

Manifesto for Dons Trust Board Candidacy: Simon Hood

Right, here's the thing: I love Wimbledon as much as the next fan, but I'm not here to give a warm and fuzzy speech. I'm here because I think we need a few things sorted out, and I'm commercially minded enough to get it done. I'm not just a fan; I've spent years growing businesses, creating brands, and driving revenue, and now I want to bring that experience to Wimbledon to keep us moving forward. I've been in marketing and PR for two decades, earned the King's Award for Enterprise, and was named one of the top business minds in the North West. The Trust doesn't just need passion – it needs expertise.

Why Vote for Me?

Here's my pitch. I own John Mason International, a company I took from respectable to impressive. We now hit a £13 million turnover – not too shabby, right? That didn't happen by accident. It happened through strategic planning, careful brand building, and clear-headed marketing – exactly what I think we could use here. Back in 2014, I drove the commercial side at Basingstoke Town FC, got them global PR, TV exposure, and yes, a nice bump in advertising revenue. So, I know how to turn brand awareness into actual revenue. Think of the potential that kind of focus could unlock for us.

Vision for the Dons Trust

Fan-owned clubs like AFC Wimbledon are special. Now, I hear rumblings about a 50.1% ownership amendment. Let me be clear: that's not for me. Selling out majority ownership? Come on, it's Wimbledon, not some money-making machine for outside investors. I get that we need funds, but let's not throw out what makes us unique. Would I entertain 60/40 if it's properly secured and helps us financially? Sure, I'd talk about it. But we're not here to let anyone with deep pockets call the shots. It's about us. This isn't just some business deal – it's a legacy. We need to learn from the past, no one needs reminding about what happened to our club in the past.

Learning from the Past, Focusing on the Future

Returning to Plough Lane was a massive achievement, but let's be honest – we could be doing more with it. Bigger facilities mean bigger opportunities, yet... no end-of-season dinner last year? When was the last major fundraising event? We used to have them regularly at Kingsmeadow, pulling in fans and extra income. Why isn't this happening now? Let's put it this way: a few well-organised events could bring in solid revenue, not to mention rally the fans together. I'd be the first to bring back the classic traditions, events that make us unique and keep us financially stable.

And what about the WISH? They've had to step in before to solve the Seedrs issue. They care about the club's long-term health, so why aren't we working more closely with them? If we're going to make good decisions, let's do it with the right people in the room.

Improving Communication and Accountability

Right, communication. Now, we're improving from the club side, but the Trust itself needs to up its game. When you don't know what's happening, it's hard to feel like part of the journey, isn't it? How about setting clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so you can see exactly what we're working towards? Membership growth, boosting the "We Are Wimbledon" fund, driving the Dons Draw – all good things, all underutilised. There's serious potential there, and yet... where's the action? Members deserve transparency, and setting KPIs makes it easy for you to track the board's progress and hold us accountable. Let's start acting like the community-owned club we claim to be.

Enhancing Fan Experience and Club Spirit

You know what I love about Wimbledon? It's not just the match – it's the experience. You've got the Man of the Match presentations, the fans, the whole energy. It's not just another Saturday football game; it's a culture. These things might seem small, but they're what make us special. I want to preserve those moments while making sure the club is financially smart.

And what about our history? A closer relationship with WISH could help us celebrate where we've come from – maybe through heritage events or archiving our story. Let's keep this club rooted in its values, its history, and its community. We're not just another club, and we shouldn't be run like one either.

Vote for Accountability, Vision, and Community

So, here's the pitch. I'm not just a fan; I'm a commercially minded leader who knows how to grow revenue, engage communities, and keep a brand strong. Voting for me means voting for accountability, vision, and a commitment to preserving Wimbledon's future, while keeping the values that make us who we are. Let's make sure this club belongs to its supporters – today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.