health discrimination.
  - To support Andrew Lamont's participation in the 2019 Mind United; Peak District Challenge, Elliott Durrell donated his signed National League Championship boots for auction.
- The EFL held a Day of Action on 19 March 2019 with all EFL clubs running activities to highlight a range of social issues, from homelessness and mental health, to community cohesion and reducing plastic pollution. The Club ran a Primary School Tournament at the Moss Rose
- EFL Trust/Network Rail/British Transport Police – announced in May 2019 that a new partnership had been launched to tackle the increasing number of people risking their lives on the railway. The club will be part of this project which will help to educate and raise awareness of the dangers of the railway network to young people.
- Pre-match Posters – an idea used in seasons gone by was resurrected with posters advertising the matches against Oldham Athletic, Crewe Alexandra and Colchester United displayed in many businesses throughout Macclesfield.
- Post-match drinks at £3.00 a pint were on offer from Saturday 9 February to the end of the season. Supporters were offered the chance to celebrate each win in the Mcllroy Suite for a 30 minute period after the final whistle.
- A Sportsman's Dinner was held in the Mcllroy Suite on 22 November 2018. The Guest of Honour was Mikey Quinn (former Newcastle United and Coventry City player), a comedian, Host Andy Powell, raffle, three-course meal, at a cost of £60 per head.
- A Murder Mystery Night was held in the Mcllroy Suite on 15 February 2019. The cost was £30.00, a three-course meal with interactive plot performed by actors, the winner received a 'Star Certificate' and a special prize. The evening concluded with a disco.

- Danny Whitaker Testimonial Year
  - After a false start during the 2017-18 season when a Race Night was cancelled it was announced in September 2018 that a committee had been formed consisting of Andy Worth, Marie Grundy, Robert Stirling, Dean Holmes, Sean Worth and Andy Scott whose aim was to raise £25K.
  - A Gala Dinner was held at Mottram Hall in October at a cost of £25.00 per head with comedian Gary Marsden.
  - A Race-night was held on 1 March 2019 at a cost of £20.00 per head which included a two-course meal. Danny answered questions with everyone present taken a stroll down Memory Lane. A limited edition of testimonial shirts was auctioned off.
  - Danny's Testimonial Game was held at the Moss Rose on Sunday 5 May 2019 featuring a team of Danny's former colleagues against a Celebrity Team, with a carvery available, a 12-page programme with a glossy souvenir programme planned for later in the year. Limited edition shirts were available for pre-order at a cost of £45. In front of a crowd of 721 Danny's team won 5-1, with Danny scoring four of the goals.



**Away Shirt Front**



Home Shirt Back



Home Shorts



**Training Kit**



**MTFC under 18 Team with their trophies**



**Special Valentine Card**



**The English Football League MIND Badge**



**The late Mike Holgate who was much respected and was manager of the Centre of Excellence for many years**

#### **ON FIELD**

Returning to the English Football League after six years in the Conference/National League Macclesfield competed in the Sky Bet League 2.

New disciplinary measures for managers were introduced with yellow and red cards issued by match officials for misconduct committed in the technical area during English League fixtures and Cup competitions. Accumulated yellow cards to count for all EFL competitions.

A total of 31 players were used across the four senior competitions throughout the season. A list of the players is included at the end of this chapter.

With John Askey leaving the club when he was appointed manager at Sky Bet League 1 Shrewsbury Town, Mark Yates was appointed manager in June 2018 on a three-year deal. He had managerial experience at Kidderminster Harriers, Cheltenham Town and Solihull Moors who were bottom of the National League when he was appointed but his management skills ensured that they were not relegated. Former Silkman, Neil Howarth, who had worked with Yates previously, was appointed joint assistant manager alongside Danny Whitaker who retained his player registration.

Kieran Kennedy, Mitch Hancox and Danny Whitehead all moved to pastures new but 11 players from the 2017-18 season remained on the playing staff with 10 new signings before the start of the campaign. Jared Hodgkiss, captain for the 2017-18 season only retained the captaincy for two matches with David Fitzpatrick and then Nathan Cameron holding this position.

## Friendly Matches

There were seven matches in total with two victories, two draws and three defeats. Yet again there was no provision for the Keith Alexander Memorial Trophy match against Buxton.

**Stoke City** were the hosts to a behind-closed-doors match which they won easily 5-2. Macclesfield born striker Peter Crouch was on the score sheet for Stoke. Nevertheless this was a useful run out enabling new manager Mark Yates to cast his eye on several trialists.

Macclesfield travelled to **Ashton United**, who had been promoted via the play-offs to the Vanarama Conference North, leaving with a well worked 5-1 victory although it was said that Ashton had not fielded their strongest team. Four goals were scored by the Silkmen in the first half (Smith (2), Whitaker and a trialist). There was only one change at half time with trialist goalkeepers changing places. On 60 minutes all 10 Macclesfield outfield players were changed but they continued to dominate proceedings, Nathan Blissett scoring the fifth goal. The hosts scored a consolation goal towards the end of the match.

A Tuesday evening trip to **Altrincham**, the home side scoring an early goal to secure a 1-0 victory. Every Macclesfield player on the Team Sheet was given some game time but although they pressed for an equaliser they came away empty handed. The attendance was recorded as 485.

The first friendly match at the Moss Rose took place on Friday 20 July with Premier League side **Burnley** the visitors. There was an attendance of 823 including 170 Burnley fans. With Burnley committed to a fixture at Curzon Ashton on the same evening they split their squad between the two matches. The visitors won 2-0 with goals scored on either side of half time; nevertheless Macclesfield produced a spirited performance creating several goal scoring opportunities.

On the following Tuesday National League side **Wrexham** were the visitors to the Moss Rose. In the first half Macclesfield did not perform as well as expected with a strong Wrexham side taking the lead in the 24<sup>th</sup> minute, former Silkman Luke Summerfield's free-kick reached Macclesfield's James Pearson who tried to head the ball back to 'keeper Rhys Taylor but Manny Smith intercepted confidently to head the ball home. The game moved in Macclesfield's favour following four changes which strengthen the side. Tall striker Harry Smith equalised for the Silkmen in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute, only four minutes after his introduction from the substitutes' bench. After the goal Macclesfield went all out for a second goal but time ran out.

On the final Saturday before the start of the league programme 178 Macclesfield supporters travelled to **Stockport County** where the total attendance was 935. The Silkmen could only manage a 1-1 draw against the Vanarama National League North side. Macclesfield took the lead in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute through Harry Smith but Stockport's Ash Palmer equalised only nine minutes later. While the second half saw a good display by Macclesfield they could not find an equaliser. Was this to be a pattern for the forthcoming season?

A final match was held behind closed doors at the Moss Rose when a **Wolverhampton Wanderers XI** were the visitors. Mark Yates used this match to look at trialists and provide match time for players who had not featured regularly in most of the friendlies. It was reported that Macclesfield played well in the first half with new signing Callum Maycock orchestrating the midfield. The second half developed into a frantic end-to-end affair with Koby Arthur breaking the deadlock in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute which was the only goal of the match.



Match action against Burnley



Miles Welch-Hayes in action against Burnley



**Goal! Match against Wrexham**



**Strikers Harry Smith and Scott Wilson in action against Wrexham**

## SEASON REVIEW

### Cup Competitions

For the **Carabao** Cup (the English Football League Cup) changes to the Rules were introduced for the 2018-19 season, the most notable being the removal of extra time. In the event that scores are tied after 90 minutes, penalty kicks are to be taken immediately to determine the winner. However, the taking of penalties reverted to the traditional format after EFL clubs had experimented with the ABBA concept throughout the 2017-18 season. Seeding arrangements for the first two rounds of the competition were withdrawn although round one remained regionalised into North and South sections. In addition, VAR could be used at all fixtures played at a Premier League ground.

In the first round Macclesfield entertained **Bradford City**. Manager Mark Yates made three changes to the side and had striker Scott Wilson playing out of position on the left wing. Macclesfield performed much better than they had the previous Saturday in the league match against Grimsby Town creating chances, with Bradford also carving out opportunities for themselves, nevertheless the first half ended 0-0. The second half was fairly even with the deadlock broken on the hour by Fiacre Kelleher who headed home a ball from Michael Rose. The Silkmen only held on to the lead for two minutes when Luca Colville hit a fantastic shot from outside the area which must have been seen late by goalkeeper Rhys Taylor, after which Taylor kept Macclesfield in the game with some outstanding saves. With the score standing at 1-1 after 90 minutes the match moved immediately to a penalty shoot-out in line with the new rule. Danny Whitaker David Fitzpatrick Michael Rose and Tyrone Marsh scored for Macclesfield and Hope Akpan and Jack Payne for Bradford to give the Silkmen a 4-2 win.

*On the Macclesfield players' shirts they had the Carabao logo on one sleeve with Cash for Kids on the other. The Cash for Kids logo was gifted by club partner Mid Communications, the organisation providing a helping hand to disabled and disadvantaged children across Greater Manchester.*

The second round saw Macclesfield travelling to **Walsall**. Macclesfield took a two-goal lead in the first 25 minutes through Jamie Grimes and Harry Smith, but Walsall pulled a goal back when Kieron Morris struck an unstoppable shot from 25 yards. In the second half Walsall were awarded a penalty when Fiacre Kelleher was adjudged to have pulled an opponent's shirt. Andy Cook's penalty shot was saved but he followed up the rebound to score from close range in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute. Only moments later Josh Gordon gave the home side a 3-2 lead but it was veteran Danny Whitaker who equalised for the Silkmen in the 91<sup>st</sup> minute, Macclesfield won the penalty shootout 3-1, Whitaker, Smith and Fitzpatrick converting their penalties to progress to the third round for the first time.

For the third round Macclesfield travelled to London to face Premier League side **West Ham United** at the London Stadium. Macclesfield held out until the 29<sup>th</sup> minute after which West Ham scored three goals in the first half and five in the second half without any reply from the Silkmen. West Ham manager Manuel Pellegrini took the opportunity to give three players from his Academy a chance with Grady Diangana on from the start and Conor Coventry and Joe Powell introduced during the second half, Diangana scoring two of the goals.

*Macclesfield manager did himself no favours when he commented 'it was not the result we wanted' and was ridiculed in one of the national newspapers, this comment coming hard on the heels of his statement that the Chairman was clever in appointing him as manager especially as, at this time, Macclesfield had not won a match in the regular 90 minutes. Macclesfield supporters had a difficult journey to London with Moose Tours arriving late and others having to take alternative routes on the railway due to a signalling problem at Euston. This was Macclesfield's first match where VAR (Video Assistant Referee) was available for use.*

For the **Checktrade Trophy** (English Football League Trophy) after the initial pilot in 2016-17, clubs voted to retain the position where 16 Category 1 teams were invited to participate in the

competition for a two-year cycle which ends after the final at Wembley in 2020. EFL clubs were allowed to name players out on-loan at National League Clubs, whilst invited Category 1 teams were able to name two players who are over the age of 21 and had made more than 40 First Team appearances. The Group stage for this competition is split into sixteen groups of four clubs including a Category 1 Team in each group, with a group match played in September, October and then November. Macclesfield were drawn in Group C with Accrington Stanley, Blackpool and West Bromwich Albion as the Category 1 team. Three points are awarded for a win. Where the scores are level after 90 minutes each side is given a point with the side winning the penalty shoot-out awarded an additional point.

For the first Group match Macclesfield entertained **Blackpool**. At the interval honours were even with score standing at 1-1, Nathan Blissett having given the Silkmen the lead. In the second half Macclesfield took a 3-1 lead following two goals by Michael Rose, but the Silkmen were masters of their own downfall allowing Blackpool to score two late goals, in the 90<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> minutes. Macclesfield continued their unbeaten run in penalty shoot-outs winning 5-3, Whitaker, Smith, Fitzpatrick, Wilson and Rose all scoring their penalties.

At **Accrington Stanley**, the League One side coasted to a 4-1 victory. They took the lead in the first half with Peter Vincenti, scoring his first goal for Macclesfield, levelled the scores in the 58<sup>th</sup> minute but the home side went on to score three further goals, the last in the 94<sup>th</sup> minute.

*This was the first match in sole charge by joint caretaker managers Neil Howarth and Danny Whitaker manager Mark Yates having been dismissed (see account for Sky Bet League 2 matches.)*

For the final Group match the **West Bromwich Albion Under 21** side visited the Moss Rose. They included two over-aged players, goalkeeper Boaz Myhill, who had spent a loan spell with the Silkmen, together with veteran and extremely experienced player Gareth Barry. The Baggies started the ball rolling with a goal in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute but this goal spurred on the Silkmen who then scored two goals in the 19<sup>th</sup> (Stephens) and 24<sup>th</sup> minutes (Arthur) to give them a 2-1 lead which they took into the interval. West Brom, knowing that a victory would take them through to the knock-out stage started the second half brightly, but the Silkmen held on to their lead and it was they who progressed in second place.

*The final Group Table ended: Accrington Stanley 6 points, MFC 5, Blackpool 4, WBA U21s 3.*

The second round tie was played at St James' Park against **Newcastle United Under 21** team with prize money of £20,000 for the winners. In the first half Newcastle marshalled the ball well with Macclesfield playing the ball backwards on many occasions losing momentum and unable to break through the home side's 4-3-2-1 formation. Newcastle took the lead in the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute from a deflected cross which rolled over the line. Just before half time Scott Wilson had a wonderful opportunity to equalise but shot straight at the 'keeper in a one-on-one situation. The tempo increased in the second half with both sides looking for a goal and with six minutes to go Scott Wilson equalised for the Silkmen to take the match to a penalty shoot-out. With Ben Stephens missing the second penalty and the home side scoring all of their penalties they ran out winners 5-3, the first time in their history that Macclesfield had lost a penalty shoot-out.

*This was Sol Campbell's first official match as manager.*

For the first round of the **Emirates FA Cup** Macclesfield travelled to **Maidstone United**. There was a good start by Macclesfield who took the lead in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute when Ben Stephens lashed home a cross from Malachi Napa. Maidstone dominated the second half drawing level six minutes after the re-start following a foul by Peter Vincenti, Jack Powell scoring direct from his free-kick on the left. Jamie Grimes then presented the tie on a plate for the home side when he fouled a Maidstone player in the box; Captain Blair Turgott made no mistake converting the resultant penalty. And so

Macclesfield went out of the FA Cup at the first hurdle to a National League team lying in 18<sup>th</sup> position at the time, who walked away with prize money of £36,000, the FA having doubled the prize money for the 2018-19 season.

In the **Cheshire Senior Cup** (not classified as a senior competition for EFL clubs) Macclesfield won the Preliminary round 3-0 against **Cheadle Heath Nomads** at the Moss Rose with goals from Wilson, Arthur and Cobey. Losing 1-0 to **Runcorn Town** in the first round, again at the Moss Rose, Macclesfield bowed out of this competition.

The **Central League Cup** is a competition for Reserve teams together with a few EFL clubs who do not have a reserve team who are invited to participate. Macclesfield were drawn with Morecambe, Huddersfield Town and Fleetwood Town in the North Group. A 3-0 defeat at **Morecambe** was followed by a 4-3 victory at the Moss Rose against **Huddersfield Town** with the Group stage finishing with a home victory of 3-2 against **Fleetwood Town**. Macclesfield finished the Group stage in second position on goal difference to Fleetwood Town who progressed to the knock-out stage.



**Macclesfield goal at Walsall in the Carabao Cup**



**Goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara being congratulated after the successful penalty shoot-out against Walsall**



**Match action at West Ham United in the Carabao Cup**



**Michael Rose, scorer of two goals, being congratulated in the Checktrade Trophy match against Blackpool**

## **ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE – SKY BET LEAGUE 2**

### **AUGUST 2018**

A testing away match for the Silkmen on their return to the English Football League, who were fortunate in the first half that **Swindon Town** had not taken control of the game hitting the post on a couple of occasions, with goalkeeper Rhys Taylor keeping Macclesfield in the match making several excellent saves. The second half started dramatically with Koby Arthur giving Macclesfield the lead in the 46<sup>th</sup> minute only to see the hosts equalised two minutes later. Macclesfield held their own and took the lead in the 55<sup>th</sup> minute, again through Arthur, a lead which they held into added time for which the fourth official had indicated five minutes. David Fitzpatrick was adjudged to have brought down Elijah Adebayo in the area, the referee giving a penalty but only after a long discussion with his assistant who had indicated off-side. Michael Doughty scored from the spot in the 96<sup>th</sup> minute. But worse was to follow in the 98<sup>th</sup> minute when Arthur tripped Adebayo with Doughty converting his second penalty to notch up his hat-trick and to win the match 3-2 for Swindon.

*Mark Yates first match in charge as manager of MTFC.*

*Jamie Grimes, Fiacre Kelleher, Callum Maycock, Michael Rose, Harry Smith and Malachi Napa all made their debut for MTFC.*

**Grimsby Town** were by far the better team in the first half at the Moss Rose and deserved to go into the interval a goal up through a stunning strike by Jordan Cook. Macclesfield created far more chances in the second half but could not find the back of the net despite two additional strikers being introduced. They were given a chance to take something from this match when Grimsby's Mitch Rose was dismissed in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute but it was substitute Charles Vernam who capitalised on a defensive error on the left wing to score the visitor's second goal to secure victory without any response from the hosts. The match was held up for a couple of minutes during the second half when a Canada goose descended on the field which was successfully caught by the ground staff.

*Prior to the match a minute's silence was held for John Brookes, former director of the club, and Ron Slater, vice president, who had recently died.*

A visit to **Oldham Athletic** came next, the home side were much faster out of the starting blocks taking the lead in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute through on-loan Bournemouth trainee Sam Surridge. They doubled their lead in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute but Macclesfield pulled a goal back when Michael Rose scored from a free-kick. This goal seemed to stir the Silkmen into life and Mark Yates changed the formation in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute from a single striker to three up front but to no avail, the hosts sealing a deserved victory with a third goal in added time to earn their first win of the season.

*James Pearson made his debut for MTFC.*

Entertaining **Cheltenham Town** on a Tuesday evening Mark Yates started with a 4-3-3 formation but with just three players in the midfield Koby Arthur tended to play far too centrally leaving full-back James Pearson with a lot of work on the wing. Nevertheless the Silkmen dominated the first half with much of the play in the Cheltenham half and took the lead in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute from a Danny Whitaker free-kick. By the interval they really should have wound up this match but they missed numerous goal scoring opportunities. In contrast the visitors commanded the second half grabbing a share of the points in the 86<sup>th</sup> minute but not before Danny Whitaker's penalty had been saved and the Silkmen having a goal ruled out for off-side. Gary Johnson, Cheltenham's manager, was dismissed following this match.

*Goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara made his debut for MTFC.*

For the final match of August **Mansfield Town** came to the Moss Rose under the managership of former Silkman David Flitcroft. With the back four becoming established there was no room for experienced and established centre back Keith Lowe resulting in Mark Yates making a strange decision to play him in the centre of midfield. Overall Macclesfield had a desperately poor first half, the Stags taking the lead in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute. At half time, Yates gambled throwing on all three substitutes – Callum Evans, Callum Maycock and Malachi Napa for Keith Lowe, Koby Arthur and Scott Wilson. Harry Smith equalised in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute scoring his first goal for Macclesfield. Nevertheless the Silkmen could only take a point from this match.

At the end of the month with only two points gained Macclesfield found themselves in 23<sup>rd</sup> position.

## **SEPTEMBER 2018**

672 Macclesfield supporters travelled to **Crewe Alexandra** where the hosts took a two goal lead into the interval. During the first half striker debutant Jordan Ponticelli, on loan from Coventry City, incurred a knee injury in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute and had to be substituted. Mark Yates had his players out early for the second half and whilst their performance was marginally better they failed to make the most of their attempts on goal with Crewe extending their lead to 3-0. But for several saves by goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara the score line could have been much worse.

*Jordan Ponticelli and Peter Vincenti made their debuts for MTFC.*

*David Fitzpatrick made his 150<sup>th</sup> appearance for MTFC.*

A change of formation to 5-2-1-2 at **Stevenage** with David Fitzpatrick and Miles Welsh-Hayes playing as wing-backs and Peter Vincenti just behind the front two, but this formation did not come off with the Silkmen having a poor first half made worse by Stevenage taking the lead when Danny Newton scored from a poorly defended corner. Striker Harry Smith was introduced at the beginning of the second half with Manager Mark Yates changing things around but despite Macclesfield pulling out all the stops towards the end of the match they could not find an equalising goal.

Top-of-the-table **Lincoln City** were the next visitors to the Moss Rose. Macclesfield were second best and to emphasise their superiority Lincoln took the lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> minute. When Jamie Grimes smashed the ball into the roof of the net from close range it looked as though he had earned a point for the Silkmen but only four minutes later Lincoln were in the lead again taking all three points back home. Macclesfield's performances were not improving at this stage of the season and Mark Yates' tactic of introducing more strikers in the second half, on this occasion Nathan Blissett and Scott Wilson, was not working.

At **Morecambe** there was an eventful first half with the sides in 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> positions at the start of play. Callum Evans was stretchered off in the 38<sup>th</sup> minute following a clash of heads with his fellow player, Fiacre Kelleher. Only moments later, Michael Rose was shown a straight red card for his challenge on Morecambe's Alex Kenyon on the halfway line. Just prior to the challenge Rose had been fouled but this incident was ignored by the referee. At this stage Mark Yates changed the formation from 4-2-3-1 to 4-4-1. Eventually Morecambe took the lead in the 61<sup>st</sup> minute after which Yates introduced striker Harry Smith and changed the formation to 4-3-2. Danny Whitaker drew the Silkmen level in the 72<sup>nd</sup> minute but it was the hosts who took all three points when Andrew Fleming scored the winner in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute.

At long last Mark Yates heeded the comments being voiced by fans that he should use the players who were members of the championship winning side last season when **Forest Green Rovers** were the opposition at the Moss Rose. Jared Hodgkiss was re-instated at right back, although David Fitzpatrick retained the captancy, and Keith Lowe was fielded in his normal centre back position. The make-up of the side produced a much more confident performance, although it was Forest Green Rovers who took the lead just after half time with a superbly taken free-kick which was floated over the Macclesfield wall into the top of the net, a lead which only lasted seven minutes when Scott Wilson equalised for the Silkmen. Almost at the end of the match Scott Wilson appeared to have been tripped in the penalty area by goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, the referee immediately awarding Macclesfield a penalty, however following consultation with his assistant he reversed his decision awarding Forest Green Rovers a free-kick and giving Wilson a yellow card for diving.

*This was the first EFL meeting of the two sides.*

*The match was the Silkmen's 700<sup>th</sup> Football League match.*

With only three points accumulated in the first two months of the season, Macclesfield completed the month of September in bottom place.

## **OCTOBER 2018**

Another Tuesday evening match with the Silkmen travelling to Rodney Parade, home of **Newport County**. Macclesfield made a splendid start going two goals up in eleven minutes. They played with spirit and defended well but as the half wore on the home side began to assert their authority pulling a goal back before half time. The second half belonged to the Exiles with the majority of the play in the Macclesfield half, the Silkmen having to continuously defend leaving the Newport 'keeper a spectator. The home team won corner after corner and then drew level from the penalty spot. Macclesfield never gave up and took a 3-2 lead in the 82<sup>nd</sup> when David Fitzpatrick converted his second penalty kick of the evening to score Macclesfield's 800<sup>th</sup> Football League goal. But the killer blow was yet to come. Six minutes of added time had been indicated, but in this time Tyrone Marsh was injured and had to be replaced by James Pearson. Marsh took an age to leave the field giving the referee the opportunity to add even more time which is when the Silkmen were undone in the 97<sup>th</sup> minute, Jamille Matt heading home in a crowded penalty area to draw 3-3. In a more forceful approach Macclesfield were given six yellow cards including one for time wasting by Kieran O'Hara and one to Tyrone Marsh for dissent.

*To show their appreciation of the effort made to attend this match, the officials of Newport County gave all 52 Macclesfield supporters a free programme and a cup of tea.*

When **Notts County** came to the Moss Rose their team included former Silkmen Elliott Hewitt and Shuan Brisley. Macclesfield matched the visitors for much of the time but there were few goal scoring opportunities. Mark Yates made three second half substitutions and matters took a turn for the worse when defender Fiacre Kelleher made a weak back pass to goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara which left him exposed and attempting to reach the ball brought down Enzo Boldewijn in the area. Jon Stead made no mistake with the spot kick to give Notts County a 1-0 win.

*In the 22<sup>nd</sup> minute there was a minute's applause for Notts County fan Ryan Perkins who had lost his life at the age of 22 in the week before the match.*

With the team rooted to the bottom of the league and having recorded no wins in the regulation 90 minutes Mark Yates was dismissed. He had never endeared himself to the fans, often receiving criticism for failing to use members of the National League championship side, and for his regular comment 'we are not a million miles away' only to be followed by another disappointing performance.

Joint assistant managers Neil Howarth and Danny Whitaker were give the role of joint caretaker managers. Neil Howarth's managerial experience rested solely as assistant to Mark Yates with Danny Whitaker without any managerial experience whatsoever.

Their first league match in charge was at **Tranmere Rovers** on a Friday evening. There was an improved performance from Macclesfield but they could easily have been behind in the 11<sup>th</sup> minute when Adam Buxton's 25-yard free-kick fortunately bounced off the post. In the second half Macclesfield 'keeper Rhys Taylor stopped a James Norwood shot with his legs, and then Macclesfield's run of bad luck continued when a Michael Rose free-kick struck the inside of the post but did not cross the line. It was the hosts who won the day when former Silkman Connor Jennings went on a run to beat three Silkmen before passing to Harry Gilmour, on loan from Sheffield United, on the edge of the box whose left-footed shot could not be saved by Taylor.

*Ben Stephens made his debut for MTFC.*

*This was the first English League Football match between the two teams.*

*With this defeat Macclesfield Town equalled Derby County for the most English Football League matches without a win – 36.*

In the next match Macclesfield tasted victory for the first time in the season against **Carlisle United** thus avoiding holding the unwanted record of 37 consecutive English Football League matches without a win. The Silkmen were unlucky not to take the lead in the first half when Peter Vincenti's effort was ruled off-side. The visitors controversially took the lead five minutes into the second half when Ashley Nadeson bundled the ball into the net at the same time colliding with the Macclesfield 'keeper. When Ben Stephens was pushed down in the box by debutant Sam Adewusi, Michel Rose levelled the score from the penalty spot. This encouraged Macclesfield to go on the attack and four minutes later Vincenti scored the winning goal much to the delight of the Silkmen faithful.

There followed a Tuesday evening match at the Moss Rose, Macclesfield came down to earth with a bump. A lack-lustre performance by the Silkmen allowed **Northampton Town** to score five goals without response, Matt Crooks scoring a hat-trick. Their fifth goal had been ruled off-side by the assistant but after consultation he was over ruled by the referee.

Another disappointing performance at **Cambridge United** who enjoyed 10 corners. The home side's goal came after Ben Stephens rasping shot hit the crossbar only to see Cambridge move the ball swiftly to the other end of the pitch allowing substitute Jabo Ibehre to score, shooting the ball across the goal.

Just three points gained during the month of October left the Silkmen rooted firmly at the bottom of the table.

## **NOVEMBER 2019**

A visit by high-flying **Bury**, the Silkmen were unable to match the visitors going two goals down in the first 18 minutes, although Ben Stephens gave the Silkmen some hope when he pulled a goal back in the 30<sup>th</sup> minute. Bury took total control of the game when they took a 3-1 lead a minute before half time. A fourth goal on the hour mark ensured that Bury gained all three points.

*One minute's silence was held before the match as it was the last home match before Remembrance Sunday coupled with respect of the death of the owner of Leicester City, Vinchai Srivaddhanaprabha, and four other people in the helicopter crash the previous Saturday at Leicester City. Representatives of the British Legion led out the players, wreaths were laid including one by club Life President Roy Higginbotham, with a bugler sounding the last post.*

At **Milton Keynes Dons** Danny Whitaker returned to the starting line having recovered from injury. The home side took the initiative throughout having two goals disallowed in the first half with Macclesfield probably fortunate to go into the break with the score 0-0. The Dons scored in the 52<sup>nd</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> minutes to win the match 2-0.

*Nathan Cameron made his debut for MTFC.*

With joint caretaker manager Neil Howarth dismissed an hour before the start of the home match against **Yeovil Town** and Danny Whitaker in the starting line-up, the dug-out was manned by defender Keith Lowe and goalkeeping coach Graeme Hewitt. It was stalemate in the first half although both sides had the ball in the net, their efforts ruled out due to infringements. At the start of the second half Elliott Durrell and Ryan Lloyd changed wings leaving Durrell on the left. Yeovil Town were also fighting a relegation battle but it was Macclesfield who were playing the better football creating chances although there were times when they had to defend well. The turning point came when Macclesfield were awarded a penalty scored by Michael Rose which proved to be the winning goal for Macclesfield to win only their second league match of the season.

Prior to the match at **Exeter City** it had been announced that the former England defender Sol Campbell had been appointed manager. Danny Whitaker was basically in charge of the match, however Campbell visited the dressing room before the match and was waiting for the team at half time. The first half saw the majority of play in the Macclesfield half requiring the Silkmen to defend strongly. After Campbell's half time pep talk the Silkmen re-grouped playing with more pace and determination, passing the ball better and matched the Grecians to provide a more even match. Harry Smith's well taken goal in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute was the difference between the teams at the finish to give Macclesfield their first away league win of the season, their first back-to-back wins and second consecutive clean sheet.

At the end of the month even though the number of points had increased to 13 Macclesfield remained at the bottom of the table.

## DECEMBER 2018

At the Job-Serve stadium, **Colchester United** increased their promotion prospects with a 1-0 victory despite Macclesfield creating goal scoring chances and taking the game to the hosts at times, especially in the second half.

A horrendous day weather wise with rain and a bitterly cold wind made playing conditions difficult when **Crawley Town** were the visitors. Macclesfield had the wind behind them in the first half making the most of the conditions and were the better side rightfully taking a 1-0 lead into the interval following an amazing strike by Elliott Durrell. A fifteen minute floodlight failure led to a late start to the second half but Macclesfield stuck to their task when play restarted with Harry Smith doubling the lead late in the half to give the Silkmen a 2-0 victory and another clean sheet.

*Danny Whitaker made his 450<sup>th</sup> appearance in all competitions for MTFC.*

*All three match mascots independently chose Danny Whitaker as their favourite player.*

A crowd of 3951, including 1908 **Port Vale** fans, witnessed a match with no goals, few shots on target but another clean sheet for the Silkmen in front of their fans.

On Boxing Day the match at **Notts County** featured the two bottom teams for which victory was equally important. Both sides had a goal disallowed but with Macclesfield in charge, Scott Wilson gave them the lead in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute fending off five Notts County players, he made space and shot home from 25 yards. Although the Silkmen carried their dominance into the second half it was the home side who scored next which sparked them into life taking charge of the match. With nine minutes to go, against the run of play, Wilson bagged the winning goal but that was not the end of the action. In the 94<sup>th</sup> minute Macclesfield's Harry Smith was dismissed for violent conduct and Keston Davies for Notts County saw red in the 98<sup>th</sup> minute when he deliberately kicked the ball at Tyrone Marsh who was on the ground injured. With this win Macclesfield moved off the bottom of the league for the first time since the middle of September but they were still three points from safety.

Having made good progress in recent weeks the team were coming under pressure with the number of current injuries together with a three-match suspension for Harry Smith. Jordan Ponticelli had returned to Coventry City as he had fractured his foot again, Elliott Durrell had injured a knee in an off-the-field incident, Ben Stephens hobbled off following the match on Boxing Day, Callum Evans remained on the injured list and Danny Whitaker having recovered from injury earlier in the season had been out of action again for several matches.

At **Carlisle United** Macclesfield made a good start, Scott Wilson scoring in the second minute, a lead which was held until just before half time when Hallam Hope equalised for the hosts. The Silkmen were holding their own in the second half with 'keeper Kieran O'Hara making some fine saves but Macclesfield's finishing was letting them down, Tyrone Marsh was the biggest culprit when he blasted over the bar from eight yards. Carlisle won the match in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute with a goal from Jerry Yates although it looked as though Michael Rose had been fouled in the move which led to the goal.

Macclesfield completed the calendar year in 23<sup>rd</sup> position but still three points from safety.



Scorer of two goals, Koby Arthur (No. 22) being congratulated at Swindon Town.



Intruder at the Moss Rose



Match action in the home match against Cheltenham Town



Jamie Grimes (No 6) celebrating following Harry Smith's equalising goal against Mansfield Town



**Fiacre Kelleher in action at Stevenage**



**Tyrone Marsh holding off Morecambe's Zak Mills**



**A red card for Michael Rose at Morecambe**



**Defender Jared Hodgkiss returned to the starting line-up in the home match against Forest Green Rovers**



**Scott Wilson season top-scorer goal scorer and scorer of Macclesfield's goal against Forest Green Rovers at the Moss Rose**



**Michael Rose penalty against Carlisle United**



Peter Vincenti celebrating with Nathan Blissett having scored the winning goal against Carlisle United



Members of the British Legion leading out the players before the match on 3 November



Match action in the goalless draw against Port Vale



Scott Wilson's second goal at Notts County on Boxing Day

## JANUARY 2019

**Tranmere Rovers** were welcomed to the Moss Rose on New Year's Day playing in front of crowd of 3398 including a contingent of 1383 from the Wirral. Tranmere fielded a slightly weakened team with one eye on their third round FA Cup tie against Tottenham Hotspur three days later but they still managed to boss the first half playing towards the Star Lane End, they took the lead in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute when former Silkman Connor Jennings slotted home. Macclesfield equalised four minutes before the break, Koby Arthur scored under pressure following a smart passing move by Ryan Lloyd. The second half was an even affair with neither side able to find a winning goal.

Down to the bare bones through injury and the suspension of Harry Smith, Macclesfield could only field five substitutes against **Swindon Town**. Tyrone Marsh gave the hosts an early lead but Swindon equalised from a free-kick with eight minutes to go to half time. There were few chances for either side in the second half but Swindon nicked victory in the 92<sup>nd</sup> minute ironically following a Macclesfield set-piece to complete the season double over the Silkmen.

On more than one occasion in his interviews manager Sol Campbell stated that the fitness of the team needed attention as they had not trained fully prior to his appointment, also that players returning from injury had not gone through a rehabilitation fitness course. At this time the club announced a new partnership with Sonda Sports, which allowed the squad to wear state of the art GPS devices during all training sessions.

**Grimsby Town** reduced their admission charges to £15 for adults with reductions for other groups which saw an increase in the attendance for the day to 4694 including 140 from Macclesfield. Harry Smith returned from suspension, David Fitzpatrick was relegated to the bench with Nathan Cameron appointed captain. Two goals in the first half from Tyrone Marsh and Scott Wilson gave the Silkmen an important away victory.

The Silkmen had the worst possible start against **Oldham Athletic** when Miles Welch-Hayes blocked Callum Lang's shot with his hand in the first minute, Oldham debutant Urko Vera scoring from the spot. Macclesfield rallied and were on the front foot for most of the first half and were rewarded in the third minute of added time when Harry Smith's daisy cutter beat the 'keeper. Scott Wilson gave the home side the lead in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute. Oldham were reduced to 10 men with Mohamen Mouche dismissed, but Oldham almost grasped a share of the points in the last minute Gevaro Nepomanceno's shot hitting the crossbar.

*Reece Cole made his debut for MTFC.*

The next match did not start well for the Silkmen who lost Koby Arthur to injury in the seventh minute at **Cheltenham Town**, however four minutes later they took the lead through a penalty. Macclesfield were reduced to 10 men in the 20<sup>th</sup> minute, Nathan Cameron being dismissed having been adjudged to have fouled Jacob Maddox on the edge of the box but not before the referee and his assistant had had a long discussion. Leading scorer Scott Wilson doubled the score in the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute. Later in the half both Callum Wilson and Harry Smith were injured and had to leave the field and, because of stoppages for injury, there were 10 minutes of added time. The second half belonged to Cheltenham when they scored three goals to win the match 3-2, however the score could have been much higher but for some superb goalkeeping by Kieran O'Hara.

*Jared Hodgkiss made his 50<sup>th</sup> appearance for MTFC.*

*Following an appeal, Nathan Cameron's red card was rescinded.*

At the end of January, whilst in 23<sup>rd</sup> position the Silkmen were only two points away from safety.

During the January Transfer Window there were several signings – Adam Dawson, Enoch Andoh, Zak Jules, Samir Mullins, Botti Biabi, Liandro Martis and Brice Ntambwe.

## **FEBRUARY 2019**

The first match in February saw the team second in the table, **Mansfield Town**, against the team second from bottom. The home side, managed by former Silkman David Flitcroft, struck first in the eighth minute and called the shots for most of the first half until three minutes from the interval, Callum Evans equalising with his first goal for the Silkmen. Macclesfield were unlucky not to take the lead before the interval when a shot from Scott Wilson hit the post. In the second half Mansfield won the game with two further rather scrappy goals but not before both Scott Wilson and Tyrone Marsh had squandered guilt-edge chances.

*Botti Biabi and Brice Ntambwe both made their debut for MTFC.*

Macclesfield had to come from behind on three occasions to take a share of the points in the home match against **Crewe Alexandra**. Crewe took an early lead which was cancelled out by Scott Wilson 12 minutes later. Following a weak back-pass by Nathan Cameron, goalkeeper Kieran O’Hara trying to retrieve the position was adjudged to have brought down Chris Porter who scored the resultant penalty. Macclesfield were not playing at their best in the first half and it was fortunate that Crewe did not capitalise on their chances but some of the credit went to O’Hara who was again in fine form. The Silkmen improved in the second half, Cameron equalising in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute. Crewe thought that they had won the match in the 95<sup>th</sup> minute when they scored their third goal. Never-say-die Macclesfield equalised for a third time in the 97<sup>th</sup> minute (only five minutes of added time had been signalled) Reece Cole firing through a crowd of players. At this stage several Crewe fans spilled onto the pitch with bottles and smoke bombs thrown. Throughout the match the Crewe fans in the John Askey terrace had refused to remain behind the barriers standing right up to the perimeter fence and shaking the net from time to time. As soon as the fans had returned to the terrace the referee blew for full time.

*Zak Jules and Liandro Martis made their debut for MTFC*

*In this match Macclesfield conceded their 1000<sup>th</sup> English Football League goal.*

A good performance by the Silkmen in the first half against **Colchester United** who were at the time in a play-off position. Macclesfield deservedly took the lead in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute when Scott Wilson netted having played a one-two with fellow striker Harry Smith. Just after the re-start a push by Brice Ntambwe on Courtney Senior gave the visitors a penalty which Frank Nouble despatched. This goal seemed to set the tone for the second half with Macclesfield unable to match Colchester other than for Reece Cole hitting the crossbar and had to settle for a point.

At The Peoples Pensions Stadium against **Crawley Town** Macclesfield took a first half lead through Harry Smith, Reece Cole having hit the post earlier. Zak Jules had to be replaced part way through the half allowing Stelios Demetriou to make his Macclesfield debut. In the second half Crawley enjoyed more possession and were rewarded six minutes from time when Lewis Young equalised with a deflected shot.

*Stelios Demetriou made his debut for MTFC.*

Having only earned three points out of a possible twelve during February the Silkmen remained in 23rd position and were still three points from safety.

## **MARCH 2019**

Having been signed in the middle January it was discovered that Adam Dawson could not represent Macclesfield during the current season as he had already played for two other teams. At the beginning of March he was loaned to AFC Telford United until the end of the season.

Another match where the second from top team, **Bury**, played the second from the bottom. Bury were unbeaten in their last ten matches with Macclesfield without a win in their last five matches. Match form prevailed with the home side winning 3-0 with goals in the 24<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> minutes without any reply from the Silkmen.

Entertaining **MK Dons**, manager Sol Campbell made nine changes to the starting line-up in an attempt to change the fortunes of the Silkmen but to no avail. Only goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara and captain Nathan Cameron survived from the defeat at Bury. Botti Biabi, Stelious Demetriou and Liandro all made their first starts and following calls from the supporters Elliott Durrell, Ryan Lloyd, Callum Evans, Ben Stephens and James Pearson were all recalled. All looked good initially with Nathan Cameron giving the Silkmen the lead in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute but this was all undone one minute from half time when the Dons equalised proving yet again that the Silkmen just could not hold onto a lead. Two second half goals by the visitors gave them a 3-1 victory. After this match the Silkmen were six points from safety with alarm bells starting to ring, frustrated supporters venting their feelings after the final whistle.

Exeter City were due to visit the Moss Rose on Tuesday 12 March but the match was postponed early in the afternoon, the only postponement of the season, due to a waterlogged pitch at the corner of the Big Brand Ideas stand and the John Askey Terrace. With Notts County winning their match on this evening, Macclesfield moved to the bottom of the table.

The next match was a 'must win' game against visitors **Yeovil Town**, the team immediately above the Silkmen. Sol Campbell had used a 4-4-2 formation on a regular basis but for this match employed a back-line of five using the wide players as wing-backs, and it worked probably influencing Campbell to use a back-line of five for much of the remainder of the season. Two goals in the first half by James Pearson (his first for the club) and Harry Smith without any replay from Yeovil gave the Silkmen their first win in eight matches and lifted them off the bottom on goal difference. They also completed the season double over struggling Yeovil Town.

The first 30 minutes of the home match against **Stevenage** were dominated by the defence for both teams with Macclesfield seeming reluctant to shoot at goal. The deadlock was broken by Elliott Durrell in the 42<sup>nd</sup> minute slotting home having received a long ball from Michael Rose, celebrating with a summersault. Yet again the Silkmen failed to hold on to their lead, Stevenage scoring only two minutes later. Early in the second half the visitors took the lead when the Macclesfield defence failed to clear the ball. Late substitute Danny Whitaker saved the day for the Silkmen when he levelled the scores with virtually the last kick of the match.

*Led by the away supporters, there was applause for one minute in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute following the recent death of Mike Thalassitis who had played for Stevenage in the number 19 shirt and, more recently, had been a contender in the TV series 'Love Island'.*

*Without any pre-match notification the standing terrace in front of the Weston Care Home stand was closed, also no tickets were sold to non-season ticket holders for the stand. Understandably this action raised concerns and objections from the fans affected, some of whom had to queue for a considerable time to purchase tickets for other areas of the ground, one supporter stating that it was 15.36 before he gained access to the ground. The club issued a post-match statement stating that the action had been taken due to the growing number of complaints in relation to abusive language and intimidating behaviour in that part of the ground. In addition, it was stated that this area of the ground would be closed for the remainder of the season. Following representation by the SST, for the next match and the remainder of the season, season ticket holders were allowed access but no tickets were sold to non-season ticket holders for this area or the Weston Care Home Stand. There was a further statement from the club owner about the situation. At a meeting in June 2019 between*

*the owner and the SST Board it was recorded that no decision could be made for the 2019-20 season until there had been an agreement with Cheshire East Council for the provision of larger dugouts to conform with EFL requirements which had been laid down prior to the start of the 2018-19 season. In addition, at this match Star Lane supporters were allowed their usual access to Butch's Bar pre-match, including ordering and paying for half time drinks, but at half time supporters were not allowed access to the bar as it was said to be full, a fact which later, was said to be inaccurate by those operating the bar.*

**Lincoln City** displayed their prowess as a top-of-the-table side at Sincil Bank but Macclesfield did well to take the lead in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute. As seen on so many occasions during the season they failed to hold to the lead, Lincoln drawing level 10 minutes later. With no more goals, the Silkmen continued to hold their own to take a share of the points partly through some excellent goalkeeping by Keiran O'Hara. Full back, James Pearson almost scored in the second half but his fierce dipping volley was tipped over the bar.

*Lincoln City fans continue to sound their air-raid warning siren when the teams enter the pitch, for corners and when they score a goal.*

With Notts County winning their last match of the month, Macclesfield slipped back to bottom place with 35 points but with a match in hand.

#### **APRIL 2019**

**Morecambe** were by far the stronger side in the opening exchanges at the Moss Rose taking the lead in the 26<sup>th</sup> minute. Against the run of play Macclesfield conjured up an equaliser when Elliott Durrell drilled home from a Scott Wilson lay-off after which Macclesfield came more in to the game. Reece Cole smashed a free-kick against the post and fortunately Morecambe had an effort ruled out for off-side. It was a disappointing second half with score remaining 1-1 at full time with the single point continuing to leave Macclesfield in bottom place.

The re-arranged home match against **Exeter City** was played on Tuesday 9 April. On an uneven pitch the visitors got off to the better start taking the lead in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute, but three minutes later a header from Harry Smith saw the Silkmen on level terms. However, four minutes later the Grecians restored their lead when Ryan Bowman scored his second goal of the evening. Deep into time added at the end of the first half, Michael Rose restored parity with a penalty kick after Natham Cameron had been fouled in the area. There were few chances in the second half although Hiram Boateng continued to make life difficult for the Silkmen. With Macclesfield pressing for a goal, an absolutely brilliant cross by Elliott Durrell found Harry Smith in the six yard box who was credited with the winning goal to lift Macclesfield out of the relegation zone to 22<sup>nd</sup> position and to take the season double over Exeter. During the course of the match there was the unusual event of a contested dropped ball to re-start play.

At **Forest Green Rovers**, on a poor pitch the 0-0 half time score line reflected the play. In the end the difference between the two teams was the effectiveness of set pieces coupled with poor decision making by Macclesfield, Forest Green Rovers winning the match with two goals, both of which came from free-kicks. Macclesfield remained in 22<sup>nd</sup> position two points clear of the bottom two clubs, Yeovil Town and Notts County, both of whom lost their matches.

With Macclesfield defence static, **Northampton Town** scored their first goal after 25 minutes. Shortly after Harry Smith headed home but he was adjudged to have been in an off-side position, but he did not have to wait long to score when he lobbed the 'keeper in the 38<sup>th</sup> minute. With the scores level at half time and Macclesfield having performed reasonably well, for some reason they could not find any sort of form in the second half. The home side scored two further goals through

mistakes by the Silkmen, Nathan Cameron's weak header towards his own goal was intercepted leading to the second goal, and Elliott Durrell was dispossessed when he should have cleared the ball leading to the third goal. Fortunately the two sides below the Silkmen also lost, the Silkmen remaining two points above the drop zone.

There was a ten minute delay to the start of the next match due to long queues at the Moss Lane Ticket office because non-season ticket holders who normally use the London Road Terrace or Weston Care Home stand were having to purchase tickets for other parts of the ground. This match had contrasting objectives for both sides - the visitors, **Newport County**, were striving to achieve a play-off position while the home side were trying to avoid relegation. For this match Sol Campbell changed the formation from playing five at the back and a sole striker to 4-3-1-2 with Elliott Durrell playing just behind the front two. An unexciting match which ended 0-0 and with both Yeovil Town and Notts County also drawing, Macclesfield remained two points above the drop zone with two matches to play.

At **Port Vale**, the 4-3-1-2 formation was retained. Captain Nathan Cameron and Ben Stephens both returned from injury with midfielder Callum Evans moving to the right back position in place of Miles Welsh-Hayes, however Stephens was forced off after 38 minutes replaced by Reece Cole who quickly put his stamp on the match. Not the best of performances by the Silkmen in the first half but after the interval left back David Fitzpatrick moved forward to hit a superb shot from 16 yards out to put the Silkman in the lead. With no response from Port Vale the three points left Macclesfield still two points clear of the relegation zone as Notts County had secured victory. With only a draw, Yeovil Town were relegated to the National League.

*There were reports that at Stoke railway station after the match about 50 so called Macclesfield supporters hurled abuse at club owner Amar Alkadhi who was waiting for a train on the opposite platform with his wife resulting in Mr Alkadhi and his wife being ushered away by railway staff for their safety.*

The final match of the season against **Cambridge United** at the Moss Rose was witnessed by a crowd of 3986 including 381 from Cambridge, the highest home attendance of the season. With the Silkmen's status as a member of the Football League at stake it proved to be a roller-coaster of an afternoon as, with a two point lead, they needed to either equal or better Notts County's result who were playing Swindon Town. Cambridge took the lead in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute through former Silkman Paul Lewis. Shortly after the interval news came through that Notts County had taken the lead from the penalty spot pushing Macclesfield into the relegation zone. Just when Macclesfield were looking for a hero, Brice Ntambwe sent a through ball down the centre of the pitch to Elliott Durrell who made no mistake to equalise for the Silkmen in the 66<sup>th</sup> minute putting Macclesfield back into 22<sup>nd</sup> position on goal difference. As the half progressed it got even better when Swindon scored a second goal and then a third to defeat Notts County and with Macclesfield drawing 1-1 they had bettered Notts County's result completing the season in 22<sup>nd</sup> place, three points above Notts County who were relegated to the National League. There was an unfortunate incident during the match when items were thrown onto the pitch.

*With the London Road terrace only open to season ticket holders and the fans believing that there would be a high attendance, before the match fans suggested that the John Askey terrace (normally allocated to away fans) should be made available to home fans. In the end the club took this measure.*

*On the club's Twitter site, only two hours before kick-off it was announced that those supporters in the Star Lane End would not be allowed access to the Butch's Bar for safety reasons.*

### **Player of the Year Awards**

The Supporters' Player of the Year Award was re-named The Richard Butcher Player of the Year Award. The winners were:

**Kiran O'Hara** – Richard Butcher Player of the Year, Players' Player of the Year and Moose Tours Player.

**David Fitzpatrick** – Goal of the Year for his strike at Port Vale.

**Callum Evans** - PFA Community Champion Award.



**Koby Arthur scoring against Tranmere Rovers**



**Captain Nathan Cameron**



**Callum Evans celebrating having scored his first goal for MTFC at Mansfield Town**



**Delight when Reece Cole scored his first goal for MFC**



**Pre-match applause before the match against Colchester United for former England goalkeeper Gordon Banks who had recently died**



**James Pearson's first goal for MTFC at Yeovil Town**



**Danny Whitaker scored the equalising goal in the last minute against Stevenage**



Goalkeeper Kieran O'Hara, Richard Butcher Player of the Year, in fine form against Stevenage



A contested drop ball during the match against Exeter City



**Somewhere is David Fitzpatrick after scoring the Goal of the season at Port Vale**

To compliment this written account, much more detail can be found in 'Match Information' for scores, scorers, attendances and Macclesfield teams, 'Season Statistics' for individual player appearances and goals competition by competition, 'General Information' and 'Player Profiles'.

Grateful thanks are extended to Peter Hilton, the club's official photographer, who has been most helpful in the provision of many photographs which have not been published in the club's media and to his assistant Chelsie Wilson. Photographs provide added value to the written word and are an important enhancement.

**PLAYER MOVEMENTS  
Season 2018-19**

<b>PLAYER</b>	<b>SIGNED/EXISTING PLAYER</b>	<b>LOANED/LEFT</b>
Enoch Andoh	From Nuneaton Borough in January 2019.	Released summer 2019.
Koby Arthur	Existing MTFC player.	Released summer 2019.
Botti Biabi	Loan from Swansea City in January 2019.	Returned to home club May 2019.
Nathan Blissett	From Plymouth Argyle (on loan at MTFC 2017-18).	Signed for Solihull Moors on 21 December 2018 for an undisclosed fee.
Nathan Cameron	Unattached (previously with Bury) signed initially on a short term contract in November 2018 which was later extended to the end of the season.	
Reece Cole	Loan from Brentford on 18 January 2019.	Returned to home club May 2019.

Adam Dawson	From FC Chester January 2019.	Loan to AFC Telford March 2019 to end of season.
Stelios Demetriou	Unattached (formerly with Ross County) in January 2019.	Released summer 2019.
Elliott Durrell	Existing MTFC player.	
Callum Evans	From Forest Green Rovers (on loan at MTFC 2018-19).	
David Fitzpatrick	Existing MTFC player.	
Jamie Grimes	From Cheltenham Town in summer 2018.	Released summer 2019.
Jared Hodgkiss	Existing MTFC player.	Released summer 2019.
Manny Idem	Unattached (formerly with Aston Villa) in December 2018.	
Zak Jules	From Shrewsbury Town in January 2019.	
Fiacre Kelleher	Season-long loan from Oxford United.	Returned to home club May 2019.
Ryan Lloyd	Existing MTFC player.	Released summer 2019.
Keith Lowe	Existing MTFC player.	Released summer 2019.
Tyrone Marsh	Existing MTFC player.	
Liandro Martis	From Leicester City Under 23 team in January 2019.	Released summer 2019.
Callum Maycock	Loan from Coventry City initially to January 2019 but then extended to end of season.	Returned to home club May 2019.
Samir Mullins	Unattached (formerly with Maidstone United) in January 2019.	Released summer 2019.
Malachi Napa	Loan from Oxford United initially until January 2019.	Returned to home club in January 2019 at the end of his loan.
Brice Ntambwe	From Partick Thistle in January 2019.	
Kieran O'Hara	Season-long loan from Manchester United.	Returned to home club May 2019.
James Pearson	From Kidderminster Harriers in summer 2018	
Jordan Ponticelli	Loan from Coventry City in summer 2018.	Returned to home club following injury on his debut for MTFC at Crewe A on 1 September 2018. Returned to MTFC end of November 2018. Returned to home club December 2019 following a re-occurrence of his injury.
Michael Rose	From Morecambe in summer 2018.	
Harry Smith	From Millwall in summer 2018.	Moved to Northampton Town in May 2019 for an undisclosed fee.
Ben Stephens	From Stratford Town in summer 2018.	
Rhys Taylor	From AFC Fylde in summer 2018.	Released summer 2019.
Peter Vincenti	From Coventry City in August 2018.	
Miles Welch-Hayes	From Bath City in summer 2018.	
Danny Whitaker	Existing MTFC player.	
Scott Wilson	Existing MTFC player.	
Although the following players were signed by the club they did not make a senior appearance: Eric Andoh, Adam Dawson, Manny Idem, Shamir Mullins, Luke Simpson		

OFFICIAL TEAM PHOTOGRAPH  
SEASON 2018-19

