

= 2009 ? 10 Plymouth Argyle F.C. season =

The 2009 ? 10 season was the 115th season in the history of Plymouth Argyle Football Club , their 85th in the Football League , and 41st in the second tier of the English football league system . Their 21st @-@ place finish in the 2008 ? 09 season meant it was their sixth successive season playing in the Championship . Their campaign ended disappointingly as they were relegated to League One with 11 wins , 8 draws , and 27 losses from 46 matches . The club exited both domestic cup competitions at the first stage , being eliminated by Newcastle United in the third round of the FA Cup and by Gillingham in the first round of the League Cup . The club changed managers in December due to a string of poor results as Paul Sturrock was replaced by Paul Mariner .

The club began their league campaign with two draws , but defeat by Cardiff City marked the beginning of a seven @-@ game losing streak . Results improved in October and November before three more successive defeats saw Sturrock replaced by Mariner . Performances gradually improved and the club won both of their fixtures during the Christmas period , including a 4 ? 1 win against Reading ; their best of the season . The club signed Damien Johnson in the winter transfer window from Birmingham City and made a number of signings on loan , including Kenny Cooper and David Stockdale , in order to try to improve their league position . A succession of draws and narrow defeats followed in February , which prompted Mariner to make more signings .

Argyle lost three of their next nine matches to give themselves a chance of avoiding relegation , but their win at Doncaster Rovers proved to be the last game that they would collect any points in . Defeats at home to Middlesbrough and away to Watford left the club on the brink of a return to England 's third tier , and that was confirmed in their next game . Newcastle United won 2 ? 0 at Home Park to secure the Championship title , and relegated the home side at the same time . The club finished 23rd in the league table after defeat by bottom club Peterborough United on the final day of the season , eight points adrift of safety . Jamie Mackie finished as the club 's top scorer with eight goals in all competitions , and captain Carl Fletcher was voted Player of the Year .

= = Background = =

The 2008 ? 09 season was Paul Sturrock 's first full campaign in his second spell as the club 's manager . The club secured their status in the second tier of English football for a sixth season after finishing 21st in the league table , five points above Norwich City . A number of players returned to their parent clubs at the end of the season after successful loan spells , including Craig Cathcart , David Gray , Alan Judge and Paul Gallagher . Sturrock wanted to bring Gallagher back to the club on a permanent basis , but was eventually unsuccessful after admitting before the season finished that the transfer fee and wages were an issue . Three apprentices of the club 's youth system were offered professional contracts in May , including Irish youth international Joe Mason . The club 's first signing of the summer was Carl Fletcher , who returned to Home Park permanently after signing on loan in February . Fletcher replaced Karl Duguid as the team captain , and Romain Larrieu was named club captain . Sir Roy Gardner was confirmed as the club 's new chairman in July , replacing Paul Stapleton who remained on the new board as vice @-@ chairman . The club added to their squad that month with the permanent signings of Bradley Wright @-@ Phillips , Kári Árnason and Réda Johnson , while Jermaine Easter and long @-@ serving Frenchman Mathias Kouo @-@ Doumbé were among the players who left . Doumbé was released from his contract by mutual consent in August after five years with the club .

= = Championship = =

= = = August ? October = = =

Plymouth Argyle began their campaign at Selhurst Park on 8 August against Crystal Palace , with Carl Fletcher captaining his new side against his former club . An early goal from Hungarian

international centre @-@ back Krisztián Timár put Argyle ahead but the home side responded in the second @-@ half to give both teams a share of the points . Argyle faced Queens Park Rangers in their first home game of the season and an injury @-@ time own goal from Kaspars Gork's salvaged a point after the visitors had taken the lead in the first @-@ half . Alan Gow 's first goal for the club in their next match against Cardiff City was merely a consolation , as a hat @-@ trick from Michael Chopra consigned Argyle to their first league defeat of the season . A stoppage time goal from Derby County 's Miles Addison denied Argyle their third draw of the season after they had taken a first @-@ half lead through Alan Judge , and a second 3 ? 1 home defeat followed a week later , this time against Sheffield Wednesday . A first @-@ half goal from Jamie Mackie gave Argyle hope of their first victory of new the season at The Hawthorns against West Bromwich Albion , but the home side responded with three goals either side of half @-@ time to claim a comfortable win .

The club 's poor run of form continued in their next home match against Watford , as they suffered their fifth straight defeat and slipped to the bottom of the league table . Another 3 ? 1 defeat , against Newcastle United , was followed by a second successive 1 ? 0 home defeat against Nottingham Forest , to leave Argyle with just two points from their first seven matches . Paul Sturrock kept faith with the young defensive pairing of James Chester and Shane Lowry for their next game against Peterborough United , and two second @-@ half goals Mackie and Rory Fallon secured Argyle 's first three points of the new season . " It 's nice to get three points , but now we have to build on it , " said Sturrock . " There 's no point in us getting this result and then kicking ourselves in the teeth again . " Argyle earned their first home win of the season four days later against Scunthorpe United . A penalty from Judge gave the hosts a 2 ? 1 win after Fallon 's opening goal was cancelled out by Scunthorpe striker Gary Hooper . Their upturn in results was halted by Blackpool , who won 2 ? 0 at Bloomfield Road . The hosts opening goal was scored by Marcel Seip , a player on loan from Argyle . He took part in the match following a request from former manager Ian Holloway , a decision which was criticised by supporters but defended by senior Argyle officials . " I suppose it was bound to happen that Marcel would score the goal , but I don 't think we should look on it as anything other than probably the cover should have been better , " said executive director Keith Todd . " We understood exactly what we are doing . "

An Argyle Hall of Famer returned to Home Park on 18 October 2009 , when former England international Paul Mariner was appointed as the club 's new head coach . " In football , there is not much sentiment . But , if sentiment is involved in this scenario , then they gave me my very first chance as a player so I grabbed it with both hands , " said Mariner on the New England Revolution website , the club he left to rejoin Argyle . " Plymouth Argyle are in my blood . Obviously the teams you 're associated with are the ones you look for every week , and when they came knocking on my door asking me to be employed there , I was delighted . " His first match in the dugout alongside Sturrock ended in disappointment as Argyle lost 3 ? 1 to Bristol City at Ashton Gate . They faced Ipswich Town , another side struggling for form , at home in their next match and a first @-@ half goal from Fletcher put Argyle ahead , but their hopes of claiming three points were dented when the visitors equalised through striker Jon Stead , who capitalised on a poor back pass from Gary Sawyer . Welshman Darcy Blake , on loan from Cardiff City , was shown a straight red card late in the game as it ended all square . Their final game of October took place on Halloween against Middlesbrough , in Gordon Strachan 's first game as their new manager . Argyle came away from the Riverside Stadium with all three points , in a game that saw Adam Johnson miss from the penalty spot , thanks to a second @-@ half goal from Mackie to lift them to 22nd in the league table , within three points of Doncaster Rovers .

= = = November ? February = = =

The club began November in the same fashion they ended the previous month ? with a win . Judge and Fallon scored again to secure a 2 ? 1 home victory against Doncaster Rovers , and pull Argyle clear of the relegation zone . They looked like earning a valuable point when they travelled to play Leicester City but were denied by a 94th @-@ minute goal from midfielder Andy King . Another home defeat , this time to Sheffield United followed , which left Sturrock desperate to improve

morale among his squad , but a third consecutive 1 ? 0 defeat at Swansea City , during which Lowry was sent off , signalled the end of Paul Sturrock 's second spell as manager . Paul Mariner was placed in charge until further notice . " It 's a sad day , but obviously a happy day for me because I 'm getting my chance to be a manager in the league , " said the former striker . " He 's a great friend of mine . The bond that we have together is quite remarkable and we have a mutual respect for each other . " His first match was a 2 ? 0 defeat at Preston North End , but he took positives from the performance .

John Carver , right @-@ hand man to former Barcelona manager Sir Bobby Robson at Newcastle United , arrived as the club 's new assistant manager on 17 December 2009 , but the club suffered another 1 ? 0 defeat at home , against Coventry City , two days later . Argyle travelled to Cardiff on Boxing Day to play Cardiff City at their new stadium , and came away with an important three points thanks to a late goal from Sawyer . They recorded their biggest win of the season two days later against Reading . A brace from Judge , and first goals of the season for Kári Árnason and Ashley Barnes secured a 4 ? 1 win at Home Park and six points from their two games over the Christmas period . Argyle returned to league action after their FA Cup ties on 16 January , looking for another three points against Crystal Palace but an early goal from young striker Victor Moses won the game for the visitors . Another must @-@ win home game followed against Derby County and a fifth goal of the season from Jamie Mackie boosted their survival bid . A defeat by fellow struggler 's Sheffield Wednesday , coupled with other results going against them , left Argyle five points from safety , with a tough match to come against West Bromwich Albion a week later . A single goal from striker Simon Cox kept Albion in touch at the top of the table and left Argyle deep in relegation trouble again , six points from safety .

A stoppage time penalty from Shane Long earned a crucial 2 ? 1 win for Reading in Argyle 's next match , but they came from a goal behind to claim a 3 ? 1 victory at Barnsley four days later , which included a 35 @-@ yard effort from former Barnsley player Fallon . Paul Mariner was full of praise for his team and singled out youngster Yannick Bolasie , who made his debut for the club . " We played with intellect . We got the ball down , rather than panicking a little bit ; we stroked it around ; we retained position at vital times , " he said . " The introduction of Bolasie was a breath of fresh air . I think even the Barnsley fans would probably say they liked to see what he was doing . He brought a lot to the table for us . " A double @-@ header of home matches were next on the agenda for Argyle , against Swansea City and Leicester City , and they both ended in 1 ? 1 draws . New signing Damien Johnson scored late on against Swansea , and Craig Noone scored his first goal of the season to earn a point against Leicester . An end @-@ to @-@ end game at Bramall Lane against Sheffield United ended in a 4 ? 3 defeat , which included a number of defensive mistakes . Argyle went 3 ? 0 before finally sparking into life , scoring twice thanks to Bolasie and a first for young Irish striker Joe Mason . A lapse in concentration from David Stockdale , on loan from Fulham , gifted the hosts a fourth goal before a 20 @-@ yard volley from Mackie set up a frantic finale . In the aftermath , Paul Mariner heaped praise on Mason , describing him as " an incredible talent . "

= = = March ? May = = =

Argyle salvaged a late point against Preston North End at the start of March , but remained in serious trouble at the bottom end of the table , seven points adrift of safety with 13 matches remaining . A 2 ? 0 defeat followed at Queens Park Rangers , with Adel Taarabt playing a part in both of the home sides goals . Draws at Home Park were proving to be an Achilles ' heel for Argyle , but they secured a creditable 1 ? 1 draw at play @-@ off chasing Coventry City , having taken the lead through a glancing header from Árnason . Three days later , a 20 @-@ yard strike from captain Fletcher earned Argyle their fifth home win of the season in a 3 ? 2 thriller against Bristol City . They had taken a 2 ? 0 lead through Chris Clark and an overhead kick from Bradley Wright @-@ Phillips , his first for the club . However , the visitors responded in the second @-@ half with two goals from Nicky Maynard before former Welsh international Fletcher scored with seconds to spare . Argyle travelled to play Scunthorpe United looking to keep up the momentum , but threw away a lead to be defeated by a deflected effort from Martyn Woolford .

They were on the road again three days later when they faced Ipswich Town at Portman Road . Argyle came away with all three points courtesy of goals from Wright @-@ Phillips and Mason on what was a special night for Paul Mariner . " It was pretty special and I was a little choked up , " he said . " It was a special night . When I moved to the States 20 years ago , I didn 't think it would come to fruition but it was a tremendous reception from the fans , and I can 't thank them enough . Bringing Plymouth Argyle here in my present role was a special occasion . " Former manager Ian Holloway returned to Home Park for the first time since his departure in November 2007 in the club 's next game , and he left happy as Blackpool side claimed all three points after a 2 ? 0 victory , with Charlie Adam at the heart of their attacking threat . Argyle played out an entertaining 0 ? 0 draw at home with Barnsley three days later , but it did little to help in their battle against relegation , still five points away from safety . They produced another rousing away performance against Doncaster Rovers to earn a 2 ? 1 win , coming from behind with second @-@ half goals from Mason , and an injury time header from Wright @-@ Phillips . In order to stay up , Argyle knew that they had to make the most of their remaining home games , but they went down 2 ? 0 on 5 April to an efficient Middlesbrough side , which left them four points adrift with four games left . A solitary goal from Watford 's Heidar Helguson dealt Argyle 's survival hopes an almost fatal blow at Vicarage Road , but vice @-@ captain Karl Duguid remained upbeat about their chances of defeating the league leaders in their next game . " We 'll be upbeat , and we 'll go for the win against Newcastle next Monday . "

It was a night of contrasting emotions at Home Park . A 2 ? 0 win for the visitors confirmed Argyle 's relegation to League One and Newcastle 's promotion back to the Premier League as champions at the first attempt . Hours after the match , the club 's board declared that it remained determined to steer it to the top flight of English football . Paul Mariner reaffirmed his commitment to the club , vowing to put things right . " I feel the pain of the supporters because this is the club that gave me my first start , " he said . " The reason I came here was because of the vision that the club can get into the Premiership . Now we 've got another couple of hurdles before we do that but I firmly believe that we can do it . " Argyle 's penultimate game of the season took place at the City Ground against Nottingham Forest , who had already qualified for the play @-@ off 's , and they secured a comfortable 3 ? 0 victory against the relegated side . The club signed off their campaign with another home defeat against Peterborough United on 2 May . Argyle took the lead in the first @-@ half from a fine individual goal from Wright @-@ Phillips but conceded two goals after the break to Craig Mackail @-@ Smith . Four days later , the club announced that they would be searching for a new manager , with Paul Mariner reverting to his original role as head coach . He said : " I am disappointed that we could not produce the results we wanted last season . I am a realist and understand why and how the board came to the conclusion they have done . I am committed to this club and want only to help it regain Championship status as soon as possible and build on that . " Work on a new state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art Fibrelastic pitch at Home Park began the following week .

= = = Results = = =