



**MACCLESFIELD TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB  
THE LEAGUE STORY**

**CHAPTER 17  
SEASON 2019-2020  
TURMOIL**



**BY  
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## OVERVIEW

The season was dominated by financial problems with wages regularly not paid on time impacting severely on the morale of both the players and non-playing staff and the club had to defend a Winding up Order in the High Court on a regular basis.

The overall situation at the club also had an impact on supporters who regularly expressed their disquiet.

The English Football League referred the club to an Independent Arbitration Panel on more than one occasion because of late payment of wages, lack of action relating to safety measures and non-appliance of EFL orders.

On the field of play, the team performed reasonably well in the first half of the season holding a mid-table place but their performance deteriorated during the closing weeks of the curtailed season (due to the Covid-19 pandemic), but the greatest impact on the final league position was the imposition of a deduction of 17 points due to disciplinary measures following action, or more precisely lack of action, by the owner of the club, which left the team in 24<sup>th</sup> position and relegated to the National League.

## OFF-FIELD

### Club Staff

The club operated without a Chief Executive with the owner **Amar Alkadhi** taking overall control as Acting Chairman who was supported by a Senior Leadership Team of Bob Trafford, Caroline Hall, Julie Briggs and Stewart Joseph. At the start of the season it was announced that the management of the club had changed from a community based to that of a business with each section of the club proposing their own budget requirements. (A proposal that each section be financially managed together with a five year plan was presented to the club at a meeting many years ago when Rob Bickerton was chairman but was never visibly put into practice.)

In July 2020 lifelong fan, Patrick Birch, became a member of the Senior Leadership team.

In August 2020 it was announced that Amar Alkadhi had stepped down as the club's Acting Chairman with a new chairman expected to be announced in the short term with former chairman Mark Blower overseeing the management of the transitional period. Future financial and operational decisions to be made at local level by the new chairman together with the Senior Management Committee, as such there will no longer be any reliance on the receipt of overseas funds. A chief executive was to be sought.

David Rutley, the local Member of Parliament, made a very measured statement in June 2020 covering the additional deduction of points through the Points Per Match calculation, impact on the morale of players and staff throughout the season, and the future operation of the club of which he said:

*'Over the last six months, I have worked behind the scenes with key stakeholders, interested parties, the owner, The Silkmen Supporters' Trust and relevant authorities to help in seeking to find a more sustainable future that the club deserves. It is clear that it is time for a fresh start whatever the outcome of the [forthcoming] Inquiry. There must be a new approach to the governance at the club with a new independent and experienced Chairman being put in place. In addition, there needs to be an active Board with relevant and complementary skills that can drive the Club forward, control finances, hold the Executive team to account and effectively engage with supporters and the community. Finally, the owner will need to take a back seat and be a silent shareholder at the Club.'*

**Bob Trafford** was appointed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager in addition to his roles of Media Manager and Fans Liaison Manager.

James Beckett, Commercial Manager, left the club in October 2019 returning to take up a position at his home club of Crewe Alexandra and was not replaced. John Rutherford, Safety Officer, left the club during the season and was replaced by **John Moorhouse**.

On the footballing staff the positions of First Team Coach, Masseur and Fitness & Conditioning Coach were either vacant throughout the season or the positions were redundant.

Tobias Phoenix left the club to take up a position of Head of Football Operations at Bolton Wanderers having been Director of Football at the club.

Kyle Fairgrieve, Sports Therapist and Physio, left the club in October and was replaced by **Bryony Woolley** who had been appointed physiotherapist to the Macclesfield Town Youth Academy in September 2019 and had also been a Placement Student at the club. Bryony holds a BSc Hons degree in Sports Therapy from Staffordshire University and has held the following positions – Assistant coach Chase Swimming club, Coach Leek Swimming Club and Coach Dane Valley Swimming Club. She has been a British National Swimming Finalist, ASA National Medallist and Staffordshire Swimming County Champion & Record Holder.

Sports Analyst Lewis Mitchell left the club in January 2020 and was replaced by **James Turner** in February 2020 who had spent the previous two-and-a-half years working for Opta.

**Tom Eastwood** was appointed Sports Scientist in February 2020. Tom had previously worked at Burnley FC, in the United Arab Emirates, Port Vale FC and the national Taiwan side as part of their World Cup qualification programme. At Macclesfield he is responsible for all areas of sports science including fitness conditioning, managing player load and data analysis generated from the GPS system.

## **Farewell**

Every year we have to say goodbye to former players and supporters who have been connected with the club.

- **Graham Barnett (June 2019)** – at the age of 83. Graham took a break from his football career in Australia during the Australian close season to play for Macclesfield during the second half of the 1965-66 season when he scored six goals in his 10 appearances.
- **Ann Walker (July 2019)** - an avid supporter of the Silkmen who was a friend of the late Margaret Jones, another avid support.
- **Tom Virtue (July 2019)** – at the age of 95. Although a southerner he was a staunch supporter of MTFC. Well known for his rattle, he helped the club in many ways including selling club shares at a time when there was a very real need to raise funds and for a time ran the club shop.
- **Kevan Maddocks (August 2019)** – at the age of 23. Had followed the Silkmen for 10 years but for the last three years had been in a coma in hospital following a fall from the multi-storey car park in the centre of Macclesfield.
- **Dot Braddock (August 2019)** – at the age of 85. Dot served in the London Road refreshment kiosk for 10 years or so, was well known for her delicious chips and helped the club receive an award for its pies. When the county magazine *Cheshire Life* published a comprehensive article about the club in February 1995, Dot featured with two other helpers in one of the photographs.

- **Gary Lewis (August 2019)** – a former groundsman who moved to Blackpool FC when he left the Moss Rose.
- **David Peter Harrison (September 2019)** – a regular supporter.
- **Colin and Graham Barlow (April 2020)** – Colin, aged 95, passed away in the East Cheshire Hospice whilst his son Graham, aged 71, had died five days earlier from an undiagnosed condition. Both had been lifelong supporters of the club, Colin having followed the Silkmen since the 1930s.
- **Norman Cunningham (April 2020)** – a loyal supporter for seven decades died aged 91.
- **Jean Wilkinson (June 2020)** – had been a very loyal supporter for many years but had been unable to attend matches in recent years. Attended away matches on a regular basis including the time when there was a significant backlog of matches, travelling by coach to Bath City on the Saturday, returning home only to travel to Dover the following day along with 26 other faithful supports. Influenced by his mother, her son Peter is a loyal and knowledgeable supporter of the Silkmen.
- **Deborah Lynch ( June 2020)** helped to write, produce and print the matchday programme during the early 1980s together with her husband.
- **Alan Boothby (July 2020)** – a life-long supporter who regularly travelled to away matches and was a vice-president for many years. Was a member of the former Silk Alliance along with his late wife.

### Season Tickets

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

	9am 18 February to 23.59 15 March	Midnight 16 March to 23.59 19 April	Midnight 20 April to 23.59 17 May	Midnight 18 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	£160	£170	£180	£200
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	£160	£170	£180	£200
Under 18	£50	£50	£50	£50
Under 12	£30	£30	£30	£30

Concessions (65 and over)/Under25/Under18/Under 12 had to provide proof of age on application (Age as at 1 August 2019).

From 9.30 on 1 March 2019 to 17.00 on 5 March 2019 an additional saving of £20 was offered on all adult, over-65 and under-25 tickets. For those who had already purchase their tickets they were asked to contact the club to make arrangements to receive a £20 refund.

Despite comments on social media that some former season ticket holders would not be purchasing a ticket for the 2019-20, sales in monetary terms matched sales for the 2018-19 season.

#### Individual Match Ticket Prices

<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

In July 2019 a new ticketing system was introduced in partnership with TicketCo. The purchasing system was simplified through TicketCo mobile technology which sends a QR code to supporters' Smartphones which is then scanned at the turnstiles. The platform also provides an online and payment facility which integrates with the club's web site and Facebook page. In addition, the usual conventional methods of payment were available.

With the season having brought to an early conclusion due to the Covid-19 pandemic the club announced at the beginning of August the pro rata season ticket refund arrangements for the home matches not played. There were four options

- Claim a credit against the purchase of a 2020-21 season ticket.
- In view of the uncertainty at the time of the announcement of when fans will be allowed back into the Moss Rose, allow a refund to be levied against a 2021-22 season ticket.
- Donate the value of the refund to provide free match tickets for NHS workers during the 2020-21 campaign.
- Refund directly to season ticket holders by way of a BACS payment.

## Financial Matters

The **audited accounts** for the year ended 30 June 2019 would usually be available at the Companies Register on the 31 March 2020 but the club took advantage of Section 442 of the Companies Act 2006 to change the year end date by a day and delay publishing for three months. Derby County, Brentford and Crystal Palace are known clubs who also took advantage of this change.

Published on the 30 June 2020 the accounts showed a dismal picture

LOSS: £563,444 (Loss £249,567 in 2018)

CREDITORS: £1,480,184 (£921,218)

DEBTORS: £70,002 (£44,020)

SHAREHOLDERS FUNDS: minus £627,907 (minus £64,463) making the company technically insolvent.

DUE TO PARENT COMPANY RAMY LTD: £196,018 (£195,975)

The club was subject to a **Winding up Order** in the High Court throughout the year with regular adjournments as follows;

8 May 2019 – HMRC ‘already paid’ but still adjourned.

26 June 2019 – HMRC paid but taken over by Egerton Youth Club.

3 July 2019 – Egerton Youth Club paid but taken over by current players.

14 August 2019 – Players paid but taken over by HMRC. ‘Will be resolved by the next Hearing.’

11 September 2019 – Given more time to settle.

23 October 2019 – awaiting international payments and Brexit having some impact.

20 November 2019 – Club state that payment had been made but HMRC said it had not been cleared.

4 December 2019 – issues moving large sums from director’s account in Spain which had ‘bounced back’.

18 December 2019 – Payment made but time allowed for payment to clear.

15 January 2020 – Club intends to sell shares and have accepted an offer.

25 March 2020 – All Hearings rescheduled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

17 June 2020 – At the club’s request Hearing postponed until 9 September 2020.

Throughout the year wages for players and staff were paid late resulting in a severe adverse effect on their well-being. One player stated that he had slept in his car because he could not afford the cost of petrol to travel from home to training and had taken this action as he was concerned that if he did not report for training he might be dismissed. It was reported at one stage that the groundsman was unable to travel to the club because of lack of funds resulting in an adverse effect on the condition of the pitch. On more than one occasion the players and staff made statements setting out the impact on them and refused to play for two matches. The English Football League took action against the club on three occasions, the results of which are included in the Season Review in the second half of this chapter.

The EFL announced in March 2020 that an amount of £164,000 had been made available to all League 2 clubs, funds which would normally have been over the months of April, May and June. This payment was part of an overall package of £50m together with the remainder made up of interest-free loan facilities available to clubs. An additional £1m from the EFL futures pot, a scheme which rewards clubs for giving opportunities to home-grown young players, which was allocated on a pro rata basis to qualifying clubs.

Following the suspension of matches and training due to the Covid-19 pandemic and government regulations, the club announced on 23 April 2020 that all players, backroom staff and the vast majority of office staff had been placed on furlough leave with the Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where 80% of wages up to £2,500 per month would be paid. In addition, all



affected employees would have their salaries made up to the full value of their normal wage in line with the terms of the furlough agreement. During this period a skeleton staff would continue to be employed under the normal terms of their contract. It was something of a surprise that in the documentation of the disciplinary hearing on 19 June 2020 that it would appear the club had not applied in time to be included in the government furloughing scheme.

## **Stadium**

The annual resurfacing work on the playing surface was undertaken during the week ending 14 June.

The state of repair of Butch's Bar continued to cause concern and with no action from the club to rectify the position, Dean Holmes and Rob Stirling stepped down as managers. At the direction of Amar Alkadhi, Bob Trafford convened a meeting of interested parties including Gail Butcher, the mother of the late Richard Butcher, when it was concluded that in view of the poor state of the structure it was reluctantly agreed that the bar could not re-open. The possibility of a Fans' Area was to be investigated but never came to fruition.

One excellent addition to the stadium was a new scoreboard showing the score and running match time which was sponsored by Proseal.

New dugouts were located on the terrace in front of the London Road stand to replace the former pitch side dugouts.

On Friday 20 December 2019 (the day before the scheduled home match against Plymouth Argyle) the club were served with a 'zero capacity' certificate notification by Cheshire East Council against a background of numerous requests to the club to provide the necessary records and an inspection certificate required to demonstrate that the ground was safe. The club had been formally advised that the safety barrier test was due (the club claimed that this test is carried out every other year but documentation indicated that this was an annual requirement) together with other failings. Officials of the club spent the day putting together the necessary paper work but at 21.00 the English Football League (EFL) announced that the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) was not satisfied that all the requirements had been met. A request by the club to play the match behind closed doors was rejected by the EFL as Regulation 33.1 does not allow this as the core principles behind EFL competitions are that all fixtures are to be played in front of spectators with playing behind closed doors significantly increases the risk of crowds congregating in the vicinity of the stadium. Despite the fact that the match could not take place, Amar Alkadhi posted a statement to the effect that despite press reports that the match had been postponed, the match would go ahead. As the match did not take place the club were charged with misconduct.

Dedication and hard-work of the non-footballing staff, the support and advice received from Cheshire East Council and the EFL ensured that a Safety Certificate was issued in time for the home match against Grimsby Town on Boxing Day. Help was also provided by the Silkmen Supporters' Trust who made a financial contribution of £2,000 towards the cost of testing the safety barriers, and Taurus who provide matchday stewards.

An alarm was raised by a Cheshire East councillor at the beginning of January 2020 when he reported that he had been in discussion with the Public Health official of the council who had stated that a 'zero capacity' notice could be served on the club again if it failed to provide documentation in relation to an Electrical Certificate, a Safety Plan and a risk assessment of barriers and lighting with a deadline of 15 January looming. Bob Trafford posted on Facebook that during the week commencing 13 January all the safety issues had been dealt with satisfactorily such that the next home match on 21 January could go ahead as planned.

### **Community Sports Trust**

The North West Under 21 Development League, Premier Division was declared null and void with teams having played varying numbers of matches from nine to 20 with Macclesfield Under 21s in fifth position after 18 matches with 25 points.

For the Under 19 teams – in the CEFA North Central League 1 the final table was decided on a points per game basis with the Macclesfield 'A' side coming second to Sheffield Wednesday 'A' side on goal difference. In the CEFA North Central League 2 the Macclesfield 'B' team came third in the table, again calculated on a points per game basis.

### **Silkmen Supporters' Trust**

The Trust continued to challenge both the owner and the officials of the English Football League about the ongoing financial position of the club and its impact on the club, staff and players, providing very comprehensive reports on a regular basis. In view of the number and length of these statements it is impossible to include these documents either in whole or as a summary in view of the volume. All the statements issued by the Trust can be found on their web site [www.sstrust.uk](http://www.sstrust.uk).

The SST was involved in the following actions:

- Set up a Hardship Fund for players and staff employees to benefit from nil interest loans of a 'pay-day' nature in view of the regular late payment of wages. The SST started the fund with a donation of £3,000 requesting contributions from supporters to a bank account, Paypal Account and later a Crowd Funding account. Reports of the amount held in the fund were reported from time to time with a figure of over £13,000 reported.
- In December 2019 high quality post-training food had been supplied for playing staff on three occasions. Also provided funds for players to enjoy 5-a-side Box Football and Paid for recovery session massage with Marty Royal – Sports Massage and Therapy.
- Contacted the English Premier League, English Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association in an attempt to ensure that any incoming monies were available only for the benefit of Macclesfield Town Football Club and not channelled elsewhere. The Premier League was requested to withhold the Solidarity Payment due in January 2020.
- In January 2020 all participants in the Silk Lotto received an e-mail stating that from 7 February 2020 all proceeds from the lottery would be distributed to the SST although commitment to the community would remain. Funds would also be provided with supporters' interests in mind. The organisers of the lottery had previously ceased making the regular monthly payment of £500 to the club.
- In April 2020 refused financial support to repair the shutters to the McIlroy Suite and the purchase of a deep fat fryer for the Silkmen Café on the rationale that playing and non-playing staff had not been paid on time.
- At the same time gave notice to the club that the Trust would provide no further financial support until staff were paid on time and the sale of the club had been ratified (See Other Matters).
- In May 2020 made a loan of £10,000 to the club (£500 was repaid almost immediately as the full amount of the loan was not required) to ensure that wages were paid on time to ensure that further disciplinary action by the EFL would be averted. Following questions made to the Trust, it was announced that the loan had not been made from the usual income streams but had been made up of £5,000 from the Hardship Fund following consultation with members who were the major contributors, together with £5,000 from SST members who wanted to support this loan.



## Other Matters

New English Football League regulations were introduced in the summer of 2020.

- It became a condition that EFL clubs must interview at least one BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) candidate when undertaking a recruitment process for any managerial position.
- Following investigations into the incident at Derby County's training ground where a representative from Leeds United observed their training sessions a new regulation was put place – 'no Club shall directly or indirectly observe (or attempt to observe) another Club's training session in the period of 72 hours prior to any match scheduled to be played between those respective clubs.'

In June 2019 the club announced a partnership with Just Sports Pro Club in association with Nike, as they became the club's Official Kit Supplier and Retail Partner in a three-year deal, with a new range of merchandise both in the club and online as well as stylish new replica and training gear. The Just Sport Pro Club was to refurbish the club shop.

Shirt sponsorship was provided by Irish Bookmaker Paddy Power by 'unsponsoring' the club's shirt for the season. This meant that they provided sponsorship monies but their name did not appear on the shirt. Other clubs being 'unsponsored' were Newport County, Motherwell FC and Southend United.

Throughout the season there were references to Joe Sealey, former professional goalkeeper and son of the famous Les Sealey who played as goalkeeper for amongst other, Coventry City, Luton Town, Manchester United, Aston Villa and West Ham United, seeking to take over the club but his efforts were thwarted and eventually he announced that his offer was no longer current.

With an unsettling situation evolving for the supporters, a protest march was organised prior to the first round FA Cup match with a small group of supporters marching from the Town Hall to the ground to join a pre-match demonstration outside the ground. Andy Worth, Chairman of the Supporters' Club announced prior to the FA Cup match on 10 November that he would not be undertaking any duties as a volunteer until the owner had sold the club to local interest and in view of the fact that members of the youth team were to be used in place of the striking full-time players for the Cup match. He asked that the youth team show solidarity with the players on strike and asked them not to play in the match. (In the end they played in the match). He urged the youth team, players on strike, volunteers, non-playing staff and supporters to stand outside the ground at 12.15 to show solidarity. Volunteers were asked to refrain from undertaking matchday duties until Mr Alkadhi had no further involvement in the club. Mr Worth stepped down from his duties as the matchday PA announcer with demonstrations prior to matches continuing for a time. In the end Mr Worth returned to his PA duties on Boxing Day. His requests had some effect with few 50/50 tickets sold, programme sellers refusing to sell programmes and the matchday commentators did not provide a home commentary for the FA Cup match on 10 November. It was suggested that the groundsman was on strike resulting in the ground not being prepared or re-marked for the FA Cup first round match. In addition, the pre-match analysis ceased to appear on the official web site and the number of articles in the matchday programme reduced with the programme physically reduced in size and volume.

An on-line petition was set up to re-iterate fans wishes that Amar Alkadhi relinquish his ownership of the club in view of the financial uncertainties within the club which reached a total of 1500 signatories.

A Community Call Scheme was launched in April 2020 by club chaplain Chris Whitely to enable supporters and the wider community to stay in touch and have a conversation or request a prayer for someone during the pandemic. An update in July indicated that over 200 calls had been made with people wanting to reminisce about times gone by with others wanting to talk about very real worries which the pandemic elicited.

#### **ON FIELD**

Macclesfield Town remained a member of the English Football League for the 2019-20 season competing in the Sky Bet league 2.

A total of 40 players were used across the four senior competitions throughout the season. A list of all players is included at the end of this chapter.

During the close season 10 players were released with Callum Evans, Tyrone Marsh, Scott Wilson, Emmanuel Idem and Elliott Durrell moving to pastures new and Danny Whitaker retired from playing. Nine players remained from the 2018-19 season with 11 new signings and five players signed on loan. Fiacre Kelleher, centre back, was appointed captain which proved to be a very popular choice.

On the managerial side, Sol Campbell started the season but left the club in the middle of August 2019, Daryl McMahon succeeding Campbell but he was dismissed at the beginning of January 2020, Mark Kennedy then holding the position to the end of the season. Danny Whitaker and Tobias Phoenix acted as caretaker managers for short periods of time when there was no senior manager.

#### **FRIENDLY MATCHES**

There were five pre-season matches, all played away from the Moss Rose, resulting in one win, three defeats and a draw.

At **Congleton Town**, six trialists were used with two different sides fielded for each half including the use of all six trialists. Macclesfield took an early lead when new signing Jacob Blyth converted a through ball from fellow new signing Jak McCourt, but Congleton managed to equalise in the 31<sup>st</sup> minute. However, the Silkmen ran out winners when one of the trialists scored in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute.

Macclesfield then travelled to Championship side **Wigan Athletic** for a behind closed-doors match. Wigan fielded the same personnel at the start of the second half other than changing their goalkeeper but made seven changes during the second half, whereas Macclesfield changed almost the whole of their team at half time giving several trialists an opportunity. The match was won with a 20<sup>th</sup> minute goal scored by Wigan's Pilkington. It was reported that Macclesfield performed well creating several chances but like the previous season failed to convert them. Likewise, the hosts also failed to convert any further chances.

Another behind close-doors match was arranged at short notice at Championship side **Blackburn Rovers**. Macclesfield acquitted themselves well taking the lead in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute through Scott Wilson who was to leave the club two days later. The second half saw Blackburn's new five million pound signing, Sam Gallagher, introduced which gave the hosts momentum. Scoring goals in the 47<sup>th</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> minutes, Blackburn won the match with a score line of 2-1.

The short Tuesday evening trip to **Leek Town** produced a stalemate where Macclesfield dominated proceedings but could not find the back of the net due to missed chances coupled with some excellent work by Ben Chapman, the Leek Town goalkeeper.

There was a most disappointing defeat at **Hartlepool Town** on the Saturday before the start of the League season when just 18 Macclesfield supporters travelled, the hosts scoring three second half goals without any reply from the Silkmen. This defeat was all the worse because Hartlepool had arranged a behind close-doors friendly with Sunderland two days later which meant that they had to divide their squad in two resulting in them being unable to field their strongest squad.



**Sol Campbell's pre-match team talk at Congleton Town 9 July**



**Match action at Wigan Athletic on 13 July**





**Scott Wilson's goal against Blackburn Rovers on 17 July**



**Match action at Leek Town on 23 July**

## SEASON REVIEW

### Cup Matches

In the first round of the **Carabao Cup** (EFL League Cup) the Silkmen travelled to **Blackpool**. Macclesfield's goalkeeper Owen Evans was the hero of the night with Miles Welch-Hayes the villain. Blackpool had the better of the early exchanges taking the lead in the 31<sup>st</sup> minute, however, Macclesfield were on the end of an excellent piece of good luck when Rocky Bushiri sent the ball into his own net eight minutes later. The Silkmen then came into the game and so it continued in the second half with substitute Virgil Gomis latching onto a long ball from Paddy Osadebe beating the goalkeeper with a strong shot to give Macclesfield a 2-1 lead in the 65<sup>th</sup> minute. Blackpool had sent many crosses into the box but had failed to convert any so it could be construed that they were fortunate in the 90<sup>th</sup> minute when substitute Miles Welch-Hayes fouled Armand Gnanduillet in the box giving Blackpool a penalty which Gnanduillet converted. With the score 2-2 at full time the match went straight to penalties. The penalties were taken at the Blackpool end with Macclesfield going first. Fraser Horsfall missed the first but with Evans, the Macclesfield goalkeeper, saving two and Macclesfield scoring the rest of their spot kicks, including the fifth by Evans himself, the Silkmen progressed to the second round 4-2 on penalties.

*Corey O'Keeffe made his debut.*

For the second round the Silkmen found themselves on the road again travelling to **Grimsby Town**. Towards the end of the first half there were thunderstorms around the area and then torrential rain with the referee blowing for half-time without any additional time being added. Prior to the start of the second half the referee allowed 10 minutes to see if the ground would be fit for play and then allowed a further 10 minutes at the end of which he declared the pitch unfit for play and abandoned the match.

The re-arranged tie was held on 10 September. By then the draw for the third round had taken place, the prize for winning this match was a trip to Stanford Bridge, so it was a little surprising that having played a formation of 5-3-2 in the previous league match this was changed to 4-4-1-1. Macclesfield played well in the first half but were under constant pressure during the second half with centre back Fiacre Kelleher and goalkeeper Owen Evans keeping Grimsby at bay. At full time the score was 0-0. With Grimsby missing one penalty and Macclesfield two, the home side were victorious 5-4 on penalties.

The three group matches of the newly sponsored English League Trophy, the **leasing.com Trophy** were played in September and November.

Macclesfield commenced with a home tie against **Newcastle United Under-21s**. The Silkmen started well taking the lead in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute with a powerful shot from 30 yards by David Fitzpatrick to score a rare goal for him. Macclesfield then seemed to take their foot off the gas allowing Newcastle to apply pressure but the score remained 1-0 at half-time. The second half started with a bang. Two minutes after the re-start Newcastle's Luke Charman hit a brilliant strike to equalise. The match then became an end-to-end affair with both sides going all out for the winner which came from Virgil Gomis for Macclesfield converting an excellent cross from Corey O'Keeffe to make the score 2-1. Newcastle had a chance to equalise right at the end of the match when the ball flew across the mouth of the goal but there was no one there to convert.

*The programme was an unusual style which had been well thought out, folding out to provide a wall chart size team photograph.*

For the second group match former Macclesfield manager John Askey returned with his **Port Vale** side which included former Silkmen Kieran Kennedy, Ryan Lloyd, Scott Burgess and Shaun Brisley. Macclesfield were the early leaders with a goal from centre forward Joe Ironside in the 16<sup>th</sup> minute, however the visitors equalised in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute. The score remained 1-1 at the half-time



but in the second half Vale took a 3-1 lead, their second goal by way of a deflection. Theo Archibald pulled a goal back in the 92<sup>nd</sup> minute but it was too late to stop Port Vale securing a 3-2 victory.

For the final group match Macclesfield travelled to **Shrewsbury Town**. A strong team was fielded against the League One side, the Silkmen needing a victory to progress to the knock-out stage of the competition. In the first half, Shrewsbury enjoyed the majority of the possession with much of the play in the Macclesfield half requiring the Silkmen to defend strongly. The home side took the lead in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute, a lead they held at the interval. In the second half, Macclesfield gradually came more into the match resulting in Theo Archibald equalising. Shrewsbury regained the lead in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute but three minutes later Shrewsbury substitute Donald Love was dismissed for a second offence only 10 minutes after his introduction. Even though they had been reduced to 10 men Shrewsbury clinched the tie with a third goal to progress to the next stage of the competition along with Port Vale.

By the time of the first round of the **FA Cup** the morale of the players was extremely low and there was concern for their wellbeing following the late payment of wages. As a result the contracted players withdrew their labour for this match with Macclesfield having to field a starting line-up of five loanees and six youth team players, with a further three youth team players featuring as substitutes later in the match. Played at the Moss Rose, **Kingstonian** who play in the Isthmian Premier Division, were the opposition sitting some 71 places below the Silkmen in the football pyramid. Two goals in the first 11 minutes saw the visitors well on the way to victory, the youngsters in the Macclesfield team were overwhelmed. A goal two minutes into the second half virtually sealed victory with a fourth added in the 69<sup>th</sup> minute saw Kingstonian walking away with the prize money, which was much needed by Macclesfield Town at the time, and a place in the second round.

In the first round of the **Cheshire Senior Cup** (not classified as a senior fixture for Football League clubs) Macclesfield travelled to **Tranmere Rovers**. Both teams fielded young teams but Tranmere proved to be the stronger side running out winners 4-0.



**Match action at Blackpool (EFL Cup) 13 August**





Owen Evans saving a penalty at Blackpool (EFL Cup) 13 August



Match Action at Shrewsbury Town in the EFL Trophy 13 November





**Pre-match Remembrance – Kingstonian FA Cup Round One – 9 November**

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

### **AUGUST 2019**

Macclesfield started their season with the long journey down to **Exeter City** fielding a new-look team including eight debutants in the starting line-up with only Miles Welch-Hayes, Fiacre Kelleher and Ben Stephens remaining from the previous season. Of these three players two had new roles: Ben Stephens moved to a striker's role having previously been an attacking midfielder with Miles Welch-Hayes playing as one of three centre backs having previously featured as a full back or wing back. Macclesfield played well but, in a continuation from the previous season, could not make their chances count which was their undoing. Exeter grew in confidence in the final quarter of the match and were denied when Tom Parkes' goal-bound header was blocked on the line by team-mate Lee Martin. However, in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute Macclesfield's hearts were broken when the Grecians enjoyed a huge slice of luck, Nicky Law drilled the ball into the box only for it to rebound off Ryan Bowman into the net to give the hosts all three points. Post-match, manager Sol Campbell emphasised the fact that the team need to be more goal hungry and if they had taken their early chances the result could have been much different.

*The following players made their Macclesfield Town debut – Theo Archibald, Jacob Blyth, Eddie Clark, Owen Evans, Jay Harris, Fraser Horsfall, Joe Ironside, Jak McCourt, Paddy Osadebe and Theo Vassell.*

Continuing with a 5-3-2 formation Macclesfield entertained **Leyton Orient** for the first home match of the season. With little to show from either side in the first half hour, the deadlock was broken in the 30<sup>th</sup> minute with a stunning shot by Theo Archibald. The Silkmen went on to prove themselves to be the far better side doubling their lead in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute through Paddy Osadebe with Theo Vassell putting the icing on the cake seven minutes from time.

*Connor Kirby and Virgil Gomis made their debuts.*

*Fiacre Kelleher made his 50<sup>th</sup> appearance in all competitions for MTF.*

*One minute's applause during the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute of play for Kevan Maddocks, a supporter, who had died earlier in the week.*

*In the pre-match announcements tribute was paid to Tom Virtue, a long-time supporter, following his recent death.*

*This was the first match that the new enlarged dugouts were used, positioned at the back of the of the London Road terrace.*

On 15 August the club announced that manager Sole Campbell had left by mutual consent. It later transpired that he had not been paid a six figure sum in wages. Whilst there was no announcement from the club, at the same time striker coach Andy Cole also departed the club and it would appear that coach Hermann Hreidarsson had already left. Danny Whitaker was appointed caretaker manager.

At **Northampton Town** Macclesfield opened the scoring in the 39<sup>th</sup> minute, Ben Stephens sweeping the ball into the bottom corner. They held the lead to the interval but the Silkmen could have gone two up but Jak McCourt's free-kick hit the woodwork. Northampton were not at their best in the second half but an equalising goal by Jordan Turnbull stirred them into action putting Macclesfield under considerable pressure. The home side should have taken the lead when a free-kick rebounded off the woodwork to Shane McWilliams who shot wide from six yards in front of an empty net. However, in the last minute of normal time, wing-back Theo Archibald gave the Silkmen a 2-1 victory.

Daryl McMahon was appointed manager on 19 August with Steve Gritt and Danny Whitaker as assistant managers.

There was a disappointing outcome to the home match against **Morecambe** which Macclesfield should have put to bed in the first half when they enjoyed the majority of the possession. However, much of the play was in the midfield although Macclesfield managed to penetrate the Morecambe defence twice, but on both occasions were denied by the woodwork and they had what looked to be a reasonable penalty claim turned aside towards the end of the first half. The Silkmen started the second half brightly but against the run of play Morecambe took the lead in the 65<sup>th</sup> minute with a well worked goal. For the rest of the match Macclesfield could not get their act together with the substitutes adding nothing to the play, nor did Morecambe's time wasting which disrupted the flow of play.

McMahon gained his first win when **Scunthorpe United** were the visitors. In the first half Scunthorpe gave a performance which belied their bottom position but the turning point came with a penalty in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute allowing Joe Ironside to score his first goal for the Silkmen. Later in the half the Scunthorpe goalkeeper produced a double save to deny first Joe Ironside and then Paddy Osadebe.

The following day in *The Football League* newspaper there was an interesting article in which McMahon stated that he had been assured that the club's financial problems are a thing of the past. 'I wasn't here before so I am not privy to what went on, and I've only been here a few days so I haven't really had a chance to find out. But I'm not bothered, to be honest. I'm here to concentrate on football. I've spoken to the owner and I've been assured there'll be no issues moving forward.' Possibly at this time he has to be given the benefit of the doubt as he was probably unaware that the club was due in Court again on 11 September to face a Winding up Order brought by HMRC.

The next match took place at **Stevenage**. At the time of kick-off the hosts had failed to win any league matches and had not scored a single league goal, however, they made the better start creating more than one scoring chance, but it was Macclesfield who took the lead against the run of play in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute through Ben Stephens. Stevenage turned the game around in the second half

scoring two goals in four minutes to give them a 2-1 lead. Macclesfield rode their luck gaining a penalty in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute which Joe Ironside despatched to earn the Silkmen a 2-2 draw.

At the end of the month having played five matches Macclesfield were in a respectable seventh place having gained 10 points.

## SEPTEMBER 2019

**Crawley Town** were welcomed to the Moss Rose for the first match of the month. The two sides were level on points at the start of the match and this proved to be fairly evenly matched encounter. Macclesfield played well in the first half and deserved their 1-0 lead by way of a goal from Theo Vassell. The visitors came out of the starting blocks strongly at the start of the second half and went on to dominate proceedings with Macclesfield unable to match their first half performance. Bex Lubala's 25-yard free-kick into the roof of the net gave the visitors a share of the points.

At **Swindon Town**, on a very warm afternoon, the referee called a halt midway through both halves for a drinks break. This was a disappointing performance throughout the match by the Silkmen with the home side dominating proceedings from the start. Two goals in the first half virtually gave the home side victory but they sealed all three points with a third goal after the interval. Macclesfield left Swindon again without registering a win. Interestingly Richie Wellens, the Swindon manager and former Silkman, said after the match that any team playing with just two centre backs against Doyle and Yates are going to have a lot of problems. The Macclesfield manager did change the formation from 4-4-1-1 to 5-3-2 during the second half but by then it was too late as the damage had already been done.

Next came a Tuesday night visit to **Newport County** who made an electric start catching the Silkmen cold to score in the first minute. For a time the Silkmen looked shell-shocked but gradually fought their way into the game and were rewarded with a goal in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute when Paddy Osadebe collected a through ball down the centre from Jay Harris to score from close range whilst under pressure. There were other chances for Macclesfield but poor finishing or lack of ball control let them down. In the second half the teams cancelled each other out, both resorting to the long ball tactic only to see the ball being returned immediately.

*With Paddy Power unsponsoring the kits for both teams (ie kit sponsors but without their name appearing on the front of the shirts) they provided a cup for this unsponsored 'Derby' but as the match ended in a draw it was decided that the cup should be played for again in the return fixture.*

The league match at **Grimsby Town** was the second meeting between the two teams in a fortnight, Grimsby having won the earlier Carabao Cup tie on penalties. Two former Silkmen, Elliott Hewitt and Luke Waterfall were members of the opposition. This was another disappointing match with Grimsby only creating three shots on target and Macclesfield just one. Even changing both frontmen in the second half Macclesfield could not make an impression leaving it to Grimsby's Ethan Robson to provide the only goal of the match and victory for the home side.

**Colchester United** were the next visitors to the Moss Rose. Macclesfield dominated the first half with Paddy Osadebe giving them the lead in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute but a goal in added time at the end of the half saw the visitors draw level. A poor performance in the second was compounded by the referee disallowing Fiacre Kelleher's 94<sup>th</sup> minute strike for a foul thereby continuing the Silkmen's winless run.

Only gaining three points during the month Macclesfield crashed down the table to 17<sup>th</sup> position with 13 points.

## OCTOBER 2019

At **Cambridge United** the referee deemed that the yellow top of goalkeeper Owen Evans was not sufficiently distinctive to the Cambridge strip such that Evans had to wear a white Cambridge training top. The home side struck the first blow when Jack Roles scored with a shot from 30 yards, the score remaining 1-0 at half time although Theo Archibald had squandered a good chance when he blazed the ball over the bar from close range just before the break. Macclesfield took the lead in the second half with two goals in four minutes by Archibald and Arthur Gnahoua. Gnahoua collected the ball just outside the area, ran into the area and held off three defenders to score from eight yards but Cambridge equalised in the 78<sup>th</sup> minute to take a share of the points.

*Arthur Gnahoua's 68<sup>th</sup> minute goal was MTFC's 850th English Football League goal*

*After the match Daryl McMahon said that his team were outstanding despite conceding a late equaliser but what he did not say was that the Silkmen had not won a league match since 24 August.*

Macclesfield welcomed back **Port Vale** manager and Silkmen legend John Askey to the Moss Rose. This match gave the Silkmen a much needed victory in the 13<sup>th</sup> league encounter of the season and sweet revenge against the visitors for their recent victory in the leasing.com Trophy. Port Vale took the lead in the 12<sup>th</sup> minute but Macclesfield equalised in the 39<sup>th</sup> minute when Arthur Gnahoua scored his second goal in consecutive matches to see the Silkmen go into the interval on equal terms. Unlike recent matches, Macclesfield were the better side in the second half and deservedly Paddy Osadebe gave them the lead in the 64<sup>th</sup> minute, with the Silkmen holding out to win 2-1 which took them to 12<sup>th</sup> position in the table.

The match at **Oldham Athletic** was not a spectacular affair but the Silkmen were on the winning side again courtesy of Jak McCourt's superb free-kick when he curled the ball round the wall from just outside the area in the 86<sup>th</sup> minute. His goal came after only having been on the pitch for six minutes and in his second match since returning from injury. He was again in action right at the end of the match when Oldham could have snatched a share of the points but his goal line clearance ensured victory for the Silkmen. With this win Macclesfield moved up to ninth position in the table.

*Macclesfield's 750<sup>th</sup> English Football League match.*

Macclesfield travelled to **Cheltenham Town** who play at the Jonny-Rocks stadium for a Tuesday evening fixture. Whilst the Silkmen started fairly well in the end they were out-played and totally outclassed against a well organised side who passed the ball well and were good at keeping possession. Again, as they had in recent matches, played a 3-4-1-2 formation. A goal by the home side on the stroke of half-time was a body blow from which the Silkmen never recovered. Two more goals in the second half secured the points for the home side. As well as impressive play throughout the match, all three of the Cheltenham goals were well crafted and they deserved their rise up the table to second place.

The home match against **Bradford City** due to have been played on the last Saturday of the month was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch with the usual problem of water gathering in the corner between the John Askey away terrace and the Moss Lane stand.

With 20 points on the board there was a slight improvement to 14<sup>th</sup> position in the table.

## NOVEMBER 2019

The Silkmen travelled north to **Carlisle United** where there was a change of formation back to 5-3-2. Macclesfield were the better side in the first half taking the lead in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute through Theo Archibald and should have gone two up five minutes later but Joe Ironside's weak penalty shot was easily saved. They were unlucky to concede a goal in the second minute of added time at the end of the half when the ball hit Cheltenham's Harry McKirdy to go into the net. In the second half Ben

Stephens had the ball in the net but his effort was ruled off-side. In the second half Macclesfield failed to match their first half performance and with Carlisle in the ascendancy, substitute Ryan Loft charged down Fiacre Kelleher's poor clearance to send the ball past the advancing 'keeper to bring Carlisle's run of five games without a win to an end.

The other MTFC, **Mansfield Town**, were the next visitors to the Moss Rose. This match was in doubt due to the contracted players having been on strike for the FA Cup match the previous Saturday but went ahead after the majority had been paid in full the evening before the match. With the groundsman reportedly unable to find the funds to put petrol in his car due to unpaid wages and volunteer staff on strike, the pitch had not been prepared and was below standard. Considering the situation the players had faced before the match they put in a gritty performance against a team also in mid-table. There were few chances for either side with the goalkeepers rarely troubled resulting in goalless draw.

The Silkmen then faced **Salford City**, part owned by the Class of '92, for the first time ever following the Ammies promotion from the National League. The first half was uneventful but the second half came to life proving to be more entertaining and exciting. Macclesfield played with three centre backs and two wing-backs who defended well throughout the match but at the other end of the pitch failed to score a goal for the second consecutive match. They could well have lost the match near the end but for a close range block by defender Nathan Cameron.

*Near the beginning of the match a Macclesfield supporter threw a flare over six rows of fans onto the pitch. Ejected from the stadium on the day he was later prosecuted, fined and given a five-year football ban.*

The last Saturday of the month saw the re-arranged match from 26 October played at the Moss Rose against **Bradford City**. Macclesfield adopted a defensive approach but took a first half lead against the run play when Cory O'Keeffe's charge into the box came to an end when he was sent tumbling by Ben Richards-Everton. Jak McCourt sent the Bradford goalkeeper Richard O'Donnell the wrong way with the resultant penalty kick. The Silkmen had a couple of chances in the second half however, the visitors equalised in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute through James Vaughan immediately after which one of the Bradford supporters threw a flare onto the pitch. (He was subsequently banned by Bradford City for three years). In the 89<sup>th</sup> minute the Silkmen were reduced to 10 men when Connor Kirby was dismissed for his second offence but the Bantams could not capitalise on their one man advantage so late in the game which finished 1-1.

At the end of the month Macclesfield remained in 14<sup>th</sup> position with 23 points.

## DECEMBER 2019

On Saturday 7 December Macclesfield were due to entertain **Crewe Alexandra** but following a meeting between the EFL and the players this match was postponed as the players had not trained for a week due to having no training facilities. In addition, the fact that their wages had been paid late on a regular basis their health and wellbeing had been adversely affected to such an extent that they would be unable to focus on the game. The EFL warned the club that they would take disciplinary action against the club for the non-fulfilment of this match.

The match scheduled for the following Saturday did go ahead with Macclesfield travelling to **Walsall**. Miles Welch-Hayes gave the Silkmen the lead in the eighth minute, his first professional goal, with further chances coming their way during the first half. Silkmen goalkeeper Owen Evans was in fine form throughout this match including making a fingertip save in the first half. Macclesfield created more chances in the second half with Arthur Gnahoua firing over and a deflected shot from Jay Harris skimming the top of the crossbar. Walsall pressurised the Silkmen as the second half wore on,



Corey O'Keeffe clearing the ball off the line, and they made their pressure pay when they scored in the 74<sup>th</sup> minute. The home side pressed for the winner but heroics from goalkeeper Evans kept them at bay with three crucial saves, but Nathan Cameron at the other end missed a guilt-edged chance from six yards leaving Macclesfield to complete their fourth consecutive drawn match.

At an Independent Disciplinary Commission the club was found guilty to multiple charges in respect of non-payment of wages on due dates and also the non-fulfilment of the fixture against Crewe Alexandra. A sporting sanction of 10 points, with four points suspended, was considered appropriate when taking into account both the aggravating and mitigating factors. Six points were immediately deducted reducing the season total from 24 to 18 which placed the club in 22<sup>nd</sup> position having been in 15<sup>th</sup> position.

The next match should have been a home tie against **Plymouth Argyle** on 21 December but the club were served with a 'Zero Capacity' notice as ground requirements and paper work had not been submitted although several requests had been made with warnings that if they did not comply a Zero Capacity rating would be served. As such the match had to be postponed with the EFL serving notice that further disciplinary action would be taken against the club.

Dedication and hard-work of the non-footballing staff, the support and advice received from Cheshire East Council and the EFL ensured that a Safety certificate was issued in time for the match against **Grimsby Town** on 26 December. This was a scrappy game with few chances for either side. Half time substitute Joe Ironside gave the Silkmen the lead in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute from a penalty but the visitors equalised 10 minutes later to take a share of the points.

The final match of the calendar year at **Forest Green Rovers** saw the home side gain victory with a single second half goal. Farrend Rawson headed home Liam Shepherd's free-kick from close range to give Rovers their first win in any competition since 23 November and leaving Macclesfield without a win since 19 October.

*David Fitzpatrick made his 200<sup>th</sup> appearance in all competitions for MTFC.*

*Forest Green Rovers generously donated the proceeds of the match day raffle of £1250 to the Silkmen Supporters' Trust Hardship Fund.*

At the end of the month with a total of 19 points the Silkmen were in 22<sup>nd</sup> position in the league table.



Pre-match huddle in the first league match of the season at Exeter City



Match action against Exeter City on 3 August





**Match action against Leyton Orient at the Moss Rose on 10 August**



**New Management team of Daryl McMahon (manager, centre), Steve Gritt and Danny Whitaker (Assistant Managers)**





Penalty claim in the Morecambe match at the Moss Rose on 20 August



A close call in the Morecambe match at the Moss Rose on 20 August





**Joe Ironside, scorer of the winning goal, in action against Scunthorpe United at the Moss Rose on 24 August**



**Paddy Osadebe being congratulated after scoring in the 13th minute at home to Colchester United on 28 September with the new scoreboard in the background.**





Match action in the goalless home match against Mansfield Town on 16 November



The defensive line in the re-arranged match against Bradford City at the Moss Rose on 30 November



## JANUARY 2020

On New Year's Day the Silkmen travelled to **Port Vale** with 452 Silkmen in the crowd of 5350. An exciting match which Macclesfield should have won in the first half but poor finishing let them down. Against the run of play Port Vale took the lead in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute with a ball which looped over goalkeeper Owen Evans into the very top corner, a lead which they retained at the interval. Throughout the second half, the match was played at pace with action from end-to-end. In a two-minute spell Macclesfield took a 2-1 lead, Jay Harris striking a thunderbolt of a shot from 35 yards in the 56<sup>th</sup> minute to score his first goal for the Silkmen with Joe Ironside receiving a pass from Paddy Osadebe in the box, turning to face the goal, placed the ball in the net from 15 yards. The pace stepped up another gear with the home side levelling the score in the 62nd minute after which both sides went all out for the winner with Macclesfield having the ball cleared off the line in added time, but there were no further goals with score remaining 2-2 at full time.

On 2 January manager Daryl McMahon and assistant manager Steve Gritt resigned. The following day it was announced that they had been appointed as the management team at National League club Dagenham and Redbridge. Unofficially it was reported that the last straw for McMahon was the cancellation of the overnight accommodation for the Forest Green Rovers match when the team were all ready to depart with their overnight bags.

Tobias Phoenix, Director of Football, and Danny Whitaker were appointed caretaker managers.

Against **Cambridge United** at the Moss Rose Macclesfield enjoyed a 1-0 victory, their first in the league since 19 October 2019. Arthur Gnahoua put the Silkmen in the lead in the fifth minute with Fraser Horsfall unlucky in the second half when his strike was disallowed for off-side but only after the referee had consulted his assistant. Former Silkman Paul Lewis then hit the outside of the post but the Macclesfield held firm for a thoroughly deserved victory.

There followed a rather uninspiring match at home to **Oldham Athletic** which did not come to life until the 85<sup>th</sup> minute when Oldham's Jonny Smith scored for the visitors. In added time David Wheeler was adjudged to have handled the ball on the line, an offence spotted by the assistant referee and following his dismissal Joe Ironside converted the penalty. Eight minutes of added time were played during which Joe Blyth had the opportunity to win the match for the Silkmen but he directed his shot straight at the goalkeeper. Following the match Oldham's successfully appealed against Wheeler's dismissal.

Mark Kennedy was appointed manager with Danny Butterworth and Danny Whitaker as assistant managers.

Hit by two early first half goals in the space of two minutes at **Colchester United**, the first a screamer from 30 yards and the second when Fiacre Kelleher misdirected the ball into his own net, gave Macclesfield a hard task to earn any points. However, they responded well and deserved their second half goal scored by Ben Stevens, but the hosts held out and could have scored a third goal but for an excellent save by Reice Charles-Cooke towards the end of the match.

**Crewe Alexandra** brought 1222 supporters to the Moss Rose making up 50% of the total attendance. The first half saw Macclesfield constantly putting Crewe under pressure resulting in an own goal in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute. Crewe came out after the interval determined to pressurise Macclesfield who were restricted to their own half for much of the time leaving the Silkmen having to defend strongly. Towards the end of the five minutes added time the referee awarded Crewe a corner when the ball looked as though it had gone out of play off one their players. Macclesfield failed to clear the ball in a crowded penalty area allowing Crewe substitute Callum Ainley to tap the ball home to deny Mark

Kennedy his first win. The re-start was delayed when a Crewe supporter threw a smoke bomb onto the pitch.

*Goalkeeper Jonathan Mitchell made his MTFC debut.*

The visitors, **Forest Green Rovers**, ruled the game in the first half taking the lead in the 17<sup>th</sup> minute and started the second half in the same manner gaining a penalty two minutes into the half when Corey O'Keeffe fouled Josh Marsh on the edge of the area. A brilliant save by Jonathan Mitchell from Marsh's spot kick kept the Silkmen in the game. Late in the match Macclesfield made their only two shots on target count when first Joe Ironside scored and then Arthur Gnahoua, to give the Silkmen a 2-1 victory and Mark Kennedy's first win. Arthur Gnahoua's 25-yard curling left-foot shot was voted Goal of the Season. Between the two goals Corey O'Keeffe was dismissed when he was the last Macclesfield defender bringing down Marsh, stopping what could have been a goalscoring opportunity.

With the unsponsored match at the Moss Rose against **Newport County** drawn, the unsponsored Paddy Power trophy was all to play for in this match at Rodney Parade with the advertising boards around the perimeter of the ground blanked out with the exception of Sky Bet, Carabao and Screwfix. The referee, the very experienced Mr Salisbury, had also officiated at the Moss Rose. Played on a poor surface, a single goal in the first half scored by captain Joss Labadie when the Macclesfield defence had failed to clear the ball was sufficient to give the home side victory and the trophy. Throughout the match the Macclesfield goalkeeper Jonathan Mitchell was by far the busier of the two goalkeepers making some excellent saves. The Silkmen often used the long ball resulting in it immediately coming back to them and whilst Arthur Gnahoua and Joe Ironside had a chance each there were few other opportunities carved out although Danny Whitehead blasted the ball over the goal twice.

Completed the month with 28 points in 22<sup>nd</sup> position, six points ahead of the single relegation place.

## **FEBRUARY 2020**

Against **Northampton Town** at the Moss Rose, with Theo Vassell, Miles Welch-Hayes and Emmanuel Osadebe having cancelled their contracts and Theo Archibald telephoning in to say that he was injured only four substitutes were named. This was a poor match for the Silkmen with Northampton in charge from start to finish claiming all three points with a goal from a corner when Macclesfield had failed to clear the ball.

*Harry Hamblin made his MTFC debut.*

The trip to **Leyton Orient** saw the hosts have the most impetus in the first half but Macclesfield came more into the game after the interval, however it was the home side who took the lead in the 75<sup>th</sup> minute. The Silkmen worked hard to find the equaliser which came in stoppage time from substitute Jacob Blyth who latched onto a pass from debutant Donovan Wilson, to hit a low ball home to give the Silkmen a share of the points.

*Shallow Tracey and Donovan Wilson made their debut for MTFC.*

On a very windy Tuesday evening at **Morecambe**, whilst Macclesfield played a 4-3-3 formation, Arthur Gnahoua and Shilow Tracey basically played wide on the wings leaving Joe Ironside isolated as the sole front man. More recent signings were preferred in the midfield and Jacob Blyth was left on the bench yet again despite having grabbed a late equaliser in the previous match. The wind dominated this match. Morecambe played with the wind at their backs in the first half and adapted to the conditions well scoring two goals. Macclesfield failed to adapt and constantly tried to kick the ball long against the wind making little or no distance. Even with the wind behind them in the second half, Macclesfield failed to use it to good effect creating few chances even though they

dominated possession. Morecambe won the match 2-0 to complete the season double and overtook Macclesfield in the league table.

At the Moss Rose Macclesfield reverted to a 5-3-2 formation with **Exeter City** starting well going two goals up in the first 17 minutes. Whilst the visitors put Macclesfield under pressure throughout the half, the home side pulled a goal back through Conor Kirby's looping ball over the 'keeper in the 40<sup>th</sup> minute. Despite playing into gale-force winds and torrential rain in the second half, Macclesfield were the better side and levelled the score through captain Fiacre Kelleher in the 63<sup>rd</sup> minute. Just when it looked as though Macclesfield were going to earn a point against their high-flying opposition Ryan Bowman netted four minutes from time to give the visitors a 3-2 victory and the season double having beaten the Silkmen on the opening day of the campaign.

The re-arranged home match against **Plymouth Argyle** originally scheduled for 21 December when the club were unable to play because of a zero capacity notification was played on Tuesday 18 February. The Silkmen flew out of the blocks and it took Plymouth some 15 minutes to adjust and find their feet. Shilow Tracey scored his first goal for the Silkmen in the 33<sup>rd</sup> minute to give them a deserved lead. The second half was dominated by the visitors who pinned the whole Macclesfield side into their own half for much of the time, often resulting in desperate long clearances only to find the ball returning as there was no one high enough up the pitch to collect. Late in the match Plymouth were awarded a penalty which the Macclesfield goalkeeper saved but the rebound was slotted home by the penalty taker Antoni Sarcevic, the nearest player to the ball. An interesting and exciting match for supporters which gave the Silkmen a point to reach 30 points and move to 22<sup>nd</sup> place.

Macclesfield travelled to Gresty Road supported by 515 fans to take on high flying **Crewe Alexandra** who stamped their mark on the match with two first half goals to give them victory. The first goal was a penalty scored by Chris Porter awarded after Fraser Horsfall tripped Perry Ng on the by-line in the area. The second came when Man of the Match and Huddersfield Town loanee Stephen Walker converted a cross from Jonathan Mitchell to score his first goal for the Railwaymen. Macclesfield had the occasional chance but the hosts were more competitive completing the day in second place leaving Macclesfield second from bottom.

*Ben Stephens made his 50<sup>th</sup> appearance for MTFC.*

*Before the match there was a minute's applause for Harry Gregg, former Manchester United goalkeeper, survivor of the Munich disaster in 1956 and former manager at Crewe Alexandra, who had died recently.*

The match against **Salford City** went ahead after two inspections of the Moss Rose pitch and much work on the ground. This was Salford's first visit to the Moss Rose, saw them playing in the first half with the wind at their backs attacking the John Askey terrace end, but for the first 30 minutes Macclesfield were in the ascendancy. However, when Ash Hunter's cross was carried by the wind over the head of the Macclesfield goalkeeper the visitors took the lead in the 30<sup>th</sup> minute and doubled their score in the 37<sup>th</sup> minute through Richie Towell. Macclesfield struggled in the second half made worse by the fact they were denied more than once when shots were cleared off the line.

## **MARCH 2020**

The return match against **Plymouth Argyle** came next in front of a crowd of 12310 including 111 Macclesfield fans. Before this match Mark Kennedy said that he had a plan which must have included a changed formation to 4-5-1, but unfortunately it did not work with high flying Plymouth winning by three goals without any reply. Macclesfield started well and had opportunities to score including Joe Ironside hitting the post in the opening exchanges, but overall it was the home side

who were rampant and could have ended up with four goals but even though it looked as though the ball had crossed the line it was disallowed.

*The football authorities suspended the pre-match Fair Play handshake between players and officials because of concerns over coronavirus. At the time it seemed to be odd decision when there was lots of body contact during the match and handshakes between players of both sides at the end of the match.*

*In his post-match comments manager Mark Kennedy said that we were outstanding, we were magnificent, on the end of an unbelievably harsh result that we played some outstanding football and our game was brilliant. These comments were in complete contrast to the views of the fans who attended the match and must be taken in the context that in the last three matches the Silkmen had failed to score a single goal, conceded seven and had also not won a league match since 24 January 2020.*

On 13 March 2020 the EFL announced that all matches were to be postponed until 3 April 2020 at the earliest because of an increasing number of clubs were taking steps to isolate players and staff because of the Covid-19 virus. Clubs were, at that time, advised to suspend indefinitely all non-essential activities which include, but were not limited to, player appearances, training ground visits and fan meetings.

Subsequently as the pandemic escalated no further scheduled league matches were played with following Macclesfield fixtures cancelled – five home matches against Walsall, Cheltenham Town, Carlisle United, Stevenage and Swindon Town and four away matches against Bradford City, Mansfield Town, Scunthorpe United and Crawley Town.

Following the appeal to an Independent arbitration panel the original points deduction was reduced to seven (previously 10) with four (previously six) deducted immediately and three suspended (previously four). The adjustment gave Macclesfield 32 points (previously 30) in the league table.

There was further disciplinary hearing following the postponement of the Plymouth match at the Moss Rose due to the issue of a zero capacity certificate and non-payment of wages in February 2020 on 7 May 2020 it was announced that Macclesfield were deducted a further seven points reducing the number of points in the league table to 25 and a position of 23<sup>rd</sup> in the league table.

At another Independent Arbitration Panel Hearing a further two points were deducted with four suspended ahead of the 2020-21 season to be applied in the event of the club committing further breach of Regulation 63.7. The EFL had provided a loan to cover the cost of players' wages for March with the owner signing a document agreeing that the whole of the loan be used for the payment of wages but he only paid 80% initially, clearing the bank account to prevent it being frozen, with the remaining 20% paid at a later date. The result of the points deduction reduced the final tally of points to 23, one point above bottom club Stevenage.

Led by the chairman of Stevenage, the EFL were persuaded to appeal against the decision of the panel as it was considered that the punishment had been too lenient in view of persistent offences (91 in total). On 11 August the EFL's appeal was upheld with the panel adjudicating that the four points which had been previously suspended should be applied with immediate effect. This action placed the club in 24<sup>th</sup> position and relegation to the National League. In the written account of the adjudication it was recorded *'Against a background of similar and escalating misconduct, compounded by a failure to properly use funds provided to discharge debts due to Football Creditors and having thus obtained a sporting advantage, we conclude that the commission erred in its approach by imposing a sanction which was too lenient. An immediate sporting sanction was the only appropriate sanction.'*

Subsequently the club put forward a case for the club to retain membership of the English Football league for the 2020-21 season on the basis that if the National league did not function then Macclesfield Town would not be a member of any league. The EFL Board rejected the request by the club in line with Regulations 7.7A to 7.7C on 17 August making the following statement:

*'In June 2020 Clubs approved Regulations in the event Season 2019-20 was curtailed, which was the position subsequently agreed in League One and Two. These Regulations also contained a provision which gives the Board the power to save the 24<sup>th</sup> placed club in League Two from relegation in circumstances where the Board could be satisfied that there is a competition starting for it to participate in at National league level.*

*The power to reprove brings with it the additional requirement. Where reprovving the 24<sup>th</sup> placed Club in League Two would result in the EFL having more than 72 Member Clubs, approval of 90% of all EFL clubs would be required.*

*The National League informed its clubs on 27 July 2020 of its intention to commence Season 2020-21 on 3 October 2020 and has provided the EFL with further information alongside confirming details relating to how it intends to do so in compliance with all relevant government guidance.*

*Having considered written submissions from the Club, the communication received from the National League, the fact that fixtures in League One and League Two are scheduled to commence on 12 September 2020 and all other relevant matters, the Board is satisfied that competitive fixtures in the National League will commence within a reasonable period of time and that it should not utilise its power to reprove.*

*As a result, Macclesfield Town, the 24<sup>th</sup> placed team in League Two are relegated from the EFL and will play in the National League in Season 2020-21.'*



**Penalty claim at Oldham Athletic 11 January**





**Jacob Blyth celebrating his goal at Leyton Orient 8 February**



**Jak McCourt back in action at Crewe on 22 February**



**Fiacre Kelleher** made a clean sweep of the end of season awards gaining the Supporters' Player of the Year, Players' Player of the Year and Moose Tours Away Player of the Year. He was also the PFA Community Champion for MTFC.

**Arthur Gnahoua's** goal in the home match against Forest Green Rovers on 25 January 2020 was voted 'Goal of the Season'.

**Rocco Fregapane** was the Academy Player of the Year with **Tyler James** voted the Academy Players' Player of the Year.

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 'Manager and Player Profiles', which can be found in the web site [www.silkmenarchives.org.uk](http://www.silkmenarchives.org.uk)

Grateful thanks go to Peter Hilton and Chelsie Wilson for their photographic record of matches and to Bob Trafford, MTFC Media Manager, for his agreement that Macclesfield Town photographs could be used in this chapter.



**PLAYER MOVEMENTS**  
**Season 2019-20**

<b>Player</b>	<b>Signed/Existing Player</b>	<b>Loaned/Left</b>
Theo Archibald	From Brentford July 2019	Left club in May 2020 at his own volition.
Jacob Blyth	From Barrow July 2019	Released June 2020
Nathan Cameron	Existing MTFC player	Released June 2020
Reice Charles-Cook	From Shrewsbury Town August 2019	Released June 2020
Eddie Clarke	Season-long loan from Fleetwood Town	Recalled by parent club on 16 January 2020
Joshua Clegg	MTFC Development team	
Adam Dawson	Existing MTFC player	Initial one month loan to Radcliffe FC in December 2019. Released June 2020
Owen Evans	Season-long loan from Wigan Athletic	Recalled by parent club on 9 January 2020.
David Fitzpatrick	Existing MTFC player	
Rocco Fregapane	MTFC Development team	
Arthur Gnahoua	From Carlisle United August 2019	Released June 2020
Virgil Gomis	Season-long loan from Nottingham Forest	Recalled from loan by parent club on 3 January 2020.
Harry Hamlin	Free transfer from Southampton January 2020	
Jay Harris	From Tranmere Rovers August 2019	To Wrexham January 2020
Sean Holland	MTFC Development team	
Fraser Horsfall	From Kidderminster Harriers July 2019	
Joe Ironside	From Kidderminster Harriers May 2019	
James Tyler	MTFC Development team	
Fiacre Kelleher	From Oxford United July 2019	
Connor Kirby	Season-long loan from Sheffield Wednesday	Returned to parent club June 2020
Trevor Kyobe	MTFC Development team	
Jak McCourt	From Swindon Town May 2019	
Ryan Mealing	MTFC Development team	
Jonathan Mitchell	Loan from Derby County January 2020	Returned to parent club June 2020
Brice Ntambwe	Existing MTFC player	Contract cancelled by mutual consent on 3 January 2020
Corey O'Keeffe	Season-long loan from Birmingham City	Returned to parent club June 2020
Emmanuel Osadebe	From Cambridge United June 2019	Left club January 2020
Jamie Osipitan	MTFC Development team	
James Pearson	Existing MTFC player	Released June 2020
Lewis Price	MTFC Development team	
Michael Rose	Existing MTFC player	Released June 2020
Connor Seymour	MTFC Development team	
Ben Stephens	Existing MTFC player	Released June 2020

Ben Tollitt	Free agent (previously with Blackpool) February 2020	
Shilow Tracey	Loan from Tottenham Hotspur January 2020	Returned to parent club June 2020
Theo Vassell	From Port Vale July 2019	Left club January 2020
Peter Vincenti	Existing MTFC player	Loan to Hereford to January 2020 Released June 2020
Miles Welsh-Hayes	Existing MTFC player	Left club January 2020
Danny Whitehead	Loan from Salford City from January 2020	Returned to parent club June 2020
Donovan Wilson	Free Agent February 2020. Previously with Burgos, Spain	Released June 2020



Macclesfield Town under 21 Team

**OFFICIAL TEAM PHOTOGRAPH  
SEASON 2019-20**



**Back Row**

Jacob Blyth, Corey O'Keeffe, Theo Vassell, Brice Ntambwe, Emmanuel Osadebe, Fraser Horsfall, Virgil Gomis, Eddie Clarke, Theo Archibald

**Middle Row**

Steve Gritt (Assistant Head Coach), Danny Whitaker (Assistant Head Coach), Kyle Fairgrieve (Sports Therapist), Adam Dawson, Joe Ironside, Miles Welch-Hayes, Owen Evans, Reice Charles-Cook, David Fitzpatrick, Michael Rose, Nathan Cameron, Ged Coyne (Kit Man), Keiran Wolland (Goalkeeping Coach), Lewis Mitchell (Sports Analyst)

**Front Row**

James Pearson, Connor Kirby, Fiacre Kelleher, Daryl McMahon (Head Coach), Jak McCourt, Ben Stephens, Jay Harris

**The follow are not included in the Official Team Photograph.**

**Management and Staff**

Sol Cambell (Head Coach – left August 2019), Mark Kennedy (Head Coach – appointed January 2020), Danny Butterworth (Assistant HJead Coach – appointed January 2020), Bryony Woolley (Sports Therapist and Physio), James Turner (Sports Analyst – joined February 2020), Tom Eastwood (Sports Scientist – joined February 2020)

**Players**

Arthur Gnahoua (August 2019), Harry Hamlin (January 2020), Jonathan Mitchell (January 2020), Shilow Tracey (January 2020), Ben Tollitt (February 2020), Peter Vincenti, Danny Whitehead (January 2020), Donovan Wilson (February 2020)