

File: BMD Paul Robinson.mp3

Duration: 0:50:40

Date: 09/08/2016

Typist: 815

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Interviewer: What's your name and could you spell it for me please?

Paul Robinson: Yes, it's Paul Robinson.

Interviewer: That's leaked, the pen. All in my pocket. Paul..?

Paul Robinson: Robinson. That's R O B I N S O N. And I'm one of the match day safety stewards.

Interviewer: Okay. and how long have you been doing that?

Paul Robinson: Well, this is my first season with Stevenage Borough and I also do the hospitality sometimes and the bar suite as well. So I look after that before the games, sometimes I do the bar. Obviously then go inside the ground.

Interviewer: Okay. So have you done this before somewhere else? Another club?

Paul Robinson: Yes, I also used to work at Luton Town Football Club and I also worked for Wembley Stadium in the Bobby Moore suite, the corporate area in Wembley Stadium. But I actually started off in football with Stevenage Borough.

I was given the opportunity obviously to start as a normal steward and I did my NVQ2 in football safety stewarding 18 months ago. I tend to be a bit of a multitasker, because of my experience in other security. I tend to be moved around quite a bit.

I used to do the home supporters and I used to do the tunnel and obviously I've done the stretcher as well. And then I did the east terrace and now I'm assigned to the away end. So I tend to be down the away end at the moment. So practically all around the grounds.

Interviewer: So what brought you to Stevenage?

Paul Robinson: Well, what it is, I'm a local boy. I came to Stevenage in 1971. I could be honest with you that I'd heard of Stevenage Borough, I never used to go to the matches. My younger brother, when he was in his teens, he was actually quite a good footballer and he actually played a few times for Stevenage Borough. And he actually played for North Herts County as well, he was a goalkeeper.

Although he didn't quite make it, he was- played a few times at Borough. I've seen him a few times, years ago. And then I- being a Londoner or whatever, I used to come to the- the fixture used to be the Tottenham preseason friendly.

My first real experience of when I actually- when I actually realised obviously that I liked the football and I actually thought- I looked around at the stewards and thought maybe I could make a career out of it was when I was at- I took my young boy, he was only seven, to his first game. And it was Tottenham Spurs pre-season friendly, which is held every year.

And thoroughly enjoyed it, enjoyed the atmosphere. And then I was already- I was a previous friend with Steve Fanthorpe, who's the Head Safety Officer. Approached him and said, "Look, is there any chance of becoming a steward?" and it sort of went on from there really.

Interviewer: So what- how many days a week are you here?

Paul Robinson: Well, ___[0:02:58] is depending on the season and obviously cup games and Carling Cup games. It's normally at least one game a fortnight, but sometimes you get two in a week, because you'll get a midweek game and a Saturday game as well.

We normally start about one, on our post for about half one and then we normally finish obviously about half hour, three quarters of an hour after the game, once all the stadium has been cleared and we've done our safety checks and cleared the stadium.

Interviewer: So you don't have to come in any other time?

Paul Robinson: No. As you say, I'm- I'm only employed as what they call a match day steward, so I'm only here on match days.

Interviewer: So are there other roles for the same- doing the same sort of thing?

Paul Robinson: No. As I say, the grounds staff- you've always got ground staff, maintenance, players, coaches, whatever, but there's about 40 of us, I think, that are match day stewards.

The one thing I like about it is that in the three seasons that I've been here, people very rarely leave. There's- some stewards have been here for 20 years and it is like a big family, you know. We all get to know each other and build up relationships and at Christmas they go out for a drink and stuff.

So it's- the same as the club, it's a very friendly, family club and we all know each other. Yes, it's very good to work with. You build up a good team spirit amongst each section.

Interviewer: So you said you're now on away.

Paul Robinson: Yes, the away end, yes.

Interviewer: Any particular one you prefer?

Paul Robinson: I actually- I actually prefer the away end. I find that the away end, for me, professionally is more of a challenge. Because one of the things obviously with a modern day steward is it's

not- a lot of it now is about enforcing health and safety, regarding smoking, drinking, not dancing in the aisles, standing on the steps.

And the regular home fans, it's their ground, they know what to do each week. But you get traveling away fans, different rules in their ground and obviously we have to say, "Look, in this ground it's this and this." And we have to sort of explain why they can't do these certain things in our ground as opposed to another ground.

And sometimes, yes, it can be a challenge. And also as well, it's- when you go- the other week with Charlton you get a full ground, 1600, 1700 people, screaming away fans. Can be quite a challenge.

And the other thing as well is that the challenge mainly for us, which is why obviously being the away end is a very important job, is we have to be objective. Obviously we have to be objective and we have to enforce the ground regulations, but at the same time, we want people to come back. We want them to enjoy the match.

And the thing- the biggest challenge is as well, and sometimes it's difficult, is you have to remain neutral. Which sometimes, you know, at the end of the day, yes, I am a Stevenage lad, but we have to be seen to be neutral to them.

So yes, it's a bit of a challenge sometimes not to- when Stevenage score to get too excited. You have to try and sort of make sure you don't show too much emotion, because that can upset them.

Interviewer: So what do you do in the bar?

Paul Robinson: Well, what I tend to do is because I've actually got an SIA licence, because now obviously the legislation over the years has changed, they have to have what are called licenced doormen. And I do licenced door work as well.

So what I do is I normally come in early, so on match days at 12 o' clock, and I have to go into the bar area and obviously basically have to look after the home and away fans before the match in the pre-match build-up, where they obviously meet and have a drink and chat in the bar etcetera. Just to make sure everyone behaves themselves and nobody gets too drunk before they go into the game.

So yes, I tend to have a nice job, so I'll go in there first. And I'll meet the home and away fans and obviously like, you know, then the match starts and I come into here.

Interviewer: So you said you had to have an NVQ or you did an NVQ.

Paul Robinson: I did an NVQ2 in spectator and football safety. It's something that has been introduced and at one time, it wasn't- it wasn't compulsory. But I think the way it's going, it- I think as you go up the leagues as well, it's something that will have to be compulsory in the end.

It's a good course. There is obviously a few days of coursework, there's not too much written work, but there's a lot of- there's a big oral exam and obviously we have to be assessed by an NVQ2 assessor regarding safety procedures. Where the entrance and exit points are, how the ground works, basically how, as a steward, the job you perform from when you come in to when you go home.

Can you do it effectively, safely, within the ground regulations?
And making sure obviously everybody has an enjoyable
experience. So it's a good certificate to have.

Interviewer: So have they taken on more stewards since?

Paul Robinson: Yes, they have. I mean, one of the things is obviously there's
certain percentages you have to have, apparently, depending
on the gate. So you have to have one per whatever.

So normally it can vary from sort of 35 to 45 stewards,
depending on the game. But there's a minimum requirement
by law to open a stadium. So they have to have a certain
amount of people before they can actually open the stadium.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy it?

Paul Robinson: Very much so.

Interviewer: You sound like you do.

Paul Robinson: Yes, very much so. As I say, like most men, I am a football fan.
I do enjoy it. And I'll be honest with you, I don't necessarily do
it for the money. The money's handy, but I probably would-
you know, provided I covered my traveling costs and getting
here, I'd probably do it for nothing, to be honest.

I don't tell them that obviously, because it'll be all about
money, but yes, I would probably do it for nothing.

And the funny story is, we had a guy that had been a steward for oh, 20 years. A friend of mine as well. He was semi-retired. He said, "Do you know what, I'm packing it in. I've had enough. I want to be on the other side. I want to sit and watch."

A season later he asked to come back. He missed it. He missed us, he missed the atmosphere and he just missed being a steward. Excuse me. So he came back.

Interviewer: Why do you think it's different for him?

Paul Robinson: I think whatever- what he actually missed, I think personally, was the camaraderie amongst us stewards. Because there are times where, you know, you do have to help each other out.

Don't get me wrong, we do sometimes- very rarely, but do we get conflict. That unfortunately is a fact of modern life. So there are times when we do have to, you know, broach people in confrontational situations.

You might have to walk into a crowd of 30, 40 people that are a little bit hostile, shall we say. Say to someone, "Can you take your seat?" or "Can you not do this?" or "Can you not stand in the aisle?"

So yes, we do have to play a role. And obviously the camaraderie is you know you're a team, you obviously know you work as a team, you've got the backup and everything else.

And that's one of the things that I like about Stevenage Borough is that right from the top to the bottom- I mean, obviously even when I come in on match days, like the ball boys, the programme seller, the bloke- the guys that look after

the pitch. They all say “Hello, how are you? How’s your family?” or whatever and it’s good. That’s what I like about it. It always has been a good, family club.

Interviewer: So you said about conflicts, have you got anything that comes to mind of a particular incident?

Paul Robinson: Yes. I mean, one in particular was we did have trouble last Charlton match. And what it is, it was a sell-out game and everybody’s gone ____ [0:11:19]. And unfortunately, what happens is in real life people don’t tend to buy the tickets together, so they- they might buy two but they’ll want to stand together.

And we had a particular group of lads, about 30 or 40 of them that were quite, you know, quite- they’d had a few beers, they were lively. They were, you know, they were a difficult crowd to deal with.

And we had problems with them standing on the aisles and under modern day health and safety- a lot of this goes back to the Hillsborough Disaster. Obviously we have to make sure the aisles are clear for evacuation purposes.

And they basically would not take their seats. They got quite aggressive. I mean, we did- one or two of them I had to say, “Look, if you don’t move for us, then we will have to ask the police to move you.” It was a the stage where it was a Mexican standoff.

And in the end, the Head Safety Officers agreed as well and so did the police that it was safer to let them stand in the corner, because there’s no way in the middle of the match we were going to try and get them all to go back to their seats.

So it was a case of managing the situation, keep them calm, keep them in an area obviously where they...

Interviewer: What were they doing then? Standing in one of the aisles?

Paul Robinson: Yes, they were standing in the aisles, all trying to stand together. But because it wasn't their seat, obviously that wasn't their particular seat, they had a seat number. But they wouldn't go to their seat, because their seat was over there and they wanted to be with their friends.

So in the end, they were put in the corner all together and the police were there, we were there and just make sure obviously they behave themselves.

So yes, that was obviously- and quite often that's what it is. You have to think on your feet. You can never be too complacent. And it's all part of the job. But it's all challenging. And no two games are different, no two games are different.

Interviewer: So why are- why are the away fans seated then and not standing like over there? Do you know?

Paul Robinson: Well, what it is, is that especially since obviously like, over the years and especially since the Hillsborough Disaster, they've been trying over the years to get rid of terracing. And as you- and there are certain regulations that I'm aware of but basically aware of is each league has certain rules and regulations.

And the higher you go up the league, the more you have to have all seated. And I think when you go up, I think, to the next

division then the club has two years, I think, to make it all seated. There are plans to redevelop the ground to make it all seated.

Interviewer: I know that they are redeveloping that down there.

Paul Robinson: Yes, that's right. Eventually they will probably make it all seated.

Interviewer: Yes. Do you think it's different? Because a lot of the guys I've had in, obviously stand over there, they prefer over there to here. Do you think it's different, from your point of view?

Paul Robinson: Oh, definitely. I mean, the atmosphere's different, the whole atmosphere's different to people who sit down and stand up. The- what I call the hard core football fans prefer to stand.

Because the whole atmosphere of football, it does get passionate, they are passionate about their club and about their sport. And they just feel that sitting in a seat, you know, being told to sit down sometimes, it takes the passion away. And what they would call the hard core football fans.

But then again, as I said before, it's good in this ground that we've got that, because a lot of places haven't. They are all seater now and it's a different atmosphere. Modern game, modern regulations.

Interviewer: Has there ever been a time where you've had a problem with home fans and away fans fighting or anything like that?

Paul Robinson: Yes. I mean, there was one particular match that was either I think- there's local rivalry between us and Luton Town. And Luton Town- because I've worked at Luton Town Football Club as well and Luton Town have got a particular hooligan element.

They used to be a big league club and they were basically demoted and they've got a very, very hard core hooligan element. And they always, wherever they go, take a lot of what we call trouble fans.

And that day was- there were riot police, there were helicopters, there were dogs, there were horses. They were throwing coins, you know, there were fights before the game, after the game.

Yes, that was probably the worst one I've done regarding what I would say is crowd behaviour and crowd violence.

But fortunately, in modern day football stadiums, you don't get hardly any- very, very few incidents actually inside the ground, because we stamp on it straight away. You know, you've got police backup and you'll find that most stadiums now...

And they're trying to promote it back to the old days, with the families and like at this club, you have family enclosures. And obviously the stamp out racism. We're very, very hot on stamping out racism.

You get one warning, I think second warning you're out and that is an arrestable charge.

Interviewer: And what is that, if somebody says something or..?

Paul Robinson: Oh yes. Any form of homophobic or racist abuse. Obviously you're approached by a steward to basically tell them that you've heard it. We've got CCTV backup now, so we can get them on camera.

If they say it again, they're approached by the person who originally noted it and a supervisor and told any more, you will be charged and arrested. You will be escorted from the ground and obviously the third time is a criminal offence.

And they do- the police- we've had a couple, I think, one or two over the years. But they are very, very hot on it and that is it. Any homophobic, racist abuse is totally stamped out in the football ground.

Interviewer: Do you think that's something that's got better? Do you think people are more racists and..?

Paul Robinson: Oh, definitely. I mean, I was growing up in the 80s and 90s. Even on television you used to see it, the racism was just terrible. You know, it was something that, you know, that was rife in football, to the stage of where it was- they had to stamp down on it.

And the FA and the stewards and everybody else, it's very, very rare now. There's still a few idiots, but yes, on the whole everybody knows now that it's just not acceptable and that's it. And it is a criminal offence and you get a banning order and you get banned from your club, a banning order. And you also get a total ban from football, any club in the country.

Interviewer: Really?

Paul Robinson: Oh yes. Total banning order, yes.

Interviewer: So does- do you have police every match?

Paul Robinson: What tends to happen is, is that the police, the local council, the club itself, they all meet up or whatever and basically they talk with the club and the Head Safety Officer. And they decide on the game in categories.

You have a cat A, B and C. Now, if it's a category C, they class it as a low risk game and with soccer intelligence, they have this thing now where the clubs talk to each other.

So if they know they've got a hooligan element and they know they're traveling up, they all talk together now, those clubs, and they said, "Look, we've got a few idiots that we know." And quite often- we had one last season, there was a coach that was pulled up before it even got here.

So the police know, they pull them up before they get here and say, "Look guys, you're going no further." And they don't even get in the ground. They don't even get in the ground, no.

Interviewer: Where was that coming from?

Paul Robinson: That- I can't remember. It was up north somewhere, but there was a minibus full of them. But the soccer intelligence is so

good now, they just pull them up and say, "Guys, away you go, go home. You're not getting anywhere near the ground."

Interviewer: So it's their team, the team they've come down to support have notified..?

Paul Robinson: The Head Safety Officer and the club speak to their club and obviously they then say, "Look, we've got these idiots." And if it's a real, real hooligan element, we get- it's a real, real what they call a hooligan, who's on a banning order, they sometimes give out the full information, description of the person who's going to be here. And if anybody sees them, to contact the police automatically.

And depending on the game, if it's a category C, which they feel is a very low risk game, they have a couple outside. We always have police spotters. We have normally three or four in uniform and we have a couple of what they call plain clothes.

But like, the big games, like the one coming up this Saturday is a category B, where they will have obviously a bigger police presence, they will have a police unit outside and they will have more police presence, depending on the game. That's how they work it out.

Interviewer: Why is that considered..?

Paul Robinson: Simply because Sheffield United are a big club, they used to be up in the Premiership. They're expecting maybe a sell-out crowd, so it's big gates, big crowd. They're traveling from Sheffield, they'll be coming down by coaches, they'll come

down for the day. They possibly will be drinking on the coach. They're going to get here early, go to the bars.

Because all local bars in Stevenage- all local bars in Stevenage- and the police intelligence works as well. So yes, they're very good.

Interviewer: So what's a category A?

Paul Robinson: Category A is similar to what they call in the Premiership. And the category A, I mean, let's just take today, you had Arsenal Chelsea. The London derbies, the big derbies, they're classed as category A. And if you have category A, that means...

Because like, when we did the Luton game, which I described earlier, that was classed as a category A, because I think they had their dogs, horses, police helicopter. Basically did the full works, because they were expecting trouble before, during and after the game. So that's the police that made that decision.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any incident where you thought that- they thought that it was going to be okay and then all of a sudden it wasn't?

Paul Robinson: No. To be honest with you, I mean, I- I can honestly say, this is my first season in the club, I can probably put on one hand really what I would call real trouble incidents.

You know, nothing more than boisterousness, a bit of lively, a bit of language, but nothing really that I would say would

warrant the attention that football gets sometimes. It's all dealt with quite quickly.

Interviewer: Do you get a chance to watch a game or are you watching the people?

Paul Robinson: To be honest with you, it's a very difficult one. Because the thing is, depending on where you're positioned- when I did the tunnel, I had to watch the game. Because if you're doing the tunnel, part of your job on the tunnel is you've got to get the dynamics of the game and the crowd behind you.

So it's quite difficult, because A, you have to keep your ear behind you, but you're always watching the game, because there's a stretcher. And for any time there's an incident on the field where a player goes down, we've got to react with the stretcher out.

Also, if there's a sending off, we have to pull the tunnel out. So when you're on tunnel, you have to really keep an eye on the game. At the same time obviously be aware that there is a crowd behind you.

If say, you're on the east terrace, you tend to find however that the poor person there is stuck on the gate with their back to the game all game. They don't see any of it.

So it tends to be swings and roundabouts. And what they do here is- I mean, there's a gate over there, I think it's this one. They call it Windy Corner. Now, in the winter there's a gate here by the burger bar.

They take it in turns. They call it Windy Corner, it's freezing cold, you don't see any of the game at all, it's only an entry and

exit gate. And that poor steward is standing by there and the toilets all day.

So they tend to like, they rotate you around, because everyone has to do a turn. So obviously there are gates where you don't see any of the game. And obviously on the away end as well, the away end is a bit of a mixed jar as well.

You're, if you like- where you're on the tunnel, you're probably 80 20%, 80% on the game, 20% on the crowd. On the away end, you're probably 70% on the crowd, 30% on the game. Because you still have to be aware and every now and again keep looking at the game, see if there's a penalty.

Because what it is, when there's an incident, we have to stand up.

Interviewer: Yes, and the crowd reacts, don't they, to the game?

Paul Robinson: That's right, yes. It's the dynamics of the crowd. And as well at the end, we actually- because I mean, I think there was one a couple of seasons ago who got arrested and after the Newcastle game there was a guy that got arrested on the pitch. He actually assaulted a player last season.

Interviewer: Oh.

Paul Robinson: Yes, after the Newcastle game. Someone ran on and assaulted one of the players. So obviously what we do is we have to make sure that all our stewards are in position, to try

and stop a pitch invasion. So that's something we have to do at the end of each match.

Interviewer: How did he manage that? Did he just jump over?

Paul Robinson: I think after the investigation, I think it was a case afterwards. But yes, it was a case of he- it was a personal feud with one of the players. And he came out. It was nothing to do with football, it was a personal feud. It was in the newspapers and everything, national news.

But yes, he actually jumped the fence and just ran on and- yes, so you know, and one of the things as well is that people don't realise, one of the things as well is that football is very passionate. A very passionate, very fiery game and tempers do get frayed.

We have had managers sent off, we've had players sent off who are substitutes and have been sent off. And you know, there are times when even at this level in the Premiership, you see it where the managers- and when he's the fourth official and the referee, we've had managers sent off, got a red card.

Because they're passionate, you know, and they've been told off for their swearing and told to calm down or whatever. Yes, so we've had everything really.

Interviewer: So do you get a chance to meet like, the players and things like that? Have you met the players? Are you interested?

Paul Robinson: To be honest with you, I haven't really. I mean, because I do my multitasking, I go around the stadium. I've met them a couple of times and they say hello to me and obviously shake their hand.

When I used to do the tunnel, they used to come out or shake my hand and whatever, so yes, I've met a few of the players.

But normally as well, one of the things we used to do after the game or whatever, we used to look after the security of the refs. Because one of the things that can happen, and obviously like, it's unfortunate, is that after the game, if the managers or the players have- it hasn't gone their way, it has been known that they try and get into the ref's room.

So we used to have to stand on the door and make sure no one goes in and...

Interviewer: Beats them up?

Paul Robinson: Well not necessarily beats them up, but I mean, beat them up is a bit strong. But basically, it can get very verbally heated.

You know, if they've had a bad game and they feel that the decisions have gone wrong, tempers flare. So one of the things we do is we have to make sure that the referees are safe.

Because after every game, a member from the FA comes in and they knock on the door and what they do is every game is on DVD. Every single game is on- is analysed.

Interviewer: Really?

Paul Robinson: Yes. Every single game, the referees are analysed and what it is, the managers get a copy, the club gets a copy. So they can study everything, right from the beginning.

So if a manager says they get upset that their player was sent off, they can go through the DVD. And if they feel that it was- that they can appeal to the FA for a red card descended, etcetera.

So yes, people don't realise. I mean, with modern day CCTV and- it's like CCTV, they also do a- I'm relief CCTV person, so I've done CCTV here.

Yes, so very rarely, but one of the guys, if he's off, I do the CCTV as well. So you can actually zoom in- you can actually zoom in up someone's nose, you can get in that close.

Interviewer: Really?

Paul Robinson: Yes.

Interviewer: So is it like, one- how many screens? Is it multiple screen?

Paul Robinson: We've got- I think it was 27 cameras, they've got 6 or 8 mobile cameras that can be any angle, zoom in, obviously zoom in, zoom out. And they've got 18 I think fixed cameras all around the ground that can monitor every area of the ground. And there's also one pointing outside, so we do crowd control as well.

Because one of the things that people forget is, going back to steward, it's getting the people in the ground and getting out of the ground. And some people forget.

It's not about obviously while the game is going on, because what we have to do is- sometimes on the big games, I do searches as well. We have to do outside searches and obviously we have to make sure people coming in having had too many drinks or the odd occasion where they might be carrying something that is on the ban list. Whether it's drugs or an aerosol or a weapon, if that was the case.

And then once they're gone, we have to sweep all the stands for suspicious packages and stuff like that. So yes, there's quite a lot to it really. It's good, it's varied.

Interviewer: Yes. So can you see all those cameras on one screen? Is it multiple screens?

Paul Robinson: Yes, you've got- you've got a big VDU and you can- there's a little joystick and you can just press a button and you can zoom in to any camera. So you can go from the east terrace camera to the south terrace camera. And all you do is you just zoom in and go around the stadium or whatever.

The supervisor is radio linked, so if they said, "Oh, by the way, I've got trouble at the east terrace," you can click on the east terrace camera, zoom right in, pinpoint who they are. Because it's recording all the time. So obviously you can record them and then they can go up there and talk to them. It's for their safety as well and obviously if anything happens it's all recorded on the incident log. It's a pretty good system.

Interviewer: Yes. So when people are coming in, are stewards outside as well then?

Paul Robinson: Yes, we have a few stewards outside. Same again, it depends on the category of the game. But on the big games, we have stewards outside who are basically there just to keep an eye on who's coming in.

We do random bag searches and obviously that's something that we do to make sure there aren't any illegal substances or alcohol coming in. Because as you know, alcohol is completely prohibited in the ground.

So obviously if someone had a few cans or whatever they're told, "Look, you know, go out on the road and drink them or dispose of them." So yes, we do that as well.

Interviewer: And as people are leaving as well?

Paul Robinson: As people are leaving, what's happened is, once the gates are open, the gates will be opened at 85 minutes, there's always a steward on each gate. And obviously there's police outside and there are static cameras on each gate. So each gate is monitored by CCTV as well. So they can see people going out. So it's all monitored on CCTV as well. Yes, it's a pretty good system.

Interviewer: So you said you worked at Luton. Was that before here?

Paul Robinson: I did it before here and at one time I was doing both clubs. At one time I was doing Luton and Stevenage.

Interviewer: Oh right. How does that work? Can you? It doesn't matter?

Paul Robinson: Well, you can. You can, because at the end of the day, there's nothing stopping you do it. But I found, I'll be honest, I was doing both clubs, sometimes games clashed and this season I decided to- my allegiance is with Stevenage Borough.

Because I was doing both clubs, which was fine, but I decided that my allegiance is here, I preferred it here, so I actually left Luton last year. And no I'm fully focused and committed to Stevenage.

Interviewer: So what was the difference between the two?

Paul Robinson: Well, the difference between the two is that one of the things with Luton Town is capacity. I mean, I think this holds about 6 ½ thousand, Luton holds about 11. So you've got- you've got a much, much bigger capacity crowd.

The thing is as well, with Luton Football Club, with their hooligan element there are a lot more police, there is always trouble outside the ground. It is a completely different atmosphere.

Here, as I said before, I've got to admit, we are doing a good job and it is a very, very- you know, going the right way. It's a family run club, we stamp out on hooligans and people come here with their families.

Luton tends to be- they're trying to change it, but there's still a lot of the, shall we say idiots, at Luton. It was actually on the television, the York City game, there was a riot that was on Sky Sports in six minutes.

Interviewer: Oh, was there?

Paul Robinson: Yes, there was a riot. Yes, there was a pitch invasion. It was a the play-off game and there was a pitch invasion, there was a- the players were being- players had to hide in the stands, they were throwing coins at them. There was a big pitch battle.

Yes, there were police on the pitch, things being thrown, seats being ripped up. It was a proper full on pitch invasion. It was on Sky Sports News and I was there that day.

Interviewer: Really?

Paul Robinson: Oh yes. And what it is, every single steward that was there, they had the police soccer unit and someone else that came round my house. They took a written statement and even now, nearly 18 months ago, I still get letters from the police service to say who's been nicked.

Interviewer: What was that like? Was it frightening?

Paul Robinson: Very. It was- because what it was, one of the things that Stevenage used to do and actually they stopped doing it in the end- we used to do a steward share scheme, where we're- Stevenage used to supply Luton with stewards.

And there used to be a team of us, about half a dozen of us used to go. When there wasn't a game, we used to do Luton as well and that's how I got into Luton Football Club.

And we- it was extra money for us and we had a little team of our own and they gave us the away end, so we were looking after the away fans.

But on that particular day, I mean, one of our- he's not here today, but one of our supervisors, there was I think a broom or some weapon thrown, missed her by inches from her head. Yes, it was proper full on, 80s style violence.

I mean, there was baton charging by the police, police dogs. It was very, very nasty. And there was a massive investigation by the Football Association. And as I say now, 18 months later, I think there's about 2 or 3 that are going to go to Crown Court and they could get anything from 7 to 10 years.

It was proper organised, full on 80s violence, which is something obviously that they thought had gone. But yes, it was quite terrifying. Because when you've got 1,000- when you've got 1,000 plus fans and over half of them want to storm the pitch, yes. One to remember, shall we say.

Interviewer: Yes. You said 'she', how many female stewards have you got? Are there many female stewards?

Paul Robinson: Yes, I think it's probably 60 40. We have got- we have got a fair amount of female stewards, which is good. Because one of the things that obviously- especially regarding- because don't forget, in the modern game and it's a fact that more women are coming to football.

It's not just about, you know, men going to football. You've got women and families and obviously you've got female toilets, you've got female searches. You know, so yes, so this club is pretty good. We've got quite a good balance, because it's not a male dominated game anymore. Which is good.

Interviewer: Yes. Have you noticed that there's more women in the stands?

Paul Robinson: I have, I have. I mean, I've noticed- I've noticed each season that there have been more females, which is good. And obviously I've noticed- and the reason is, is because they do actually by law have to have them as well.

When it comes to searches, a female can search a female, but a male can't. So males can't search females, so if you're going outside searches, it has to be female to female.

Interviewer: Yes, so females can search males?

Paul Robinson: Yes, they can search both. So yes, but that is law. So you do have to have females that are trained in searches.

But it's good, you know. End of the day, it needs it and also, as well, what I've found as well is that sometimes- I'm a man, I'll be honest with you. And men, especially in football, testosterone, they're very passionate and quite often a female steward can actually calm a situation down better than a man.

Because, you know, if there's any conflict there, men are obviously territorial, full of testosterone, gets a bit- and a

female steward sometimes will walk in and calm it down a little bit better than a male can.

Interviewer: Yes. So had you been to any games here- I know you said about was it your brother?

Paul Robinson: Yes, my brother used to play. My brother used to play a bit for the youth team and stuff and then I came to the Stevenage Tottenham game every year. That was a fantastic day.

Interviewer: Are you Tottenham?

Paul Robinson: I'm a Spurs fan, yes. So that was brilliant. Every year they used to have a pre-season friendly, so I used to come every year for that. And then I used- and then I didn't actually follow them much, to be honest. But obviously now I'm still a Tottenham fan, but obviously I...

And I also went to the Stevenage- obviously today it's all about history of the club and memories and one of the memories for me is I went to the FA Vase, I went to Aston Villa. I went to Aston Villa for a day out. That was good, took my boy and we had a great day up at Aston Villa. We lost that game 3-1.

And then another fantastic memory for me, my youngest boy who's 13 now, I think he was 11, when we went to the FA trophy 3 years ago, I'd never been to new Wembley. I work there now, but I hadn't been to new Webley before. He'd been, I hadn't.

So we went up to that game, we took a coach up and- because he used to play for a local football team. Because my boy as well used to play for a local football team and he sometimes used to be a ball boy. Yes, so my boy did ball boying here for his local team.

Interviewer: So did you come down here with him?

Paul Robinson: Yes, well, sometimes what I used to do, before I actually started- what it is, before I started as a steward, I took him to a couple of matches and one day I was down here, took him to the match and obviously where he was ball boying.

And that's going back to the story of how I got into stewarding. Because I just thought, "Do you know what?" and that's when I came in and said, "You got any jobs?" and it went on from there. Here I am.

Interviewer: Yes, great. So what was that like going up to Wembley? Did you go with the Stevenage Borough fans or did you go separately?

Paul Robinson: No, I- yes, I went on one of the Stevenage coaches. I went on one of the Stevenage coaches. Yes, that was a great day. I mean, I think there were about 20 coaches that day. We all met in the carpark over there and went up with the fans and stuff.

It was a cracking day out. But I mean, we lost, but it was- it was a game that you'll never forget. Because you say about memories, it went down from 11 players to 9.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Paul Robinson: Yes, it was a crazy game. And one of our guys- we'd already made a substitute and one of our- I can't remember his name off the top of my head, but one of our guys, he got elbowed in the face and it he broke his jaw and he was unconscious for five minutes.

And the guy, the guy who did it, got done for assault by the FA. Oh yes, it was a proper full on- and it was just my first at Wembley as well. So it was a fantastic day out and experience.

Interviewer: And you took your son?

Paul Robinson: Yes, I took my son with me. And then probably for me, the next- the biggest game I've actually done, which for me is very personal as well, and in fact I've got one coming up as well- my little lad's birthday is on 7th January and last- two seasons ago, they played Newcastle in the FA Cup.

And I was working, my parents took my lad and a couple of his friends, so they were here. And obviously I was stewarding and obviously that was a fantastic match. I was in the tunnel and we beat them. What a day that was.

And then afterwards we took my boy for a carvery down the road to celebrate his birthday. And then this year now, my daughter, my daughter works in the burger bar.

Interviewer: Oh, does she?

Paul Robinson: Yes, yes, my daughter is 16. She works in the east terrace on the burger bar, so on match day she comes down with me, I drop her off and she works in the burger bar. So she does a bit on the burger bar now and then she comes home with me, so she works on the burgers.

Interviewer: Did you get her the job?

Paul Robinson: Yes, I got her the job. Yes, because what it was, she was coming up for 15, 16 and she said, "Oh, can you get me a job, Dad?" and I said, "Well, I'll have a word." And then yes, so she started this season. She loves it. She does the burgers.

That's what I said at the beginning, it is very much a family club and a lot of the time people get jobs because they know each other. And there are a lot of them in like- one of the stewards here, there's husband, wife and son.

So a lot of it is like, you know, and Steve does try to sort of get recommendations off people. So everybody- you know, we are like one big family really. And it is good. It's one of the reasons why we all enjoy it.

There's no- yes, we've got supervisors, we've got a chain of command, but you don't get that in this club. You know, going back to your question, in Luton sometimes I think it was a bit impersonal. You know, obviously, like... But here, we all work together. And that's what I like about being in this club.

Interviewer: So what's the game coming up that's important to you?

Paul Robinson: Well, there are two coming up for me. I mean, obviously you've got Sheffield United, which is this Saturday, which is obviously a big fixture for this club. Obviously same again, I mean, they're expecting big fans and they're an ex-Premiership team and that's going to be a big, big hype game.

But for me personally, there's MK Dons on the 7th. And MK Dons obviously are ones that are trying to get up the leagues. MK Dons is only in Milton Keynes, my dad's cousin runs a business and he's got a season ticket at MK Dons.

My parents were from Stevenage, but my dad's cousin, sometimes they go to MK Dons and on that particular day I think I've got about 10 people coming. I've got my parents, my dad's cousin, his wife, my youngest boy, I'll be working, my daughter will be working and my eldest boy is coming as well.

So same again, they're all going to come down, I'll get them all tickets and I'll work, ___[0:42:36] working with me, we'll have a little party and my lad's birthday down the...

And also as well, my girlfriend's- well, my daughter's boyfriend goes in the army the next day, so we're going to have a little celebration as well. So hopefully that will be a good day and hopefully we can beat MK Dons and go down and have a little meal and a few drinks afterwards.

Interviewer: Do you get any perks with tickets and things? Do you get any discounts or does it not work like that?

Paul Robinson: No, we- no, we don't...

Interviewer: First preference?

Paul Robinson: Yes, what they do there is we get- there are certain days and members and staff for the big games can purchase them I think it's a few days before general public. And I think it's like, limited to 4 or 6 tickets, but you can actually purchase them before general lease. So that's the only real perk we get really.

Interviewer: So does your son- obviously he- does he still play football?

Paul Robinson: No, he used to play for a local team, but he gave it up. But yes, he gave it up.

Interviewer: Does he come to watch?

Paul Robinson: Now and again, now and again he comes. He's- he's been to a few games.

As I say, what it is, they do now and again. Every now and again, which is good. And I think that's another way that I think is the way forward. They do a weekend where I think it's under 14s are free.

And also what they do as well is they give them out in local schools, so sometimes they get tickets through local schools and that and sometimes he comes with his mates and stuff. Yes, it's just getting the kids involved. It's good.

Interviewer: Are you- so you're a Tottenham fan. Do you go?

Paul Robinson: I used to. I used to. I used to back in the sort of late 90s, early part of the 2000s. I used to get tickets quite regularly and I used to go to Tottenham and take my eldest lad and go up fairly regularly to Tottenham. Yes, so I used to go a few times.

Interviewer: You don't go any more? Work or..?

Paul Robinson: No, well, the thing is, we were actually having this discussion today. One of the things in modern day football is that with the bigger clubs- because I've actually done it as well. I've been on a corporate day, I went on a corporate day to Everton. I got some tickets from my old boss for Chelsea.

And you'll find with the big Premiership games now, there's a lot of corporate, it's a lot of money. I mean, you're talking about- if you can get a ticket, you're talking about 45, £50, that's the cheap seats. You've got your train fare.

I mean, you can get through 150, £200 and this is why clubs like Stevenage obviously- and apparently attendances are up something like 10 to 15% this year. More and more people now are going back to grassroots football.

They're going away from the big clubs and actually going back, which a lot of people say- especially today, like the memories thing, is that they remember when their dad took them and all that. They used to have a pie and as you say, stand in the freezing cold eating a pie with a cup of tea and freezing cold on the terraces.

And a lot of people say they were the best days of football and a lot of people say with the modern day money and everything

else, that the clubs like this are, if you like, going to reap the benefits of it.

Interviewer: Do you think that?

Paul Robinson: I honestly believe so, yes. Because I feel that when you are here, and especially in smaller grounds like this, because I do Wembley Stadium and I mean, I did Man City, Man United and there were like, 82,000.

So yes, it's great and everything else and it's big. But you don't get- you know, you're right intense here, you're right in amongst it. And sometimes the atmosphere can be more here than being at Wembley Stadium, you know, because you feel as though you're not part of it. Whereas here you're right on top of it.

Interviewer: I was just wondering whether it's because you were more of a- because you said you came here in the 70s, so were- would you consider yourself more of a Tottenham fan than- to go for a local team or..?

Paul Robinson: Yes, well one...

Interviewer: Do you think the two are compatible?

Paul Robinson: This is one thing we discussed as well today. Unfortunately, Stevenage- Stevenage was an overspill town from London. I

myself came in '71. So my family come from London, a lot of people are London born and bred.

And one of the problems Stevenage has got is with its local support. Because there are still a lot of- on a Saturday like today, Chelsea Arsenal or the big clubs are playing in London, you can have 10, 12,000 jumping on trains. You're in London in 22 minutes.

So there's a lot of support still for what I call the big boys. And sometimes that's why clubs like Stevenage or whatever do struggle a little bit, because the local support should be for here, still tend to go to watch the big clubs.

But what's happening is, because of money and everything else, you're getting more and more people that say you know what, I can go here to a game, obviously take my boy, it's local. So hopefully the percentages will go up. That's what the- hopefully that's what it's all about.

Interviewer: And you look like you really enjoy your job.

Paul Robinson: Yes, I do. Yes, I do enjoy it. As I say, I mean, I enjoy it for all sorts of reasons. At the end of the day, it's- people say, you know, it's football. I like football and stuff. But yes, it's the social side as well.

So I don't- I know it sounds- I said it before, I don't actually see it as a job. You know, I've done jobs where as soon as I get in I wanna go home, you're just looking at your watch and you think, "Do you know what, I've had enough." You're watching the clock.

But here, you come in, time just goes like that, you know. You're with your friends and that and obviously all right, obviously you have jobs to do, but you- depending on where I'm positioned, you know, sometimes I see a bit of the game and you get your money and you go home.

And as I said before, right from the beginning, you know, don't tell him ever, off the record. Don't tell the chairman, but I probably would do it for nothing. But don't tell him that.

Interviewer: Lastly, can you think of a match that was like, here at home that was fantastic? All the- for the supporters.

Paul Robinson: Oh God, I mean, without a doubt- I wasn't actually here, I watched it on television and without doubt, the biggest game they had was the Newcastle FA Cup semi-final a few years back. And that was- oh, I mean, I wasn't working then, but I watched it on telly. Excuse me.

And they had extra terracing and stuff and I mean, they were, you know, a couple of minutes away from the proper Wembley FA Cup final.

I mean, Alan Shearer came on and oh, I mean, it was- for most fans, that's probably one of the biggest games. And the game as well that- another one as well that funnily enough sticks in my mind was when we went up to League One.

Because when we went up a league, it was quite funny, because at the end of the day, there was- pitch invasions aren't allowed and it's a criminal offence to go on the pitch.

Now, they'd already won the league, so they sort of said, well, people can run on the pitch or whatever, providing they're good-mannered we'll let it go.

So I'm being a steward down here and there's my boy on the pitch. So I'm saying, "Get off the pitch, you'll get me in trouble." But it was all well-mannered and they were doing signatures and stuff and the players were signing things.

So yes, that was a- I mean that was a momentous day for the club as well.

But yes, to this club, yes, it's got some history. I mean, it has got a lot of memories and, you know, I think they're going forward. As you say, a lot of people here- I mean, there's people, ex-players and stuff, so yes, today is a good thing as well. It's good, it's a good project to do.

END AUDIO

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