

**The Peterborough Sports Fans Forum took place at the Turbines Tavern on Friday night. This was an opportunity for fans to come together and pose questions to new owner and chairman Tim Woodward. Tim was joined by David Anderson (Club Operations Manager) and Joint Managers Michael Gash and Luke Steele. Daniel Ruscillo (Senior Physiotherapist & Assistant Manager) and Kelly Rayner (Assistant Physio) were also in attendance.**

**Tim Woodward:** Welcome all, it has been a very busy start and period to my tenure as Chairman. As I am sure you are all aware there has been a lot of work to get done within a tight deadline, work which we needed to do but it did cost a lot of money. I have put a lot of my own money into these developments as we are still awaiting the funding from the Football Association to come through so all the money that has been put in so far has been my own. I plan on continuing work on the ground throughout the off-season with the first priority being adding a roof to the new terrace so that it is looking good, professional and ready for the new season. We also want to push to get to that 4000 capacity that is required for the National League if we get there.

#### **Kit colour change and sponsorship.**

One of the main sponsors that will come in this year for the season may want to change the kit colours. Their company colours are orange and black so it may be that they want to change the home strip to orange and black. However, there could be a change in the pipeline.

Sponsorship is key to this club, and I have a number of contacts within my line of work who would be willing to contribute to sponsorship in some capacity. I don't do negatives and I don't do failure. I will not be letting this fail. Grant has done a fantastic job over the last few years and full credit to him as he did his utmost best to keep this club going and afloat over the last few seasons.

If we want the National League, whether it be maintaining where we are for a consistent period of time or going further, we have got to keep going and keep pushing. We need to check whether, if we get into the playoffs next season, that we would be able to keep our place depending on whether we reach the 4000 capacity.

I know it may not be popular but the ticket prices will be going to go up to £16 for general admissions as this is something that we need to do to help with running costs and to make sure that we aren't losing money. We are doing this to stop those losses that we have suffered during the last few years. It has got to be sustainable now, we want to be worthy of our place in this league on and off the pitch. Season ticket prices are in the pipeline at the moment, and this is something that we will communicate to you all officially over the course of the next few days.

I am looking into getting a team bus for the upcoming season. It looks professional and we need that level of professionalism within this league.

I'm going to change the Turbines Tavern. People will know that I do not like it in the clubhouse. The floor is awful and I hate the blue skirting board; it feels like I'm currently sitting in my works canteen and that is not what we want. The clubhouse will be partially carpeted and will be furnished with leather sofas and soft furnishings. I am also looking into adding a second floor to the clubhouse, with a Fan Zone replacing the space where the current boardroom is and the boardroom moving upstairs with a balcony and viewing platform. The new Fan Zone could potentially be called the 1908 Club for members on the first floor of the club where the boardroom currently is. The TVs will be taken down and placed elsewhere as I would like to put some patio doors where they are and potentially open out into a new outdoor seating terrace or conservatory style outbuilding so that there is more space for more people. We want to make the Turbines Tavern a place that everybody wants to come and a place that people want to come back to and possibly use regular for functions outside of football.

### **Ground developments**

With regards to the ground developments, I definitely haven't stopped just yet. I hate the dugouts so I am planning on extending a new stand down the side where the Colin Day stand is and past the dugouts so that the dugout could be built into the stand, like you see at a number of other clubs. I have already mentioned the main priority of getting a roof on the new terrace at the far end as that will really make it look the part. I did plan on building a brand new bar and food outlet to the side of the new terrace but I don't think that this is something that we can do now as we need to consider the possibility of increasing capacity by another 1000 at some point.

**Q: Will we be looking at adopting a Hybrid model if we are aiming to push towards the National League in a few seasons time?**

MG: With a hybrid model, you have to consider bringing in players who do not have a full time job on the side. You must also factor in costs and also how convenient that kind of model is to our players that we have at the moment. At the moment, we are happy with running as a part-time club as it works for us and also fits with our players and their work commitments outside of football.

**Q: Why did you (Tim) take over this challenge from Grant Biddle?**

TW: I wanted the challenge. Someone I work with told me to come down to Sports and see what it was about. This was before Grant put out that he was putting the club up for sale. When he did put the news article out that he was stepping away, I got in touch and was on the phone to him the next day. I have a background of welding and mechanical engineering, so I knew that I had

the tools and the business mind to be able to get things done and improve down at the ground. I just saw it straight away and thought 'yes this is a challenge'. As previously mentioned, I do not do failure and I am not prepared to let this club fail. I'm a Peterborough lad and I just wanted to give something back. I am not doing this for my own financial gain, I am doing this for enjoyment and to get this club thriving and continuing to succeed.

**Q: Where do you see Peterborough Sports in 5 to 10 years' time?**

TW: Didn't I mention the Championship? We are aiming for the National League minimum and who knows maybe League 2 in the future. Maintaining our National League status is the aim of course for this season but who knows where the next few years can take us.

**Q: Do we have a retained list for the squad yet?**

LS: Obviously we know that club captain Richard Jones retired at the end of the season, and we can also announce that left back Nathan Fox has left as he has decided to move abroad with his partner which is something that we cannot control. We have released Kayden Williams-Lowe and Maniche. Maniche has not yet signed for someone else yet. Obviously, we also had Jordan Crawford and Johnson Gyamfi who were loan players and have since gone back. Crawford was released by Boston United recently though.

MG: We have 3 players who already have contracts for the upcoming season: Connor Kennedy, Connor Johnson and Hugh-Alban Jones. Obviously, we want to keep the majority of the squad from last season and we have approached those players that we want to give contracts to for the new season and they have said that they would like to but obviously there will be other players weighing up options that may arise too.

**Q: Is there a way that we can avoid our home games clashing with Peterborough United home games?**

TW & MG: I'm going to have a conversation with the Head of the National League Mark Ives to see if there is something that could be considered to avoid the clash happening. This is something that has been put forward every year to the league by our club secretary but nothing ever really gets done for it or cannot really be arranged logistically. Hopefully they can have a little look into something and see if they can come up with a solution.

**Playing the final game at Kettering:**

It was the leagues call as we were obviously expecting a big crowd from Darlington and with the police numbers

**Lack of crowds:**

TW: This is obviously one of our biggest concerns. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. We will be having a little stint on ITV news in the coming weeks, and we are hoping that they will cover all of the groundwork we have done.

**Q: Could we not try to market our club to the community that surrounds our ground?**

TW: It's all to do with how we market this.

LS: Being known and being seen within schools so that children in particular want to come along week in week out. Can we get 500 fans in 5 years? My company works in schools on a daily basis and of course Daniel works at the Peterborough College so we will be looking into ways of engaging the younger generation that we work with daily to come down to the club and get them coming along regularly. Making the ground more child friendly and a more welcoming place for all to be and where they want to spend their weekends. Who knows, it may be worth us bringing a mascot in as often the mascots at other clubs are idolised by the younger generation.

**Q: Would you look into bringing a reserve side into the set up?**

LS: We haven't had that discussion yet, but it has sparked something with that we could definitely look at. We could enter it into the Peterborough leagues and hopefully have it as a second side.

MG: No matter where you are, you will find gems out of nowhere. We could potentially get players in for an Under 18s or Reserves side from Peterborough, Northampton, Cambridge etc. who we could bring into the first team over time. They could then do well within the first team and be sold on in the future which would be great for the player and also great financially for the club.

**Q: How do we get kids and students into the games?**

DR: I think that we have got to keep offers for students and schools going consistently throughout the season rather than just the odd game. 16-18yrs are kind of forgotten when it comes to free tickets etc. as free tickets tend to be offered by other clubs to primary and secondary schools. I think this is an audience that we target in the future to try and get them into the club and into games.

**Q: What do you plan to do about away travel next season?**

TW: Sometimes it is just not cost effective with the amount of interest that we have from our fan base at the moment. Obviously with a number of trips up North, you can hop on the LNER line and get a deal on weekend tickets which ultimately works out cheaper when you considered the combination of paying for a coach ticket and away match ticket, but it is definitely something that we are considering and looking at.

1. One of the priorities is getting an official team bus for the players. How we could then offer this to fans would be considered.
2. You have to admit that £1800 for away travel is ridiculous. Split that between around 52 fans you're looking at around £35 each.

**Q: How many players are you looking to bring in from outside?**

MG: Like Luke said we have lost some players in key positions in Foxy and Richard Jones, so we obviously need to replace them. The key position to fill first is obviously a left back and we have had a look at a couple of players so far. The majority of the players from last season, which is about 14, we want to keep. 3 are already signed in Kennedy, Johnson and Alban-Jones and 4 others have said yes but just haven't signed anything yet as. We only have 2 centre halves, so we need at least one more of those. In this league, you need at least 2 players per position. We can't throw money about so we will be looking at loans and younger players.

**Q: What will the squad size be this season?**

MG: At this level as a part time team, it costs because if we have 3 players that are out injured, you ideally want to bring in 3 players to replace them but the issue is that you have to pay the 3 players that are injured and the 3 players that are brought in too. We will try by the 1st of July when we start training to have brought more players in. Obviously, we won't have our full squad by then, but we will aim to have a base of around 17/18 players to work with.

**Q: We need a proven goal scorer. Have you looked at getting a goal scorer for this season?**

MG: Strikers cost money and again that is something that we really must consider. Some strikers that are playing in the leagues below are being paid nearly £1000 a week because a striker is the most expensive position so Luke and I have got to do our work and try and find a gem somewhere that is going to do well and isn't going to break our bank. We need that out and out goal scorer, but it all comes down to money.

**Q: Have you got plans for improving the pitch conditions?**

LS: The pitch isn't great, it's green but it isn't level. It's going to be improved but it isn't going to be perfect. Our team thrives on a good pitch for example, our performances away at top venues and pitches like Chester, Telford and Spennymoor show that the team are technically good on a good surface so it is something that we would like to have here on our own patch.

**Q: Would you consider getting a 4G pitch?**

TW: It would cost about 650,000 and you would get a 300k grant. It is on the radar but will not be happening this season. The main task right now with the pitch is to get it reseeded and properly maintained for the pre-season friendlies.

**Q: Do we have any pre-season friendlies booked in so far?**

LS: We have the following teams booked in for friendlies so far with dates and details TBC shortly: Spalding, Corby Town, Stamford, Peterborough United, Barnsley (which will be at home) and Northampton (which will be the Maunsell Cup tie for winning the Northants Cup)

It depends on the league start as to whether we squeeze another one in. We want to play Manchester Utd, but it would be a U21s side away at Carrington which would obviously be a great experience however, I am waiting for my contact to get back to me about it and also for the season start date to be confirmed.

**Q: Plans to change the name of the stadium?**

TW: Yes. Obviously, it was named after Grant's company but now he isn't a part of the club anymore and doesn't want his company sponsoring in any capacity which is completely understandable. My company is called PIMS (Process Installations and Maintenance Services) so do we possibly call it PIMS Park? There are two companies in for the home and away kit: my company (PIMS) and a company called Vital Energi who could come in and sponsor part of the ground (possibly the new terrace) along with one of the kits.

I have got some contacts from within my line of work who are willing to throw between 5-10k into the club which is money that the club haven't had before and is fantastic. I even got in touch with Jet2, and it may be that they throw some money into the club as well. We will have to wait and see. It is obvious that we will lose money this year, but we need to make sure that we are efficient and don't lose too much.

**Commercially, will we be using Chroma again for kits? Will we have a club shop back too?**

TW: A large Portakabin will be lifted in and half of it will be a club shop and the other half will be an office for relevant people to use. Robbo's current office is like a walk in wardrobe so it will be good for him to have that new space and of course we definitely need to have a club shop back within our ground. With regards to club merchandise, we are in contact with Chroma and also another avenue as well. I would rather us have the stock in at the ground on a matchday so that people can grab it straightaway rather than having to wait a while to order something in.

**Have you thought about introducing a match package which covers about 10 games with an added saving?**

TW: That is an idea that could work with us and is definitely something that we will think about for those people that like to be flexible.

**Q: Will there be development of a supporters group that was going to start at some point last season?**

TW: This was something that I did not know about but I will have a chat with Robbo and the boys about this.

**Q: Will the Fans Forums become a regular thing?**

TW: Yes, every 2 months. Possibly on a Thursday or a Sunday when the season is up and running. If you have an issue or an idea, I would rather you be straight up and come and tell me these things rather than keeping them to yourselves. I am always willing to listen.

