

Meet the newest members of the English Football League – and the owners behind a phenomenal first season

The newest members of the English Football League are toasting an incredible first season in charge of their home town club.

[Jason Stockwood](#) and [Andrew Pettit](#) took the helm of Grimsby Town after carving out incredibly successful careers in business miles away from Blundell Park.

Under [1878 Partners they took the helm](#) from former seafood processing chief John Fenty at Blundell Park, as the club was relegated from League Two.

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Having bounced back at the first time of asking – with the team clinched three successive play-off matches in extra time – they've been credited with galvanising support, creating the culture and backing manager Paul Hurst who had trodden the path back with the Mariners before.

Victory over Solihull Moors at the London Stadium, followed the scalps of Notts County and Wrexham on the road in a dramatic extension of the season proper having finished sixth.

Cheered on the pitch as club captain Giles Coke thrust the National League Play-Off trophy on them as they thanked the travelling fans, Mr Stockwood said: "We just wanted to make sure that we stabilised the club and use that as a platform to kick on. We thought we had it in us to get promoted, but it really is a fairytale.

“To go through three play-off games and be behind in all three and come through all of them is unbelievable.”



Watching training: Jason Stockwood, left, and Andrew Pettit at Cheapside, where investments have been evident.

(Image: Jon Corken)

Mr Pettit added: “Solihull were probably the best team we have played all year they move the ball really well and are a very organised team, so credit to the Grimsby players for pulling through.”

Upon taking control of the club, the pair quickly got to work in instilling the business values that have seen them become successful entrepreneurs in their own right. Improvements to the club’s infrastructure have clearly affected results on the pitch.

They also backed Hurst in the transfer window, and when the team needed improvements due to loans ending and injuries, the necessary pieces were there to ensure the team did not falter.

Mr Stockwood added: "The things that matter to us are high work ethic, togetherness and spirit, which this team encapsulates perfectly and has got it in spades.

"It makes it so much sweeter. Football is great for the drama and the stories it creates, and the way he [Hurst] has fought through it all is brilliant.

"Also, the way he has added to the team throughout the season to make them stronger. For example, Jordan (Maguire-Drew – match-winning goalscorer) coming in March improved the team massively when it was needed.

"He has shown outstanding character this season, and he deserves this promotion for the work he has put in throughout the year."

So who are the guiding lights of the newest members of the EFL?



Jason Stockwood, left, and Andrew Pettit, with chief executive Debbie Cook.

(Image: Jon Corken)

Business Live has profiled both.

Technology entrepreneur [Mr Stockwood](#) led online insurance company Simply Business to a buy-out with US giant in a deal worth more than £400 million. He now invests in other companies, and had previously held senior roles with Trailfinders, Lastminute.com, Travelocity Business and Match.com.

When it came to the Blundell Park boardroom, [Mr Pettit](#) appeared the perfect partner. It has been described as 'serendipity'.

Son of the revered Grimsby butcher, with the [family's favoured bangers making a return this season](#), he chose international law over pork loins, leading him to specialise in property then financial markets, before launching his own real estate private equity business.

With the Mariners in the mire, Tom Shutes, a philanthropist with vague connections to the town, had spelled his vision for taking over the club out in a Grimsby Telegraph article. It led Mr Pettit to contact him, outline his background and interest – and with Mr Stockwood introduced, the pair were introduced.

Mr Shutes stood back, Mr Fenty was bought out, and the rest has become a rollercoaster ride back to the football league.

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