

Jordan Davies (07 August 2015)

## The Season Begins

2014-15 was a case of so near yet so far for The Silkmen. A draw at Torquay on the final day of the season meant John Askey's men missed out on a place in the end of season playoffs by just one point.

In the top five for the vast majority of the season, it was a 3-1 loss in the 44th game of a 46 game season away at Forest Green that allowed Rovers to nip ahead of The Silkmen and into fifth spot, a position Macc couldn't quite reclaim.

Solid at the back all campaign, John Askey's side conceded the same amount of goals (46) as league champions Barnet did, but it was putting the ball in the oppositions net that ultimately scuppered their chances of promotion, only netting 60 times, compared to The Bees 94 goals.

It's been a fairly busy close season at Moss Rose with a number of players leaving and signing but Macc will hope that promotion back to league football can be achieved this season.

## Players - Signings

*Jack Sampson* (Striker from Morecambe): 'Sammo' has resigned for Macc after impressing during a brief loan spell at The Moss Rose last season, most notably when he scored a brace in a 2-2 draw at Halifax.

*Curtis Haynes-Brown* (Defender from Lowestoft Town): Haynes-Brown has been on Macclesfield's radar for a while now having trained with The Silkmen last summer and has said when he was away from the club 'all he wanted to do was play for John Askey'.

*Tony Diagne* (Defender from Lincoln City): Rejoins the club where he enjoyed a spell between 2011 and 2013. Once scored a 40 yard free-kick for The Silkmen in a shock FA Cup 2-0 away win at League One side Swindon Town.

*Neill Byrne* (Defender from AFC Telford United): Byrne has made the step up to full-time football from relegated Telford where he was The Bucks player of the season in 2014-15.

*Kristian Dennis* (Striker from Stockport County on a season long loan): Dennis is rejoining the club where his football career began as a youngster. Deemed surplus to requirements at Edgeley Park, Askey has faith he can deliver the goals for The Silkmen.

*Theo Bailey-Jones* (Winger from Wrexham): Another who is coming back to The Moss Rose for a second spell with the club. TBJ appeared on loan for Macc towards the end of last season and said he 'couldn't wait to come back and sign again'.

*William Boyle* (Defender from Huddersfield): The 19-year-old has joined from Championship side Huddersfield on a two-month youth loan and can play at centre back or left back.

*Danny Whitehead* (Midfielder from West Ham): The former Stockport County attacking midfielder was released by Premier League West Ham at the end of last season and after impressing during pre-season, Askey was quick to sign the 21-year-old.

## Players - Out:

*Rhys Taylor* (To Newport County, undisclosed fee): Taylor has made the step up to the Football League after excelling between the sticks for Macc last season. Notably saved five

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penalties in the 2014-15 season.

*Scott Barrow* (To Newport County, undisclosed fee): The Welsh full-back is joining Taylor in making the move to The Exiles after a strong debut season at The Moss Rose. Scored a goal against Alfreton where he ran all the way from deep in his own half to slot past The Reds goalkeeper.

*Matthew Barnes-Homer* (To Aldershot Town, free transfer): Barnes-Homer is a club legend after scoring both goals in The Silkmen's 2-1 FA Cup win over Cardiff City in 2013 but was not offered a deal for 2015-16 by Macclesfield.

*Waide Fairhurst* (To Torquay United, free transfer): Fairhurst was The Silkmen's top scorer with ten goals last season. Some of them spectacular, most notably against Kidderminster from the halfway line, but like Barnes-Homer, wasn't offered a new deal as John Askey looked to change his front line.

*Adriano Moke* (To Wrexham, undisclosed fee): Moke disappointed Macc fans by rejecting the offer of a new deal and leaving for rivals Wrexham. Especially disappointing as The Silkmen resurrected his career from part-time obscurity.

### **KEY PLAYERS:**

*Paul Turnbull* the Silkmen's captain always leads by example, hard-working, determined and intelligent, 'Bully' is talismanic in the middle of Macclesfield's midfield. The best piece of business the club have done all summer is retaining his services.

*George Pilkington* Last season's player of the season had a variety of players alongside him in the heart of the defence but remained a constant himself. A model of consistency, Pilkington adds calm and composure to the back-line and hardly puts a foot out of place.

*Danny Rowe* Will shoulder the burden of being the teams most creative spark in 2015-16 especially now Moke has departed but that shouldn't faze the tricky left-winger. Rowe has the ability to take on defenders with ease and he possesses a powerful left-foot shot.

### **POSSIBLE LINE-UP:**

GK: Branagan DEFENCE: Halls, Pilkington, Byrne, Haynes-Brown MIDFIELD: Lewis, Turnbull, Whitaker STRIKERS: Holroyd, Dennis, Rowe

### **PREDICTION:**

With Askey at the helm, and Turnbull wearing the armband, Macc can overachieve again this season but replacing those who have departed will prove just too tough an act for The Silkmen to achieve their dream of a promotion against all odds.

### **VERDICT: 7th**