

City Swiss Club

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CITY SWISS CLUB.

DINNER to Sir Stanley Ford Rous, C.B.E. at the Dorchester Hotel on Tuesday, 14th September, 1954.

The Orchid Room presented its usual festive and cosy appearance when a company of about 60 (members and their friends) sat down to enjoy the Dorchester fare and also what proved to be a very pleasant evening.

The loyal toasts to H.M. the Queen and "La Suisse" having been duly acknowledged, the President, Mr. R. Pfenninger rose to welcome the guests, amongst whom he singled out Dr. E. Bernath who, notwithstanding his numerous engagements, shows a sustained interest in the activities of the Club. He greeted also Mr. René Faessler, Secrétaire de Légation, who has recently taken up his duties in London, and our old "habitués" Messrs. R. J. Keller and G. Lepori whom we are always so glad to see at our meetings. Mr. Keller is shortly proceeding to Berne where he has been called to an important post at the Département Politique and whilst we wish him every success in this new assignment, we are sorry to lose in him a faithful member and a charming personality who has endeared himself to all during his stay in London.

Mr. Pfenninger then said how proud he was to introduce our guest of honour, Sir Stanley Rous, C.B.E., whose name is so familiar to all those who, like ourselves, are football fans. — As we know, he has been for quite a long time the Secretary of the Football Association, an old and venerable institution but apart from that, he is interested in everything appertaining to physical education, having written several books on the subject. He has travelled all over the world and was on the point of leaving for Copenhagen where Switzerland is playing a Danish team.

Our President then recalled memories of his youth when — like many of us — he fancied himself as an ace centre forward or a crack goalkeeper, although experience — or the lack of it — chastened him somewhat in his later years. — He added that the game should be played as a game for the love of it and that all sportsmen should endeavour to maintain the spirit of comradeship with the sole aim and hope that the best man may win.

Sir Stanley Rous, who was greeted with warm applause stated that he was fascinated to note that the City Swiss Club was founded 98 years ago, because the Football Association celebrated its 90th birthday last year. He told the story of one of its members (now 85 years of age) who, when asked what he did with himself nowadays, replied that every morning, when sipping his first cup of tea at 8 a.m., he perused the "Times" and if his name did not appear in the


obituary column he knew that he was still of this world and proceeded to get up ("Se non è vero, è ben trovato!").

Sir Stanley mentioned that he had been invited in the first place for the 5th October next but as he will be in Moscow on that date, our function had to be brought forward as he wanted to make sure to meet us.

Reverting to the recent championships in Switzerland, he thought this would be rather stale news as they had been thoroughly reported in the Press and on Television. He would therefore confine his remarks to the relations between our two countries and admitted that he nurtured quite a sentimental feeling about his sporting association with Switzerland.

He remembered the days when he went there to referee his first match between Italy and Switzerland in Zurich. He met with a delightful reception by Mr. Gassmann who is now Secretary of F.I.F.A. but in spite of it all, he had to award the decision to the Italians as he could not have done otherwise by any manner of means. On that occasion however, he learned a lot as to how referees should be treated and paid tribute to the way in which the Swiss entertain their guests. When the National Anthem was played, he naturally thought it was his own and considered it a great compliment, only to find out subsequently that both the British and the Swiss Anthems are identical in tune! After the match, there was a reception at the St. Gotthard hotel, where he was presented with the traditional watch. This pleased him very much but it appears that the same procedure was repeated many times in later years and he is now the proud possessor of a selection of Swiss watches, although he tried to hint on several occasions that some other object (such as cuff-links or studs, etc.) would be more acceptable.

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When the F.A. celebrated their 50th anniversary, they decided to make a gift to Switzerland of Wedgwood china with appropriate designs of football scenes. — This was despatched from the factory at Stoke in a large box which somehow got lost in transit. Detectives were called in to trace the missing box, which was eventually found at the Legation where the Chef had stowed it away in the cellar, thinking it was a consignment of cheese from the homeland!

Sir Stanley then mentioned that at one time when he was in Switzerland, the British team played two extra matches at Bellinzona and Schaffhouse. In the latter town, a poll had just been taken and by a small minority, the creation of a new sports ground had been defeated. When the match took place, there was practically no room in Scaffhouse to accommodate all the visitors from neighbouring districts, so much so that people were sitting in trees and on the roof tops to get a glimpse of the game. As a result, a fresh poll was taken and this time, the building of a sports ground was agreed to by a huge majority. The Football Association rightly consider that they have kept a warm corner in their hearts for the Schaffhouse Sport Platz.

Coming back to the world championships, Sir Stanley praised the Swiss for having undertaken the task of organising these events, the total receipts having reached over 5½ million Swiss francs against an expenditure of about 4 million francs. He hoped the F.A. would secure some share of the "kitty".

At the reception held at the Bellevue Hotel in Berne, Sir Stanley said that the friendliness engendered there had to be seen to be believed. All nations gathered together in the most cordial atmosphere and the Russians, as well as the Hungarians were amongst the jolliest of the lot. Football is indeed a language which is understood by all peoples of this earth, as it is the best teacher of fairplay, observance of the referee's decisions and the essence of the time-honoured formula of "playing the game".

In his opinion, the administration of all sports in Switzerland has contributed in a large measure to the good fellowship which obtains between players and

spectators at all these international meetings and he is more than ever convinced that the practising of games — arts, music and other similar pursuits are a means of enriching people deeply and vitally whilst promoting a better understanding all round.

Sir Stanley closed by stating that he had received many honours for work done in the international field but the words which fill him with pride are those of a toast in Berne to "Sir Stanley Rous, ce grand ami de la Suisse".

The end of this speech was the signal for an ovation which had hardly subsided when Mr. Pfenninger rose once more to express to our guest the members' gratitude for the pleasure of his company and their thanks for the nice things he had said about Switzerland. He went on to say that above all we Swiss owe a great deal to Great Britain in the realm of sport. It is in this country that sports of all kinds have been shown in their best light at all times and we must remain true to this ideal. It is on this happy note that this intimate little "soirée" came to an end shortly after 9.30 p.m.

C.G.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique

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on Tuesday, September 28th, 7 p.m. at the
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Joint-director, Secrétariat des Suisses à l'étranger.

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on Wednesday, 20th October, 1954, at 7.30 p.m.
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