



IT STARTED WITH A GAME OF SUBBUTEO IN 1978 AND LARS LILJEGREN'S INTEREST IN CHARLTON HAS NOT WAVERED SINCE. IAIN LIDDLE SPEAKS TO THE CO-FOUNDER OF 'SWEDISH ADDICKS' AS THE GROUP CELEBRATE A 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Charlton's recent match against Fulham marked a 10-year anniversary for one group of fans – although their history with the club goes a lot further back.

The Swedish Addicks supporters club was still in its embryonic stages when they made their first trip to the UK in October 2004 to watch Alan Curbishley's side draw 1-1 at home to Newcastle United in a top-flight encounter.

As is now customary, the group took the opportunity to ground-hop while in the UK and also sampled the delights on offer at Brisbane Road when Leyton Orient beat Shrewsbury Town 4-1.

In October 2014 the match at Craven Cottage was followed by visits to West Bromwich Albion vs Crystal Palace on Saturday and then Morecambe's game against Exeter City on Sunday.

Co-founder Lars Liljegren and his travelling band of cohorts are more than just football tourists however and their dedication to the Addicks cause rivals supporters from Stockholm to Sidcup.

"Liljegren's personal love affair with the club began as a 10-year-old in 1978 when assigned a random Subbuteo team by his older brother."

Founded officially in 2005, Swedish Addicks follow keenly from their homeland, sponsor players and perform "missionary" work in spreading the gospel about the club wherever they travel.

"We were founded thanks to a popular Swedish sports website where people could have pages for the teams they support," said Liljegren.

"Thanks to that site people like me, who thought they were the only Swedish Charlton supporters, found out there were a few more. I got in contact with Magnus [Persson], who did all the writing and said I was interested in taking part.

"We had great help from Ian Cartwright who worked at the club at the time and had started a project for international supporters clubs. He had a mailing list and sent out a mail to everyone in Sweden to see if they were interested in founding one.

"I got a response from around 20 people and thought if we could get so many so quickly then it was enough to start a branch. We had our founding meeting in 2005 and Ian Cartwright came over to it. Around 13-15 people from a widespread area flew to Stockholm and we went from there.

"We dropped some supporters after relegation from the Premier League, but the hardcore branch was still there and we struggled on. Today we are up to the same figures or even better than we had in the Premier League at about 40."

There is an annual fee to be a Swedish Addicks member with the funds going towards sponsoring at least one player a season and the costs of their website.

Liljegren's personal love affair with the club began

as a 10-year-old in 1978 when assigned a random Subbuteo team by his older brother. He would wait two weeks for copies of English magazines to arrive in order to read the story behind each individual scoreline.

Nowadays the group rely on a variety of websites, fan blogs and online radio to follow the action in real-time.

"We don't have the possibility to see many games live, but one thing our organisation agrees on is that if we can only afford to support one player then we should try to sponsor one who has come through the academy," said Liljegren, whose group are backing Jordan Cousins in 2014/15.

"If there is enough to sponsor left another then we do one who might be more popular and more often in the starting XI so that our name can be shown on the screen.

"I have a friend at work who supports Tottenham and was over a couple of weeks ago. He came to the Charlton game and when he came back he told me he saw our name in the programme which was nice."

Less than a handful of Charlton matches are shown live on Swedish television every season, but Stockholm-based Liljegren takes every opportunity to spread the word about the club during his weekly routine.

"Every Monday morning at 9am at work we have a start-up meeting and this season I have mentioned Charlton games in every one," laughs the public

transport employee.

"People become aware of the club and it is good word of mouth. People know us at Charlton supporters and we tell them about the team.

"Many of them have never heard of the club, but after that when you see them again they will say they are now following Charlton.

"You could say we do missionary work on a voluntary basis."

As an official supporters' group, Swedish Addicks schedule an annual general meeting and the most recent was held in late August.

Assembled in Gothenburg, close to the iconic Poseidon statue, the group listened to Charlton's 1-1 draw at Huddersfield Town on CAFC Player and shared their tales of following the club's fortunes over the previous 12 months.

"I asked a guide from a group of Japanese tourists if she would take a picture of us by the statue and she asked if we were all from England as we supported Charlton," said Liljegren.

"I explained that we were the Swedish supporters' group, but asked how she knew about the club and why she thought we were from London?

"Well my boyfriend and I live in England and he supports Charlton too!" she said. It was funny."

For more information about Swedish Addicks visit www.addicks.se or email Lars@addicks.se.

