

## **Peterborough Sports Fans Forum - 13th September 2023**

**Tim Woodward - Chairman & Owner**

**Luke Steele - Manager**

**I know the budget has been cut this year. Is it sufficient? Are we going to stretch it?**

**TW:** Our playing budget is very similar to that of Tamworth who are flying. They have a massive catchment area so they have a lot more players that they can get a hold of rather than us who have a smaller catchment area. I wanted to cut the loss by half which in the end I have managed to, taking into the consideration that now the loss was at 460k. We are trying to cut the loss through sponsorship and Vital Energi have been fantastic and we have Princebuild coming on for a 3 year shirt sponsorship which is fantastic.

With regards to the ground, we have a 50 year lease on the ground. I've had two meetings with the council and I am talking with them to hopefully buy the land personally. I want to secure the future of the ground and in time the club can then own the ground when it is feasible to do so. The council has been great. One lady in particular, Jackie Harvey, was really helpful with putting the roof on the new stand. Part of the plan going forward is that I want to spin the ground which will then open up space for a brand new stand.

**Luke, what are your thoughts on the season so far?**

**LS:** It has just been a mix really, the last 5 or 6 games have been really negative. We started off with some really tough games. I was with Jimmy Dean yesterday and he said our draw at Scunthorpe was probably the best result in the club's history. We played alright at Alfreton but obviously didn't win. At home we are playing negatively and not going forward enough and creating enough chances. The injuries have killed us. Players have had to start the game that Gashie & I wouldn't honestly start if we had a full squad at our disposal but injuries have had that impact. Gashie didn't want to play as much as he had done but the injury to Mark Jones at Scunthorpe meant that he had to come in.

**TW:** Brackley and Tamworth were the two best teams we have played so far. Hopefully now we can build with injuries coming back. Connor is now suspended, we appealed Ashton's red card and it didn't even get a look in which is really unfortunate. When Connor comes back he comes back on 4 yellows, if gets another and he then misses another game.

**The 3-5-2 formation is a bit like square pegs in round holes with players playing out of position. 5 goals, no goalscorers in the team. How are you going to rectify it?**

**LS:** We went with that formation in pre-season and I wanted to work with it going into the season. Had a good first result against Scarborough with the formation, the draw at Scunthorpe was great and we now believed that we wanted to give it more of a chance. Since then we have had two bad results at Alfreton and Spennymoor but then went to Hereford with that formation and got the win and Crooky not making a save in front of 2k people. I don't think formation has nothing to do with it, if you haven't got the desire or

application to be a football player, it doesn't matter what formation you play. Forget last night's game as we went 4-3-3. We don't create enough, especially at home.

**At the end of the last season, the one thing everyone agreed we needed was a goalscorer. If Jimmy was still here, Gashy wouldn't be here and certainly wouldn't Mark.**

**LS:** Ben has come in and scored, he's a good finisher and had great chances. If you want a prolific goalscorer to come in, he may not necessarily come in straight away and get 20 goals. He's not necessarily going to change the whole season, so we have gone and got Ben who has proved to score goals in the previous 2 seasons and we want to play alongside Mark.

**Does one of you (Luke and Michael) take charge in the joint managementship roles?**

**LS:** As Michael is still playing, I have been the one taking the lead with training and things like that. Gashy came up with 3-5-2 as they played like that at Kings Lynn. We started it with Ashton coming in as a third centre half and with it working well in the first few games of the season. Gashy takes the captain role in training alongside Mark and likes to get the boys going.

**Mark Jones goes down injured again this season, no one in to replace him. Why have we not got that out and out striker that we all think we need?**

**LS:** From a personal point of view, I think I have been naive, I've come to the club and seen all the promotions and successes of the club. Dan Lawlor and Mark are the spine of the club as they have been here for so long. I still trust in Mark as a player, Gashy was going to be the kind of player that comes on as the big man towards the end of the game however, like I previously mentioned with injuries, it means that he has had to play a lot more often.. Football seasons go on for a long, long time and if this run continues, we will go into the market and try to get a 27/28 year old striker with a bit of experience and steel.

**It has to be addressed that the goals have dried up since you guys have taken over, what do we expect from now?**

**TW:** We have brought Ben and the others in, hoping that they will do a job. If they don't, I will give the guys the opportunity to go and get someone else in. Luke and I are both learning, we haven't done this before and we are trying the best we can, trust me.

**Is there the possibility of getting an Under 18s team together? I remember the main concern when we used to have the youth section was the state of the pitch after they played and trained on it.**

**TW:** Where we are at now, I am learning lots of different things as to what happened before I took over. I am hoping to try and build up a positive, youth section once again. Peterborough United want their ladies here as their permanent home from next season. There will be a certain amount of funding that we can get from that from the Football Foundation, which is promising. I really want to give that back pitch its own set of changing rooms but the issue is

drainage. We are going to start developing for the ladies ASAP and try to get funding from the football foundation too. Darragh Macanthyony, Barry Fry and Bob Symns have all said that they want to build a partnership with us and help us out. Also from now on, a guaranteed Peterborough United 1st team will be coming for a friendly every pre-season.

**I come to all home games and many away games, there were times last season where the goal scorer was a problem. Fowkes signing was exciting and a player who could come in and really push on. However, is he up the top doing an impossible job? He gets the ball on the halfway line by himself and there's not a lot up there with him.**

**LS:** You are right and that's why I am thinking of changing the formation so that Ben can come in from the wing instead as he is a fantastic dribbler. Last night in the Maunsell Cup we played the 4-3-3 and we think that will work better for Ben in particular. We don't get the ball in the opposition's half enough, we need to pick the ball up deeper and then players like Ben can drive at them.

**What about Maniche? What happened to him?**

**LS:** Rizzo knows a lot about his physical condition. He has got an injury with his knee which means it is in a bit of a state. Maniche is a very big risk, and he's done his knee again. We have done everything we could to help him to get a decent club a couple of levels lower, hand on heart, but he will never complete a full season of football. His ACL has never recovered. He tried full time at Scunthorpe but after 2 sessions he broke down. We'd be paying a lad on a contract that we would never really use because of his injuries.

**We have lots of old faces that don't come anymore, how do we plan on getting them back? You have spent a lot of hard cash, why are you not shouting from the rooftops?**

**TW:** I've tried with TV, specifically Donovan Blake at ITV, but they are not bothered. We have tried and left messages and made phone calls but they are not interested. The PE magazine in Peterborough, we have got a full page advert going out there every month, which will reach a minimum of 20,000 homes each month. There will also be a refreshments voucher in the bottom corner of the advert in the magazine which can be used when here at a game. We (Luke and I) are also going into schools to give out free tickets in the next couple of weeks.

**Ticket prices have gone up, why have we put students and 13-17 yrs up to £8. It's too much.**

**TW:** I will admit we got that wrong. I am learning and I will admit that. We need to know what is going through the gate on a matchday. Tickets for children aged 13-17 yrs will now be £5 and will go down by £3.

**There was talk that you weren't particularly a fan of 'The Step', is this the case?**

**TW:** The step is going nowhere as I think it is something that has been around for a long time at the club and is something that people associate with the club. It is going to be

revamped in the next couple months as I am hoping to add additional steps to it as well as give it its own roof with a sign that says 'The Step' above it.

**At the last Fans Forum a 10 game flexi ticket was mentioned. Quite a few clubs offer a membership. You pay £25 for a season which takes off £1 for a matchday ticket. Could we do this or maybe offer deals on the bar or club shop?**

**TW:** I am looking into making an area in the clubhouse that is going to be dedicated to those fans that may purchase a membership in the future, but this is something that can only be done if we buy the ground from the council. We are looking into after the game, like a happy hour after the game. If we won by, for example, 2 goals, we take £2 off a pint after the game. We had to take Sky TV out which was about £5k a year but we still have the projector with games on both before and after our matches. We are slowly making changes to try and make it better for you all. Club membership is a good idea and this is something that my son Adam will be looking into over the next few weeks.

**Last home game I was at, 6pm it was dead. We need people in here to keep the revenue coming in. Could we maybe have entertainment after the game?**

**TW:** As previously mentioned, it may be that we offer a happy hour after a home win in the clubhouse so that there are deals on drinks at the bar. At the club presentation at the end of last season, Luke organised a local singer to come along and provide entertainment and that went down really well. It may be something that we do either before or after matches as I know it has been mentioned that some clubs have fan zones running before their games.

**Is Richard Jones coming back?**

**LS:** He came in for the Rushall game when it was one of the worst weeks for injuries within the squad. We needed bodies and we got Richard in. He came to sit on the bench and we wanted him to be the captain figure, he said he was missing it a lot and I said just come in and have that captain's role. I wish he never got on the pitch because he wasn't match fit. I don't blame him for the loss but if he wants to come back and train then he will be treated like everybody else.

**Is there any truth that Dion is coming back?**

**LS:** I actually went for Dion about 4 weeks ago and I thought we could try and get him back. I went for him after his foot operation and then he was fit and Jimmy needed him and he was coming off the bench and he scored. If he's not playing for Scunthorpe then he should be here as we are at the same level.

**Should we be reproducing players if we are the second biggest team in the city?**

**TW:** The club the size it is, it has got to build and develop. In actual fact, the club is young, it's really like 9-10 years old. Obviously the history dates back over 100 years but under the Peterborough Sports with which we currently operate, the club is still seen to be very young and the fact that club has risen meteorically through the leagues has maybe not helped.

### **How are injuries looking within the squad?**

**LS:** Harrison Nee is out for a minimum of 10 more days and he hasn't broken his ankle which is good. His ankle did come out very swollen though so we will take as many precautions as possible with him. Ryan Fryatt was rushed back from an injury during pre-season. When he started in the Rushall game, he was fully fit and hadn't been rushed back; however, he felt something go when coming back from a corner which meant he is now on the sidelines again. We hope that he is only out for a couple of weeks. Hayden Cann was suffering with a slight injury which we think was down to the amount of game time he had been playing since signing for us. Sidney Pereira is still young and raw and although he shows huge potential when he plays, he needs to build up his strength.

### **Can we get a mascot, you mentioned this at the fans forum last time out. Or can activities be offered on the land outside the ground for families so that all of the family can come along to the game and find something that they enjoy?**

**TW:** My son Adam has a lot of ideas for these different kinds of things that can go on outside of the actual pitch. This is definitely something that has been considered as it will help to attract a larger demographic to the ground.

### **Reaching out to the Eastern European communities for open trials for youth and potential for the first team. You say there's no catchment but there may be some uncut gems.**

**LS:** We have players come and train with us all of the time. Sidney trained with us since February/March time. I believe there are always going to be opportunities for local people. I have randomers turn up to training near enough every single week which could potentially be an uncut gem.

### **We have lost some sponsors since the Play Off Final when their pitch side banners got ruined. How do you plan to solve this kind of issue?**

**TW:** Advertising boards are not going around the pitch anymore, they are going at a high level so that people cannot get hold of them. The Colin Day stand will always be the Colin Day stand however, over time I want to make it bigger and better. I plan to extend the stand all the way along that side of the pitch with integrated dugouts. What will change is Colin Day's name will go on the top of it and we will extend and build onto it to make it better. The Colin Day stand name will never change because he is a club legend and still continues to be.

### **Should we set up a supporter's club? For things such as away travel?**

**TW:** Feel free I will fully back it.

### **Where is Michael Gash this evening?**

**LS:** Michael had personal commitments this evening that meant that he couldn't make it. It hurts him that he can't play up front like he used to and he is surprised that he has had to play so much. We are still working out jobs and bits and bobs.

**TW:** I don't do failure and I want to make this a fantastic little club. We will do whatever we need to do to stay in this league.