

Season Ticket Feedback

Background

As the result of the response to the new Season Ticket packages for the 2007-2008 season, it was decided to undertake a quick survey of Quinssa members in order to develop a better understanding of the full range of attitudes and feed that information back to the Club.

Members were asked to respond to questions on three issues, as follows:

1. Price increases
2. Re-categorising of seats
3. Concession pricing of re-categorised seats

Within hours of the questionnaire being sent to members, the Club decided to revise their decision on concession pricing for existing season ticket holders in re-categorised seats. Therefore, although the comments and scores are provided in this document, it is no longer necessary to make further comment.

A total of 70 members completed the questionnaire, although one provided only comments rather than a "score". The full questions are provided below, along with an analysis of the scores and a summary of the comments received. The full, unedited comments are contained within the appendix.

Summary of Findings

Price Increase

1. There is significant concern that the increases are way above inflation and certainly far greater than many supporters receive in relation to salary increases.
2. Those who believe that the increases are "reasonable", however, feel that it is necessary if the Club is to continue to grow and invest in new facilities and players.
3. Some believe that the increased is justified only if the increased income will result in the signing of world-class players.
4. There is some concern that the benefits of a certain category are gradually being devalued, e.g. guaranteed car parking.
5. The uncertainty of European competition is also an issue, although this has since been clarified.

Re-categorisation of Seats

6. Re-categorisation of seats is less well received than the overall price increase because it is perceived as totally unfair on those whose seats have been re-categorised.

7. The one year price freeze is welcome, however, many affected will not take advantage due to the fact that if they cannot justify the increased price the following year they need to find a new seat in the original categorisation immediately, otherwise the best seats will be taken the following year.
8. It is seen as a “stealth increase” as with the large annual increase discussed above, a potentially large increase for the 2008-2009 renewal is anticipated.
9. Communication and justification of these changes come in for most criticism. Firstly, those affected were not informed until the renewal forms came through the post, and secondly, the explanation that they were being “upgraded”, which most people would normally interpret as an increased benefit for the same price, rather than an increase in price for the same benefit.
10. Although there have been precedents for re-categorisation in recent seasons, e.g. Premier seats in the old West Stand were priced as Gold seats in the Lexus Stand, as well as approximately 5-6 years ago when many Club seats were re-categorised as Premier seats, the response from those affected this time is possibly the result of increasing ST sales and a concern that it will not be easy to obtain “good” seats in their existing category.

General Comments

Criticisms generally focus on two related themes:

11. There is a perception that the Club is not showing loyalty to those ST holders who had shown loyalty during the relegation season. Above-inflation price rises are understood by many to be a financial/commercial reality, but many less respondents accept the arguments for re-categorisation.
12. Communication and justification for the price increases was not well managed, and the “forced” explanation for re-categorisation made the problem worse. Many are now questioning whether the relationship that was developed between the Club and supporters during the relegation year is now being discarded. Supporters now see themselves treated as purely revenue generators, rather than supporters with a close attachment with the Club. There is a fine balance that needs to be maintained.

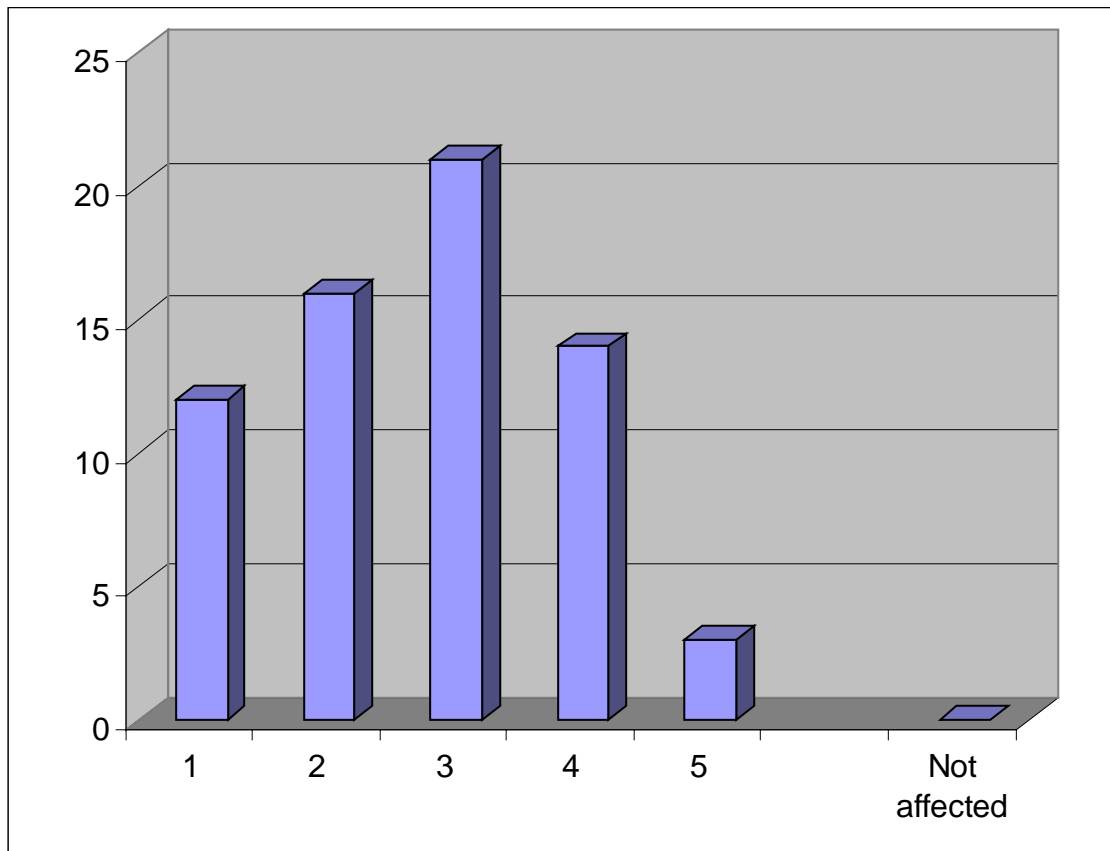
Questions and Analysis

Q1. Price Increase

These appear to be year on year Joker 8%, Jester 16%, Tryline/Touchline/North 14%, Club 9%, Premier 12% Gold 8%

Taking into account the package and the price you are being asked to pay for it next season, the growth in our sport and club, how do you view this increase on a scale of 1 - 5?

(Unreasonable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Reasonable)

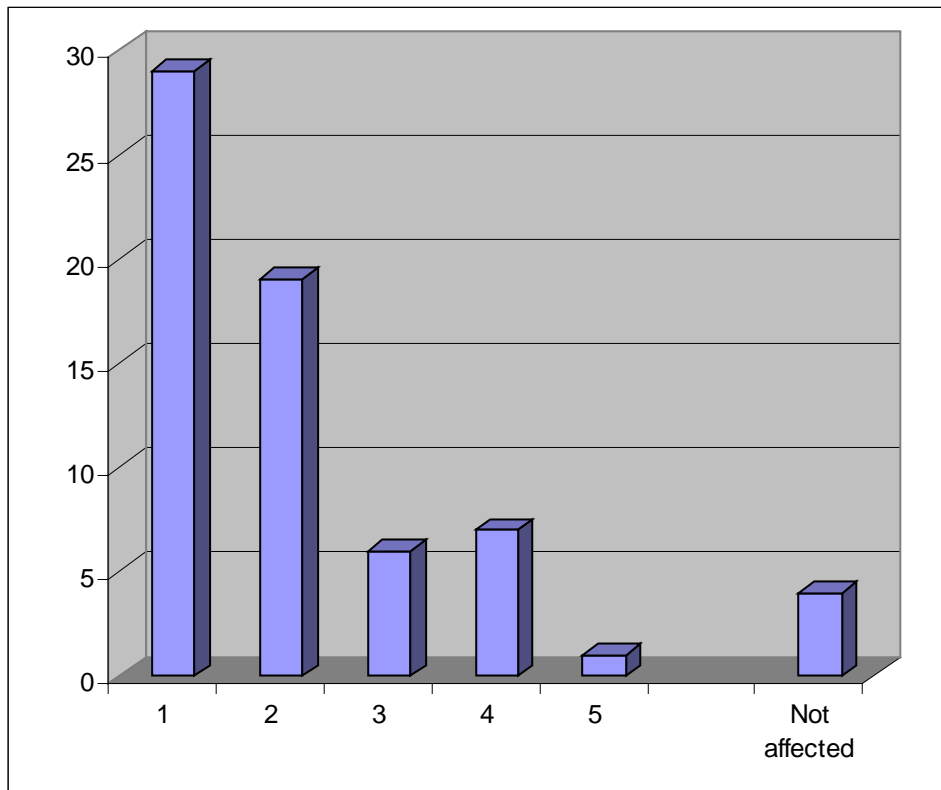


Q2. Re-categorising of seats

A number of seats are being re-categorised next season albeit with a year's grace in upgrade increase.

The justification appears to be a mixture of aligning the stands and a shortage of gold and premier seats

(Unreasonable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Reasonable)



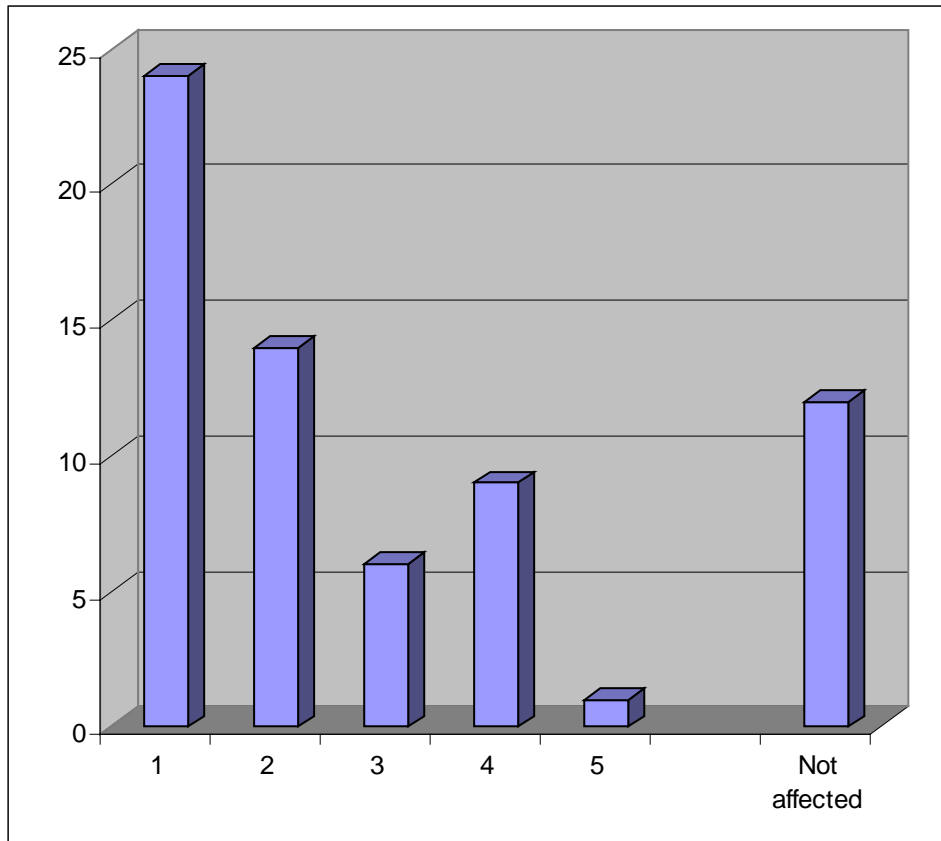
N.B. the respondent stated they were not affected and did not provide a score.

Q3. Concession pricing

The Club promotes its U.16 and U.21 ticket policy and the U.16 prices have stayed the same (or a small £5 increase in the Joker section) and the U.21 category now applies to Touchline/Tryline and North.

However there are no concession in the premier seats and supporters re-categorised into these have a potential large price increase next year.

(Unreasonable) 1 2 3 4 5 (Reasonable)



N.B. the respondent stated they were not affected and did not provide a score.

Comments

The Club has now addressed the concerns about concession pricing in re-categorised seats.

Appendix – Comments

Q1. Price Increase

Comments

1. Reasonably big hike - over & above inflation rate. Though it never made me think for a second about downgrading seat or not renewing.
2. I'm responsible for a block booking of 26 Seats – We'll be back under 20 next season.
3. I think also it is a good indication that when we see the quality of the additions to the squad, then we are going to be very pleased. If I knew who was coming then I may well have answered as 5, but we don't and we don't have to until the end of the season. It is not as if we are being asked to commit our payment until end of May, when we will know the majority of the squad for next year and should have a better idea about next years European fixtures.
4. Even though my ticket has only gone up around 8%, this increase is not in line with other annual increases, for example in salaries.
5. With the uncertainty of the European / Anglo Welsh competitions, the price hike in my area (not taking into account the re categorisation) is quite excessive (12%).
6. Although 8% doesn't sound a huge amount another £50 extra to last year's cost is going to hurt personally! Also, it seems to be spiralling upwards quite rapidly and at this rate a Gold ST is going to be hitting £600-700 before too long and I'm not sure I can justify paying that from my earnings (which incidentally aren't going up at the same rate!), so would have to consider changing seats or buying on a match by match basis. Also concerned that Europe will not go ahead next season and that as a result I will be paying £545 for only 11 competitive games, if you understand my logic. I.e. at the moment I can just about justify £34 per game for 16 matches including five cup games, but would be very annoyed if some or all of these are replaced by "friendlies" or "show piece" matches since that wouldn't represent value for my £34 per match as far as I am concerned and essentially pushes up the per match cost of the competitive matches up to nearly £50 which is NOT reasonable! Would rather have a reduction on the cost of my season ticket should that happen (but I know that is not very likely!!!). I guess the key is to wait until Europe settles itself out or it is getting close to the deadline before renewing, whichever is first.
7. We all understand that prices have to increase, but usually if something goes up well above the inflation rate, there is something to show for it. This season, there are no indications of team changes, new signings, or anything else.
8. A 14% rise is ridiculous, if I get a 2% pay rise I'll be lucky, has ME lost contact with reality, has he not read about people with less disposable income.
9. Although a little high an increase of 10% was expected
10. The increases are way above inflation.

11. An increase of nearly 3 times the RPI is really rather high, especially when added to previous seasons over inflation rises!
12. I gave it a 3 only because we don't know how the money is being spent ('top-class new players': I'd give it a 5 – 'get by with what we've got and pay for a new South Stand' as per relegation season: I'd give it a 1).
13. If it helps improve facilities/the squad, I don't mind paying more. 12% does seem rather high though.
14. Compared to other Premier Clubs it is excellent value.
15. They have raised the price above inflation and cut the benefits, I have had to stop my kids season tickets as we can no longer afford them, how this helps the club with new and up coming fans I do not know.
16. This is an increase of £26 in one season, which isn't too bad. If we were in more expensive seats we would find the increase too much. With the increase in inflation, salaries do not appear to have kept pace and any more than this would be unacceptable. However, as we are both being made redundant within the next 6 months and felt that it would be better to stay with the basic North pricing.
17. This is just a tad above inflation and although I will be renewing, others may not. It depends on whether the club wants to fill the ground with STHs or ad-hoc sales - I think numbers of STHs will be reduced on the back of this increase.
18. In view of current situation with Europe this is a big hike, also when you consider allocation of Intl.tickets, it's getting to the point that joining a lower league club will give us a min. 02 tickets on ordering. Also some clubs give concessionary rates for over 60's - Quins is 65 plus. If you have a captive audience you do what you want - it will backfire in the end!
19. The cost for an adult has gone from £199 (when we were in division one) to £345 in two years, with fewer meaningful games. Kids' tickets have gone from £55 to £105. You can argue about justification until your blue in the face. The bottom line is: I'm not going to pay it.
20. If we want better players some one is going to have to pay.
21. The timing of these price increases without any current plan for either valid competitive European rugby next season, or the confirmation of any signings (or indeed confirmation of certain players retention) does make me suspicious of the club's attitude towards its season ticket holders, and its plans for next season. Despite having had my current season tickets for 5 years, I have no intention of renewing until I know what those plans are, and may decide not to bother at all. The club appears to be looking to exploit all those who attend matches, currently giving poor and reduced service in all "off pitch" areas. This season I have stopped parking in the Rosebine, stopped buying food, and in the last month even stopped trying to get served in the bar.
22. Steep rise, but perhaps unsurprising given the increased popularity / crowds attending. The demand is there; so they are going to milk a bit. But, my big issue is that they want us to pay for something when we do not know what we are getting. Will European competitions go forward next season?

23. At this moment in time with no big name announcements etc and noting inflation levels far below the 12% increase in the premier area where we sit I think a 12% increase is not really a reasonable rise especially noting the fact that there are less games etc this season. It may be more acceptable if there was an explanation behind it or several big names coming to the club, each year the club refrains from making announcements on who's joining etc but expects the tickets to be purchased ahead of this, putting the pricing up way above inflation without anything seemingly behind the need to do this does not put the club in a positive light with me.
24. Quins are taking a commercial view on this, not surprising for a commercial organisation.
25. Now priced out of seat after all these years of building up to it.
26. Assuming that this above inflation rise is geared towards improving the squad, the academy and the facilities.
27. I was one of the people at the fans forum and understood my ticket price was to be frozen, but has in fact risen and frozen at the early bird price, with a prospect of a massive hike for 2008\09.
28. If the price increases much more, I'm off to watch Blackheath! I'm also annoyed at the small-print which says that the Club won't guarantee a parking place to Gold ticket holders if Rosebine is closed – if I pay for a parking place, I expect to get one!
29. Despite ME's explanation, the amount that supporters are being asked to cough up represents a significant increase year on year and this, coupled with the overpriced options within the ground and travel costs, pushes regular attendance near to the limit of affordability. This year is a world cup year so we are being asked to pay over the odds to watch second-string players. Finally, other clubs have not seen the need to increase to such a level (Wasps tried it last year and have suffered as a result). Indeed, some have held prices or even reduced them, taking into account the whole package. Again, this is hitting the less well off and there are other ways of raising revenue (although not as easily). Communication from the club has been appalling. You would not expect to pay a 13% rise in council tax without a full explanation of why the extra is needed and where it is being spent. As ME says - it is all about value and, yes, Quins has a nice stadium and a relatively good match day experience, but it is certainly not the best value in comparison to our nearest equivalent at Northampton. Food and drink at the Stoop are both poor in quality and value. We have decided that we will renew this year, but we were very close to not doing so. The business side of the club no longer has our unswerving loyalty and we will actively seek to recover the extra costs by cutting back elsewhere. This has not been a good move by the management of the club, who we now view with the same suspicion as we would MPs, Estate Agents and Double Glazing salesmen.
30. The prices are way above inflation and these price rises are getting bigger year-on-year. Are we having to bolster the faltering RL side?
31. Although a little high an increase of 10% was expected

Q2. Re-categorising of seats

Comments

1. Challenges the 'Loyalty' from the club in my opinion. Increase in price should be for new purchases only, not renewals.
2. Club is reacting to demand. They can sell premium for more, so have re-categorised some seats to be able to do this.
3. This looks like a 'moving of goalposts' purely to increase revenue and there is no justification.
4. Understand the reasons behind this from the ' perspective, but to disrupt existing season ticket holders and members shows little regard for the existing fan base. Appreciate the years grace in the price, but means that I will have to find another seat next year, which may be difficult as they will be a lot of STHs in the same position.
5. I won't get into a massive diatribe about this, but suffice to say that I feel terrible for those who have been re-categorised and if it was me I would be seriously questioning my commitment, loyalty and disbelief in the club. Perhaps those seats affected will have a much better view next season and that is the reason for the increase in prices. Mark Evans is a miracle worker after all.
6. Once again, normally if something increases in price, there is something to show for it. In this case, it is simply the re-classification of an existing seat, and one, which is inferior to the equivalent gold in the west stand. Freezing the price increase for a year is a good start, but it means that if the choice is made at the end of the 07/08 season not to pay the higher price, the chance of a reasonable seat being available for the 08/09 season is likely to be low. We are currently in Premier, about to be rezoned to Gold. Rather than wait to 08/09 and risk being pushed out to the 22, we have already taken the decision to renew in block AF, in a seat that is still classified as Premier and is on the 10m line. This decision was taken with mixed feelings; if the club now go back on their plans, we've lost our favoured seats. On the other hand, moving from almost on the half way line out to the 22 in 08/09 is not acceptable. It's a tough call.
7. If you re-categorize, at least give people fair notice.
8. I can see why the club are trying to do this, but as the only real difference is the inclusion of membership, billed as a "freebie" I do not think the price rise of something like £130, more than the cost of membership is justified. Perhaps a separate category would have been more appropriate where some seats in the North Stand can be purchased with inclusive membership but for a more modest £50 - £70 increase. I do not feel that the view from my seat has improved by £130 on top of the standard increases. The one year price freeze is obviously welcome for this year, but is likely to see me moving from the North Stand in the following season.
9. I this is unacceptable, as of next year I will have to pay almost 1/3 more to sit in the same seat or pay the same to move to a seat with a far worse view.

10. Price rises by stealth. We were there for the club in ND1 - they appear determined to make the loyalty wall a 'wall of remembrance' - those who used to watch Quins!
11. Although not affected we think it is 'unfair' on the long term supporter and particularly unfriendly if there is a family involved. Whilst we can understand that the club, as a business, has to maximise its revenue earning potential it does seem that this is perhaps one step too far!
12. I don't object in principle to re-categorising but I think some of the premier tickets now gold are pretty poor. My premier seat is right on the halfway line and is arguably of gold quality but is barely under cover and it does get wet if it rains hard. The two rows in front are not even covered. How can they be gold standard? I think there is now far too wide a quality span over gold seats.
13. Appallingly badly handled and communicated. Significant 'own goal', even when TC tried to explain it. Makes club look at best educationally sub-normal ("this is in response to demand for more Gold seats" – they don't become Gold seats by being reclassified, Tony) and at worst cynically commercial ("this is a business now – sod off to the cheaper seats if you don't like it. Welcome in, all you well-heeled new supporters").
14. Much better would have been to sub-divide areas into additional categories (e.g. Premier 1 and Premier 2) which allows people to benefit from being in a less attractive area than the next area along, not be stung with 'best seat prices' for 'less than best seats'. Then apply whatever are reasonable overall % increases for each of the areas, reasonable being determined in the context of what the money's being used for (we deserve to be told this – and the truth, not New Labour style spin from Evans) and, then give a year's grace as icing on that cake.
15. The year's grace is OK as far as it goes, but it's been very badly communicated and misses the main point.
16. Outrageous.
17. If I wish to stay in this seat for 2008/9 the increase will be huge and I will be unable to get a Senior Citizen reduction (unless this changes) If I decide to downgrade back to Club the better seats will already have been taken and I will have a poor choice from what is left.
18. We are still waiting to receive the information officially including the price increase for next season. We telephoned Quins last week to find we are not affected by the re-categorisation (by one row) but find it unacceptable that people only found out their seating has been re-categorised along with their ST renewal form. The club should have warned ST holders beforehand this was going to happen.
19. As the club states that renewal will guarantee keeping your seat, this is a little harsh on STHs who cannot afford the increase. Will the club guarantee a seat nearby or will the unfortunate fan find themselves at the 'back of beyond' because the seats in the immediate vicinity are already allocated?
20. Money grabbing - they should only re-categorise seat when current occupant vacates seat.

21. Even though it doesn't affect me, it looks pretty sick to start trying to charge premium prices for what you've previously admitted is a second-class seat. I can tell you, even at one remove, it leaves a really bad taste.
22. Extremely poorly managed.
23. Although not effected I cannot believe the club has done this to its loyal fan base, it does not make any concessions for families in any of the premier etc seating areas, it's claims to be providing better seating because of demand is laughable, reclassifying a seat as gold etc is just a way for the club to make more money, the seat view has not changed from season to season, the seat has not got suddenly better, this is purely a way for the club to make more money and it would be better being honest about it rather than trying to give unjustifiable reasons for it. If the club needs more money, then they should spread the costs out across the ground instead of force loyal fans out of the seats they have enjoyed for several seasons.
24. It is a bit of a con, because prices are going up but with nothing extra for those affected.
25. Assuming that the new "gold" areas are really excellent seats... otherwise it could/will be construed as a "con" by new purchasers.
26. Totally unreasonable - the club has done well this season, but not enough to justify these increases. Unless we are buying some really big name players. I notice WASPS most expensive season ticket is 468, and look at their squad. I enjoy the view I get from my seat, but will have to consider moving to a club seat, and not have such a good view.
27. Although I'm not immediately affected, I view this as pure profiteering and a devaluation of the worth of my Gold ticket. The Club is sailing precious close to the wind in my opinion, and if it exploits supporters any more, I'll want nothing to do with it.
28. Fair, parity between east and west costs, same price for same view – east has the sun AND the toilets!
29. That 18 months notice has been given is welcomed.
30. Essentially it is akin to ethnic cleansing! Strong I know but it is not fair to those who have had those seats for many years. I proposed that the re zoned prices should only apply to new st holders and that those who had their seats for many years stayed at the same zone that they originally bought.
31. Changing the name of a seat does not improve the view from it or justify a huge increase in price. People do not want to pay Gold money for a seat with a Premier view.
32. The 'justification' is nonsense. Gold and Premier are categorised in that way because of the seat location and the view you get from that seat. Calling an old Club seat 'Premier' does not give you a 'Premier' view!
33. I this is unacceptable, as of next year I will have to pay almost 1/3 more to sit in the same seat or pay the same to move to a seat with a far worse view.

Q3. Concession pricing

Comments

1. It forces families to move to the cheaper, and therefore not so good, seats. Goes against the 'family' ethos in my opinion.
2. They are offering concessions in the stadium. Premium seats can be sold for more - unfair to expect these seats to be sold for less.
3. Although it does not affect me, it affects people I know. If you were Premier and rezoned to Gold, there's no difference; there never were any concessions in Premier. However, for those in Club and beyond, there is an issue if they have been rezoned. It literally marginalises people who cannot afford to remain in their seats due to the rezoning. If the object of the club is to make money, fine. If it is to encourage long-term participation, then it's not so good, as families who are marginalised may decide not to come any longer. There is an aspirational path, but it doesn't help now.
4. I was affected two years ago when my club seat was re-categorised to Premier. My daughter has paid full price since then.
5. Very poor, considering that there part of the Gold package includes membership which is advertised as worth £110 for an adult and £55 as a child – BUT there is NO discounted in the package price! We are also in a dilemma having now to consider what we do for our son in the future, as although he is still a babe in Arms at present (5 Months Old) by the end of next season he will be toddling and restless so we have a few choices to make buy him a seat, at £535!!!! Next to us if available – Leave him with his grandparents on a Saturday Afternoon (probably love it!), move to cheaper seats or stop coming to the stoop...
6. I expect, judging by the chaotic announcement, the club never even thought of it.
7. I think it's unreasonable only because it comes about through this deeply flawed 'reclassification'. I have always had Gold debenture seats and know there are no concessions in that category (fair enough). But to 'reclassify' is appalling. The proposed fix above (to sub-divide areas into additional categories rather than reclassifying) would have avoided this problem.
8. I either will have to pay almost double what I am paying now or go for much poorer seats. Or decide not to be a STH any more.
9. We can understand the club not willing to give the standard U16 and U21 pricing to the premier seating however, they could have made a 'special' U16 and U21 price for the premier area. This could be a discount for a premier seat. There are ST holders in those seats who sit with their parents or friends and can afford to pay an increase. Those who cannot afford should sit elsewhere as we do.
10. If the club increases prices by a large percentage for adults, I think a % reduction or freeze for U16/21, wherever they may sit, is justified. It depends on whether the club truly promotes to its youth or the objective is to fill the seats with full paying adults. I have my doubts.
11. Money grabbing.

12. The absence of kids' discounts already kept me out of the best seats anyway. Enlarging the area from which kids are effectively banned (Yes, that is what it amounts to) strikes me as very family-unfriendly.
13. I would have thought a years grace would have helped here but again it is about raising the cash to pay the clubs way. Quins is hardly a money making machine like most clubs is barely breaks even at best.
14. Totally unreasonable, whilst I don't have children myself I do bring my two nephews to games, at the costs in premier for a ten year old and an 8 year old there is no way I can afford season tickets for them and I have no wish to spoil my view, as a supposedly family oriented club I find it amazing there are no concessions for children and they are all forced into areas where the visibility of the field is poorer, this is not a family oriented club, it is a business oriented club.
15. I found it completely unacceptable that my son's ticket would increase from £99 to £425 (assuming early bird and no increase next year) in 2 years. This was the final straw (in addition to 1 and 2 above) and I was planning to cancel our STs. However, based on Mark Evans' statement on CAW yesterday I am now likely to renew these 2 seats. However, it does mean that the rest of the family (wife and younger son) will never become ST holders, as we will not be able to sit together as a family.
16. So much for the loyalty, the freezing of prices last year after we stuck by the club in ND 1 and then return to Prem is crap. In my mind they have increased far too much against rate of inflation. My wages as have many others not gone up but everything else has. This season I have not been able to afford to go to any league games away as the cost is spiralling out of control, cost of match tickets, programmes, food, travel costs etc. Are they trying to make this an elitist game now? I will either have to go back to Club seats or less or go and watch a team in lower leagues where I can afford to go and watch and start taking the boys.

General Comments

1. Yes - whilst I appreciate the club is a business there has to be a question of scale - where would the club have been if the loyal fans hadn't supported them during the time in ND1, all it seems with the club is take take take - its time for some return!!!!
2. Not particularly happy about losing a home game to the double header, even if we get an extra game in the EDF.
3. If we are to compete on an equal footing with the best on the field, we have to be equally good off of the field. Any business would look to maximise the return from the most profitable and desired seats. The club have thought this through and by offering a 12 month transition to people affected, I don't think they could do more.
4. Disappointed. I manage yield on restricted capacity for a living but I don't have the 'emotional factor'. I thought we were different to other clubs, a step ahead in building a true 'rugby club feeling' but obviously not! We are just the same as everyone else.
5. I am astonished at the club's arrogance in not even offering the supporters reasons why the prices (etc.) need to go up so much. The brochure is instead filled with 'spin' which takes it for granted everyone will pour in (self-congratulatory stuff about what a wonderful thing is Quins). Is it really only one season since there was virtual panic at the club, at whether we would all walk when Quins went down? The fact that the club decides we don't need to be told about new players etc. until weeks after we're being asked to commit to these higher prices is breathtakingly presumptuous. The biggest single damage done in this whole sorry episode is to the club's relationship of trust with the supporters. I think the contrast between all this and 'Commitment, Loyalty, Belief' cannot be emphasised enough. TC's statement that "this is in response to demand for more Gold seats" puts him first in line for 'rugby chump of the year' - way ahead of Syd Millar in second place ... Harlequins should be sitting head in hands this morning saying to themselves "what the hell have we done..."
6. This was very poorly managed and communicated, there should have been a good cross section of people including those affected by the reclassification in the discussions, I would hope that the representatives of Quinssa who were engaged in discussion had been informed of the reclassification and were able to communicate with those effected, not allowing this discussion outside was a mistake, this effects a reasonable proportion of the fans and to find out this happens only when they go on line to pay is not acceptable. Whilst it doesn't directly affect me it certainly does not give me good impressions of the club and makes me wonder what happens next year if the club want to reclassify my premier seat as gold just to make more money because they sell out of Gold seats this year etc, supply and demand is more important than the fans, I am very disappointed in the clubs attitude and behaviour!
7. It appears to me that despite the hike in prices (not to mention the re-categorisation) the "peripheral benefits" have been significantly reduced. It looks like I'm now being forced to take Gold tickets or move seats. The "peripheral benefits" on offer to Gold STH's are now less than what were available to premier several years ago (before relegation).

8. See my previous comment. I've almost had enough. If prices continue to escalate as in Premiership soccer over the years, I'll tell Quins to stuff it and I'll go back to watching local lower division rugby where the burgers are better, the atmosphere superb, no crowding or ignorant officious fools on the door of the Members' bar, and where the merchandise is cheaper and in a size which fits properly!
9. The overall communication of these changes has been very poor!!
10. The communication of the changes was handled very badly, a point that has, I believe, been recognised by the club. Sadly general communication from the Club has gone downhill over the last couple of years.