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Interviewer: Can you please state your name for me?

Lee Redmond: My name's Lee Redmond.

Interviewer: Your role at this club?

Lee Redmond: My role at Stevenage Football Club is I'm chief steward. I work on a match day. Chief steward is running the main stand and support for the safety officer and deputy.

Interviewer: How did you come about getting that job?

Lee Redmond: I used to be involved with the club through, years ago, because of my father, but then I was just a supporter. Prior to working as a steward I had been doing car park work and stewarding at Barnet and Watford.

My cousin was working here and his role here then was chief steward. He said to me basically, "Why do you pay to get in?" I said, "Well, because obviously I want to come and see the

football.” He said, “Well, why don’t you come and be a steward? You might only see a little bit of it but you get paid and you see some of it.” I said, “That sounds like a good idea.”

Interviewer: Yes. Have you been a fan for a long time as well?

Lee Redmond: As I said, I was first involved with Stevenage when it was not quite Stevenage Athletic but when they first became Stevenage Borough back in 1980. My father had been involved in football for years, and he was the physio here for the manager then who was a man called Derek Montgomery.

I was involved here because my dad would bring me along and I would sit on the bench with the subs and the manager. As soon as they said, “I need something,” so I would then run from the dug out round to where the Portakabins were, which is now where the North Stand is, and go and ask whoever for whatever it was that he needed and run back with it.

Interviewer: How old were you at that point?

Lee Redmond: I was about 11.

Interviewer: You’ve had an involvement in the club for quite a few years.

Lee Redmond: For a few years, yes.

Interviewer: Did you ever, when you went with your dad, did you ever experience any interesting things that happened?

Lee Redmond: Well, every single time I'd come would be interesting, really. There was always something different going on. I would come once during the week, I think that was probably on a Tuesday when there was a training session going on, because I think that was one of the days that my dad as physio would be working on various players.

I can just sort of remember hanging around and watching various players toing and froing and just talking with these just normal guys, as I would think of them. I remember kids at the school wanting to take turns with me to come so they could actually get to see these players. To me these were just friends of my dad but to them these were these idols, fantastic players.

Interviewer: So made you more popular as well.

Lee Redmond: I think so. (Laughter)

Interviewer: That's good. You were obviously up close to all the matches then.

Lee Redmond: I was, yes. In some respects my role now is just as close because I'm dealing with match officials, players, when necessary, and just basically overall crowd management, really, that sort of stuff.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any problems with the crowd at all?

Lee Redmond: Yes. (Laughter)

Interviewer: You have, any stories you'd like to share?

Lee Redmond: Yes. We've had various incidents, good and bad. We had a period of where people would want to throw things. One guy came running along and wanted to throw a bottle at the away bench for whatever reason it was. We had great pleasure in evicting, sorry, ejecting this man from the pitch. People do seem to think that because it's football that they have got a right to be able to express themselves in a way which may not necessarily be the correct way of doing things.

What I always try and remind people, when I have the opportunity, is that if they want to be abusive towards me, not that we do get a lot of that, these are very small incidents, very few and far between, but on occasion we've had a few of our supporters who are not happy with the referee's eyesight and things like that, certain decisions haven't gone our way and they're shouting. I sort of then try to understand where they're coming from but, you know, "You really need to sit down and try and be quiet. Yes, you can shout and holler but mind the language you're using."

Interviewer: Yes. I guess it's a family event as well, isn't it?

Lee Redmond: Of course, yes. Some people then think this is now becoming personal and they want to take it as though they almost want to go toe to toe with me but not quite. I then, on at least one occasion I've had to say to someone, "Well, just a question about you. Where do you work?" He worked in an office. I said, "Right, so you work on a computer and stuff?" He went, "Yes." "So if I come up to your desk and started shouting at you like this, how would you feel?" He went, "Don't be so silly." I said, "No, this is my place of work." "Oh, yes," he said. I said, "Right, shall we calm down then?"

People forget that because it's football. I've received a lot of very good training and a lot of really good scenarios. I've worked with really good people who are very knowledgeable and now that knowledge I try and pass that on to guys that work for me. I think I might be doing something right as I'm chief steward. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Brilliant. How many people would you say you organise, how many stewards would you have on a typical match day?

Lee Redmond: On a match day we can have up to about 50, you know, on a bigger game. My team, I have a team of about 15 that I'm directly responsible for but all of the other supervisors would require assistance. They'll get me on the radio and then I go and talk to them. Sometimes it can be just a bit of advice or it can just be a bit more than that where I might need to do a bit more involvement. They might want me to go and help talk to someone or something like that.

There's an awful lot of communication. People tend to think that all this just happens but there's so much that goes on behind the scenes that people just don't seem to really realise

that what a job it is that us guys are doing just to keep people safe.

Interviewer: I guess you have to organise a lot before a match day so everyone's in the right place.

Lee Redmond: I hope that you've had the opportunity to, I mean, I see that you've already interviewed Keith Glazebrook.

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: It would be, if you haven't, someone to interview, Steve, regarding what he does. By the time a general steward arrives for the briefing at one o'clock, the safety officer has been here about four hours. That doesn't include all the pre-meetings he might have had, meetings with police, meeting with safety advisory group, lots of other things, and of course organising and making sure we've got enough stewards to turn up on a match day.

Interviewer: As a steward do you get a lot of training?

Lee Redmond: We're actually now going through the NVQ, so all stewards have to get the NVQ two in spectator safety. I've got my NVQ three, which is a supervisory one.

Interviewer: Is that something you can do while you're working here?

Lee Redmond: As part of the club, do support us in, and we've obtained funding so all we've had to do is basically do the work and pass the course. There's quite a bit of work that we need, you don't just sit and be spoken to and then get a certificate, you actually have to do assessment and actually prove that what we've actually been told is put into practice.

Interviewer: Do your kids support the team at all?

Lee Redmond: They're always looking for what the scores are and things like that. However, I think because I am so involved on a match day that until they're actually old enough to come along on their own, or if I can get someone else to bring them, because I can't sit there as a dad with my kids because I've got quite a large team to organise.

On a match day my main – we actually have a one o'clock briefing, so that doesn't mean arrive at one o'clock, it means get there before one o'clock, pick up your briefing sheet and I usually if I can seek out the safety officer, deputy safety officer because as a chief steward I like to have a quick word with them prior to a main briefing in case there's anything in particular that I might need to know or in addition to what he's going to tell the rest of the stewards.

On occasion, if we're particularly at a larger game, for example we hosted Sheffield Wednesday a few weeks ago, when we hosted Newcastle United there are quite a few additional things which as the chief steward I would be privy to that the

general steward doesn't need to know about, you know, regarding dealings with police and that sort of stuff.

They're just in their section and if there's a problem they'll talk to their supervisor, whereas I'm liaising with the police, with the first aid people, with whoever else is around, so it's quite important that if there's anything that I actually know in addition to not try and wait until we've had our briefing.

Our main briefing would happen at one o'clock and then that's normally done by about twenty past, twenty-five past, I then go to our – I go from where our stewards' room is round to our section. They all check the stand to make sure it's safe for – prior to spectators coming in, so because we're only working on the match day if suddenly there was something like a broken seat or something that needed to be dealt with, we could locate that seat, take it out of action, put 'do not use' on there, you know, all on behalf of the club to ensure that it's safe for the people to enter.

Once we've done all those checks I'll then do an individual briefing, 90% of which they must think I'm a cracked record because I go on about it every single week regarding when to stand up, location of – where [team 0:11:51] bars are and locations of the toilets and what to do, what not to do, reminder of safety messages, all those sorts of things, because the more they hear it the more when we actually need it they're going to know the answer immediately.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any problems-?

Lee Redmond: That's before anyone comes in the ground. (Laughter)

Interviewer: So you've done all that.

Lee Redmond: Then we finally open the gates and in come the supporters and that's the first time the supporters then actually come in and see us-

Interviewer: So there is a lot of work.

Lee Redmond: Then we're in position, yes.

Interviewer: A lot of work before to arrange it all.

Lee Redmond: Of course. Yes, and on occasion pre-games if necessary I've had a phone call from the safety officer regarding any additional things. Not just the five-minute thing that we might have on a match day, he'll ring me up and we'll talk about things.

We're a team, we support each other in all the things that we try and do and try and give a professional side to how the club is. We want to show that we're a professional operation. Our actions reflect what other people's view of the club is going to be.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any problems with opposition crowds, like after your team may have won?

Lee Redmond: There's always rivalry between opposing supporters, you're always going to get them shouting out and singing different sorts of things. Sometimes when they use words which aren't really appropriate and then they're singing back, if they shouted certain words on their own then we've got a cause to eject them, but when there's 200 of them up there singing it, it's a bit-

Lee Redmond: You can't really control that.

Lee Redmond: It's a bit more difficult.

Interviewer: People tend to forget that it's a family thing.

Lee Redmond: Of course, yes. When we have had problems from – with people it's very, very difficult. If someone is standing in, say someone's been shouting abuse or really being uncontrollable in the game and disturbing other supporters and all that sort of thing, so that can be quite difficult, and when they're as part of a pack you can't really deal with them effectively. However, at some point that supporter is going to need to go to the toilet or to the team bar or something.

Interviewer: Very good plan, yes.

Lee Redmond: Half an hour later they've forgotten about the fact that they were doing thing earlier, and really if we would have got them out at that point... So they've then gone down to – so

obviously we'll let them go to the toilet first of all, we're not going to do that, and then suddenly they're going to come out and, you know, you hear the stories, "That person was jumped as they come out of the toilet." Well, this isn't quite what we've done but that's our opportunity to then talk to this person because they're out of their pack.

Interviewer: I guess you have to think about the safety of yourself and your staff.

Lee Redmond: It is, yes. We're not bouncers, we're trained in spectator safety. Most of us feel that we're not really rewarded enough, monetarily, for the sort of job that we do. Some games, yes, there's very little to do but on certain other games it is – we have to put ourselves in very difficult positions. I've got my family to think about if I'm going toe to toe with someone who I know is what we'd term as a 'risk based supporter', so there's a fine line there between how far you will go.

However, a lot of us will do it not purely for the money. I would say that 80% of the people that work here do it because they love the club, like I do. I would call this more my hobby, this isn't my main stream of income. Yes, this might be a bit of beer money but it's mainly because I've got such a passion for the club that I want to support it the best way I can. I know that this is me doing my bit. I can't get on the pitch and play for them but I can make sure that everything around them is safe.

Interviewer: As a fan you must be thrilled that they're now in division one and 13th in that division.

Lee Redmond: It was like a dream come true when we finally got League status, when we finally got into League Two having been stuck in the Conference for around 15 years to finally get up to the Football League was exhilarating really. To actually know that I'm involved with the club at that point as well and knowing that our actions, although we're not playing on the pitch, but our actions have helped get the club there.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the atmosphere was like around the staff and the fans when they actually made it into the League One?

Lee Redmond: It was quite a strange sensation because we had been told... This story could take some time.

Interviewer: That's fine. (Laughter)

Lee Redmond: The chairman had said that there wouldn't be a pitch invasion whereas we knew, we were about to go up the football league, there's no way we're going to keep the people off the field.

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: Our difficulty was going to be not just... Once the first person gets on there they've committed an offence so what we must do, we just try to manage the situation, so people are on the pitch for long enough for them to have their celebrations but then to get them all off safely as well.

We've had a couple of different pitch invasions, unfortunately, and they all sort of merge into one in my mind. I'll just tell you this particular story where as chief steward... So we're on the pitch and we had a pitch invasion after we beat Newcastle, that was the famous incident when Scott Laird was – someone had decided that due to a domestic incident that had happened in his life that he wanted to come and punch him. That happened on the pitch.

Of course a lot of people said to us at that point, "Why didn't you prevent that?" Of course how could we protect every single player? The players' brief was if there's a pitch invasion you come off the pitch. About half the players didn't so therefore that made it very... They had a clear instruction if there was an invasion to come off the pitch as quickly as possible and because they didn't that was difficult for us.

Interviewer: Yes. I guess if the players are on the pitch then the supporters have got a reason to stay there.

Lee Redmond: Yes.

Interviewer: If they go off then they're more likely to go back.

Lee Redmond: Of course they are. Having quite a bit of experience on how it was going on, I was controlling it from the pitch and directly liaising via radio, so what happened after we had the incident with the player, of course I'm liaising with the safety officer over the radio and I'm just telling him exactly what is sort of going on.

We were told at one point that we needed to put a line of stewards away so we could make sure that no away people could come on the pitch and that sort of stuff. We knew that they weren't going to come on the pitch with that many home fans on the pitch, it was just not going to happen.

We're constantly changing our decisions and things, which we're doing because there are no written rules, these are so obscure things that happen. I'm liaising with the safety officer and I said, "Okay, I'm going to be..." I'm also talking to other supervisors and so I'm getting various groups of stewards together so we can then basically do a line. Well, not quite a line but where we're going to start, "Okay, they've now had ten minutes, right, now start asking people to leave."

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: I'll start off by saying to the players which are still on there, "Okay guys I want to clear the pitch now, if you can go off that would be great." That sort of thing. Once I've started to move the players off then we can say to the supporters that are on the pitch, "Okay, players are going off now, can you make your way back now please?"

I was quite cunning in the way I was getting supporters back onto the pitch, because we ensured that most of the pitch gates were all closed and I was pointing towards the corner pitch gate, which was where people were close to an exit where they could get out, but the main reason I chose that one, because that was where the police camera was so everyone who then was coming off the pitch was clocked by the camera.

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: Therefore if there's a future event, or they might do something, they've still got these tapes and they could say, "Look, this is a second offence rather than a first offence," and suddenly they've got something to go on.

Interviewer: It actually counts as an offence to go onto the pitch?

Lee Redmond: It is an offence to go on the field of play. That's the ground regulations and if they hang on on the pitch they could be arrested.

Interviewer: Do you ever use that as a threat for those who don't decide to go?

Lee Redmond: If somebody comes onto the pitch, if a whole group of players, sorry, if a whole group of supporters are intent on getting onto the pitch you're not going to stop them.

There was a bit of footage on, obviously I need to defend myself when I'm on my day job, people talk to me, "How did that happen?" I show them some footage which was on YouTube of one of, I think it was the guy that actually got on and he was the person who hit Scott Laird, but what happened at this point was that the person that he got by wasn't one of our stewards, it was a policeman.

Interviewer: No.

Lee Redmond: Where we had stewards trying to do that we had some police in there as well. This particular supporter got past the policeman, got through the line, and a lot of people would say well, why didn't we chase after him? Well, if we then chase after that one person then we've got a big gap.

Interviewer: The other people, yes.

Lee Redmond: So other people can come through. Once they're through unfortunately-

Interviewer: Yes, you can't stop what you're doing.

Lee Redmond: When they've finished doing whatever they wanted to do they've got to come off at some point and when they do they're going to be, if we've got police here, they're going to be arrested because it's an offence.

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: Yes, so there are incidents where we plan for the worst and hope for the best, and usually it's somewhere in the middle.

More of the time it's always on the positive side. We learn from all these different experiences, different crowds.

I mean, we've had a whole host of different sorts of supporters this year, more pockets of trouble than we've ever been used to. We remember from years going back in the Conference all our rivalry with Woking and Woking fans and all that sort of stuff, so it's like us playing Woking every week now. (Laughter)

Of course we've stepped up our game regarding – and we've got more experience on how we handle all of these different situations. We've got a lot more going for us now.

Interviewer: Do you get to experience the atmosphere on a match day among the fans or are you too busy working?

Lee Redmond: I do get to experience what the tension levels can be, because that always comes across, especially if it's one of these crunch games where we need to win. We need to win every game really, but where at some of these games we haven't been particularly playing our best you can feel the tension within that.

Also, when we're winning, for example, when we beat Sheffield Wednesday 5-0, the atmosphere was electric. It was so fantastic because on paper we should have lost by that score, so we can really sort of pick up.

Of course a lot of us are fans who are supporting so we're working as stewards, are fans as well. Part of our job is we have... I always say to the stewards, "Yes, you're here to watch the crowd and not to watch the match, however, you can't know why the crowd are acting in a certain way if you haven't got one eye on the field of play."

Interviewer: Yes.

Lee Redmond: “You need to know what’s going on on the pitch in order to judge what the crowd dynamic is going to be. Therefore it means you’ve got to watch a bit of the game, boys, sorry, but that’s just how it is, but you’re primary watching the crowd.”

Interviewer: I know you’re a steward here but do you attend away matches as well?

Lee Redmond: I’ve been to a few away matches but not many at this point in my life because of having young children so I don’t really attend the away ones. However, I thoroughly enjoy watching us when they win on the telly, which has been really good to do that. I do get to see at least some of the match while I’m here so I still feel like I’m giving my support to the club not just as a worker.

Interviewer: Do you see Stevenage going up even further in the tables?

Lee Redmond: I think we have got the passion to make it as far as the Championship. My personal feeling at the moment is let’s have a season or two in League One and establish ourselves as League One. That was the goal for last year, establish ourselves as a league club, and we win the play offs, wow.

Graham Westley did a fantastic job in basically doing what Paul Fairclough did for us, taking us from the Ryman through

to the Conference, this has been like a repeat performance for Stevenage in going from certain tiers in football to suddenly we're at League One.

Interviewer: Yes. It happened so fast as well.

Lee Redmond: Of course, yes. It's taken a lot of us really by surprise. A fantastic surprise to us. So many clubs in our position will go up to a higher league and come straight back down again. I think we're too good to do that. There is such a drive.

I hear the different managers talk to players afterwards, because I've got staff who are outside the referee's dressing room at the end of the game and that sort of stuff, so if we've had a particularly bad game I can hear, and even when I thought we've had a good game, I can hear lots of shouting coming from our dressing room.

Where they're a passionate bunch of guys in there and Graham has got such a drive that he needs the players to understand where he's coming from, and I think that's why sometimes, I mean, obviously does that as well at half time, sometimes we come out a totally different team.

Interviewer: Yes. Would you say the level of football now is a lot higher than it used to be?

Lee Redmond: Definitely. They've definitely raised the game. I always used to say that when we were in the Conference the ball was mostly in the air, and football is a control game where – so you keep

the ball on the ground. I'm pleased to say that that ball isn't in the air as much anymore so they're doing something right.

Interviewer: That's brilliant. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Lee Redmond: Only that part of the operation which I was just talking about having players outside the, sorry, I said players, I meant stewards outside the room of the officials after the game. So certain games I go on, and the other supervisor, to get the referee at half time or full time and sort of escort them off and it's quite funny sometimes that when some of the supporters want to, as we're going off, want to hurl abuse at the referee.

Interviewer: Really?

Lee Redmond: Or whatever. Sometimes if they start shouting or whatever, on occasion, I'm not sure if the referee needs to be put at ease at that point but I've said to the referee, "I don't know why they call me that." Or something, "I don't know why they're always having a go at me." You know, try-

Interviewer: Makes them feel a bit better.

Lee Redmond: Yes, basically we're there for their protection. Just to make them know that we're also there as a witness, so if someone says something I'm an independent witness there and we go through the argy-bargy in the tunnel before which we've had to-

Interviewer: Between two teams?

Lee Redmond: Between different teams, yes. Managers who want to have words, they're not going to have words outside but once they get-

Interviewer: They actually have-

Lee Redmond Yes.

Interviewer: Managers have them?

Lee Redmond: Yes, there are all sorts of things that can go on. Not necessarily the managers but between the support staff, so managerial team rather than managers in particular. We're also there to do that as well, so we have to be in quite a few places at once sometimes.

Interviewer: Yes, and I guess because you're organising all the others you have to make sure they're all in the right place at the right time.

Lee Redmond: Of course, yes. I try and make sure I'm in as much contact with the safety officer as I can, because he's the one that's going to be questioned about things. We've all got our notebooks and we write various bits down and we ensure that, as I said, we

work as quite a closely knit team. Basically we've had to step up our game the same way as the football team on the pitch has.

Interviewer: Yes. Anything else you'd like to add at all?

Lee Redmond: No, just that prior to coming today I looked on the web regarding – to see what I could find out and there is an old photograph and it was on one of these old football teams, talking about kits and things. You can probably find it on the web as well but I'll leave all this stuff with you.

Interviewer: Brilliant.

Lee Redmond: It's from season 1980 to 1981. The team's all in red. I can see on the left we've got Derek Montgomery and then we've got, first player on the far left at the back, who I'm pointing to is, this is a guy called Danny Dance who this was one of my idols when I was – who I supported.

I can remember them going out to have this photograph. When I just looked at the picture I could find myself standing right in the background.

Interviewer: So you're actually in the picture?

Lee Redmond: That is me there. So there's me.

Interviewer: That's brilliant, so you've got a little memorabilia now.

Lee Redmond: Yes, I'm sure you'll be able to find out who's got the copyright of this photograph and be able to use it, I'm sure.

Interviewer: Is your dad in the picture as well?

Lee Redmond: He's not. No, I actually emailed my father about this and he said to me, "Yes, that's definitely you, easily," and my dad said, "I was in the dug out area, as the physio guys etc. didn't get to be in photos." (Laughter)

Interviewer: You're very lucky. That's really good.

Lee Redmond: I've got a few things I'll leave with you which is some memories my father did, but he mainly played for Redbrook but he had been involved with here as well so I'll leave that for you.

Interviewer: Brilliant. How was he involved, did he work here?

Lee Redmond: My father was physio for the club back in the early '80s.

Interviewer: Yes, you said, yes sorry.

Lee Redmond: Yes, so that was my chance to sort of come along. I came along with him and that's how I got to meet all these different people. I had the best seat in the house watching the games during the early '80s from the dug out. That's where I watched all the football from. I didn't see all the game, like now because I was Montgomery's runner.

Interviewer: That's brilliant that you found that picture. That's a nice keepsake as well.

Lee Redmond: Definitely, yes. I was amazed when I looked at it and saw, look, I'm even in the picture, wow.

Interviewer: That's brilliant.

END AUDIO

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