

File: BMD Tony Creek

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Interviewer: Okay. If you could tell me your name, please?

Tony Creek: Yes, my name's Tony Creek.

Interviewer: And, Tony, what's your connection with Stevenage Football Club?

Tony Creek: I've been supporting the club for about 17 years. Currently, though, and for quite a few years, and more than I'd care to remember, I've been responsible for the ball boys and ball girls at the games.

Interviewer: So, you have a role on match days?

Tony Creek: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: And does it extend outside the match days, or do you just come along and work with those people on match days?

Tony Creek: No, I just work with those people.

We used to have local clubs, and we used to invite local clubs here, local youth clubs, but for the past couple of years, since we've been in the league, we've had a ball squad, if you like.

So, outside of match days, it's obviously making sure they turn up. Recruit at the end of the season, recruiting new ones, new ball boys and girls, because some drop out. But yes, I just do it on a voluntary basis.

Interviewer: Right. So, if you could talk me through a standard Saturday home game then, and your routine on a Saturday.

Tony Creek: Is there such things as a standard Saturday? (Laughter)

Generally, we arrive a good hour before the kick-off. I've got a good idea of how many I've got because, depending on how many we've got, depends where they are situated around the pitch.

As luck would have it, generally, I've got one more, or one less than I thought I was going to, so I have to rejig everything again. (Laughter) But, generally, we get them in their positions. They know where they're sitting.

The good thing with having a ball squad is, they're used to it, they're used to the rules. There's a whole raft of, sort of, rules and guidelines to go through, just through their own safety more than anything else.

So, it's get them into position, and get their seats into position. We then form a guard of honour before kick-off, so we're on the pitch anyway. Then they get into their positions.

The important thing is to get them off at half-time nice and quickly, because they come off after the players, and they go on before the players. They've only got about a 10-minute window to do what they need to do at half-time.

And the bigger games, one of the biggest challenges is, to get them off safely, with a big crowd, and make sure that I get all back to me. So it's working quite well, but we've had our teething problems.

Interviewer: So, when you say a squad, how many have you got?

Tony Creek: We've got 15 on the books. The optimum number of ball boys and ball girls out on the pitch is 13, because that gives you 5 down one side, 4 down the other side, and 2 behind each goal.

But you have to work it. Sometimes, especially when there's school holidays, things like that, we may only have 8. We may have the full 16. So, 13 is the optimum but, yes, we've got 15 or 16 in the squad.

Interviewer: And what age are your ball boys and ball girls?

Tony Creek: Yes, they've got to be over 12. And, generally, they are between the ages of about 12 and 15. And once they get to 16 they start having jobs, etc., so it's generally between 12 and 15.

Interviewer: And what's their job during the game?

Tony Creek: Well, they're there to speed the game up, and to make sure that there's no gamesmanship, in terms of slowing the game down. It does happen. Players kick the ball away, etc., and it can be quite intimidating for some of the kids as well, when you consider some of the players are six foot plus.

But their job is to just speed the game up, and make sure the game flows.

Interviewer: And do you operate a multi-ball system here at Stevenage?

Tony Creek: No, we don't. We have done. I prefer a multi-ball, to be honest, because it's a lot quicker. But we've done it off and on.

Then there was - I'm not sure if it was a league ruling - that they weren't going to do multi-ball, because there was a lot of problems with sometimes, two balls ending up on the pitch. So no, we don't do multi-ball at the moment.

Interviewer: So what happens when the ball goes over the top of the stand?

Tony Creek: Oh, yes, they don't have to run off and get that. There's other people within the club that do that. They're only responsible for it between the byline and the edge, the wall around the pitch, if

you like. If it goes into the crowd, the crowd throw it on. So they're only responsible for that area there.

Interviewer: So they don't have to interact with the crowd at all? Because I know sometimes they can be a little bit reticent about throwing the ball back, can't they?

Tony Creek: Yes, sometimes they do. I mean, you'll generally see the ball boy or ball girl will turn round, and will ask for the ball, but I always say, "Just wait for the ball to come back on again."

There's been some interesting experiences with some of the away fans of some of the clubs that have come in, who thought the ball boys, maybe, weren't being as quick as they should be, etc. Which is sad to see, really, you know, because they're only kids, at the end of the day. But what we do is, we just move them around from the area if that happens.

Interviewer: So, can you think of any funny incidents or, indeed, maybe even accidents that have happened to your squad of...?

Tony Creek: We've got the obvious slipping over. I do tell them to walk around the pitch, especially when it's wet, because there's nothing funnier than seeing someone fall over. And the crowd will remember it until something else happens in the game.

But I suppose the one that really stick in my mind is, when one of the ball boys actually could claim an assist to a goal.

And that was back in the days when we were bringing in local teams. And I used to manage a team, and it was actually my team, one of the lads that played for me.

Obviously, you can't be offside from a thrown in. The ball boy grabbed hold of the ball as soon as it came off. I hasten to add, that it came off the pitch. It wasn't one of these, grab it on the line.

As soon as it came off, he threw it very quickly to Ronnie Henry. Ronne Henry threw it to Steve Morrison, who was in front of their defenders, and he scored. So he can quite rightly claim an assist against that one. I was quite proud of that one. (Laughter)

Interviewer: And what sort of training do you need to give these guys?

Tony Creek: Well, most of them play football anyway, so they know the game.

We have a safety brief which we go through, which is all fairly basic stuff and common sense ["Just 0:05:51], keep your eye on the ball, because you need to know what the decision is also." Those balls do come at an alarming rate towards you, so it's for their own safety, etc.

Things like not going onto the pitch. They get a lot of jip off of the crowd sometimes, when the ball was just on the pitch. But they're not allowed to actually enter the field of play, unless the referee invites them on to the field of play. A lot of people don't realise that, and give them a lot of jip.

So it's just really going through those safety guidelines. There's about 20, 25 of them, I think, now. They keep getting

added. For example, inflatables. Since the Liverpool goal [at 0:06:24] Sunderland - the Liverpool goal with the inflatable coming on the pitch - we've now got a rule about inflatables. We've got to not throw them back into the crowd, etc.

But the good thing with having a squad is, they know the rules, so you're not going through it every week, with different people.

Interviewer: So, do you have to get involved with the referee at all?

Tony Creek: No.

Interviewer: Does he ask you what role the ball boys and girls are playing?

Tony Creek: No. The referee can choose to have the ball boys taken off, if they think they're being ineffectual. They can ask them to bib up in different coloured bibs. If they're clashing, we've got a couple of sets of bibs.

But, generally, what happens is, one of the other guys here goes and has a word with the referee at half-time, just to make sure that everything's okay. We haven't had a problem in all the games we've done here so far.

Interviewer: So where are you during the game?

Tony Creek: I'm in the main stand, which, when I first started supporting Borough, obviously I was on the terrace, and I like the terrace humour and the banter on the terrace.

So I'm in the main stand, which is a bit quieter. But I'm in an aisle seat, so that I can get out, should I need to. Sometimes I do, if the ball boys have positioned themselves in a strange position, or we need to get instructions around. So I can be anywhere around the ground. Hopefully, not in the away end, though. (Laughter)

Interviewer: So, are you watching them, or are you watching the game?

Tony Creek: A bit of both, really, yes. I normally miss the first 5 or 10 minutes of the game, because I'm normally running around, trying to move one or two into position, or getting instructions out.

And also getting drinks out. They have the drinks for the players, the pitch side drinks, so we make sure we dish them out to them.

So, I tend to miss the first 5 or 10 minutes, maybe, of the first half. The same with the second game. And if it's a big game, especially if they take the ball boys and girls off before the final whistle, I can miss some of the end of the game as well.

Interviewer: So, as a fan, that must be quite awkward at times?

Tony Creek: It is a bit, yes. It is a bit. I mean, the worse one, I suppose, was the Newcastle game that we had here, in the FA Cup, where

Joey Barton scored. We'd just got the ball boys off. I didn't really see the goal because we were...And, also, because it was crowded, we were trying to get them out of the way. But I saw our goal, our third goal, so that was all right.

Interviewer: So do they get any privileges? Do they get to meet the players at all, or anything like that?

Tony Creek: Last season they had a training session with some of the community coaches. It's done in conjunction with the community coaches.

We have previously had a 'meet the players' session, if you like, and they get to meet the players.

But I suppose the biggest privilege is, they get one of the best seats in the house. They don't pay to come and watch the Borough, and they see the game, you know, as close as you can, really.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, let's move to talk about your supporting experiences of Borough. What was it that brought you down here first of all?

Tony Creek: I first started coming down when I was in senior school with one of my friends. And that was back in the Danny Dance era. That was a long time ago. And that was off and on, because I moved out of the neighbourhood.

But then I came back, and I started watching them, in the year that we won the Conference the first time round, from '96. I

came to a game there, because a lot of my work colleagues came down. And I've rarely missed a home game since.

Interviewer: Really?

Tony Creek: Yes.

Interviewer: So are you Stevenage born and bred, then?

Tony Creek: No, I'm not, but I've lived in Stevenage since I was eight. So, yes, I've lived here quite a few years. My dad was in the RAF, so we moved around a lot until I was eight. So this is the first place I've had roots, I suppose.

Interviewer: And would you characterise Stevenage as being your only football team, or do you have a Premiership team as well?

Tony Creek: I would actually say that Stevenage are my only football team. We all have a team which we follow which, you know, when we were young kids, we started following, and I used to like watching Liverpool. But I think I've seen Liverpool play once. I've lost count of the amount of times I've seen Stevenage play. So, yes, I'm a Stevenage supporter through and through.

Interviewer: And do you think that's unusual, in a town like Stevenage, where people have come to the town in reasonably recent years?

Tony Creek: Yes, I think a lot of people have got second teams, if you like. Throughout the Stevenage supporters, a lot of people have got second teams, because of their history of where they were, because it's a new town.

I think it's a great shame that Stevenage has got such a good football club, but we're so close to London, in terms of the train, that obviously, a lot of people in Stevenage are Arsenal and Spurs fans. In fact, a lot of our fan base, I think, are Arsenal and Spurs fans as well.

I think it's a crying shame that we don't get more people here that are Stevenage supporters through and through, to be honest.

Interviewer: So, how much do you recall of that first season, when you were coming along regularly, then, and a season that was obviously, to end up in disappointment?

Tony Creek: I remember quite a bit. I remember the fact that - and maybe I'm one of the fans that's guilty of thinking that we've got a God-given right to win - because the first season I saw them, we were disappointed if we'd only scored four goals. And, certainly, we were disappointed if we conceded one. I think [I was 0:11:29] somewhat spoilt, really, watching that. We were head and shoulders above everyone else, and I think that's really got me hooked.

We knew what the rules were, so I didn't expect us to go up. It was just really frustrating that we'd won the league in such an emphatic manner. There's lots of memories of that first season.

I think my favourite one is – because in those days we didn't have segregation – was a Morecambe fan - who had obviously had more than enough laughing juice before the game - who was in the wrong end, singing Morecambe songs, totally oblivious to the fact that all his comrades were in the other end. (Laughter) That was quite funny. And, I mean, the thing is, we just laughed along with him.

But in those days, at half-time, you swapped ends, just like the team did. So we went from the stand, which is pretty much as it was then, over to where the away stand is now, which was just a grassy knoll. And I remember that changing ends, which was to happen for a few more seasons yet.

Interviewer: And what other memories do you have of the ground, in that time, in terms of the stands at the side?

Tony Creek: On, yes, I remember the main stand was only a third of what it is, the centre portion, if you like. The North Stand is pretty much as it was, I think, if memory serves me right.

And then you had what could only be described as a team shed on the other side, where the hard core fans were, where all the singing was from.

And then you just milled around, and you had the infamous grassy knoll behind the goal, at the away end.

And, funnily enough, you, sort of, got an idea of what the ground could look like, when we had the Newcastle game, the first Newcastle game, when they erected that temporary stand, which was just scaffolding. And, you know, we can see now what the away stand looks like now, but that gave you a view as to what the stadium could like.

But, yes, it would be interesting to see pictures again, of the ground like that, because it's such a long time ago now. But no, I remember it well.

Interviewer: So you came along in the middle of Paul Fairclough's reign, somewhere in his first spell as manager here?

Tony Creek: Yes.

Interviewer: What memories do you have of him as a manager?

Tony Creek: He was always a very passionate manager. He could do no wrong, in terms of the fans' eyes, I think. I mean, his record was pretty impressive, to say the least, where he took the club, before I was supporting them. He'd taken them from where they were, up to winning the Conference, I think, in the second season or the third season that they were in the Conference. Not only won it, but won it emphatically. I remember his disappointment, the fact that we didn't go up.

I obviously remember the saga over the Newcastle game, with the chairman on the telly all the time, then.

But no, I always found Paul was very connected to the fans, and was a real genuine guy.

Interviewer: And that Newcastle game, I mean, it came at the end of a successful cup run. Do you remember the Swindon game, or the game before that?

Tony Creek: Oh, you couldn't forget the Swindon game, could you? That's got to go down, in my memory, as one of my favourite away trips, for all the wrong reasons.

We were in an uncovered stand. It was horizontal rain. I think it was Jason Soloman that scored the goal.

And I turned round -and the weather was getting worse and worse – and I turned round to one of my friends, who was a qualified ref, and I said, you know, "How much of the game has to be played, for the result to stand?" And he said, "They can call it off in the 89th minute and it's scrubbed." And we all starting singing, "It's all getting brighter over there," because we could see a bright area.

And, yes, that was one hell of a game. I've never been so wet in my life. But I came away from that feeling really warm inside, because of the result, obviously.

Interviewer: And what was the demand in town like, for tickets for that first Newcastle game?

Tony Creek: Oh, I think it was pretty insane. It's the biggest of, the biggest game we'd had. We'd had pre-season friendlies, with the likes of Chelsea down here, who brought really good sides with them, but, you know, this was a real competitive game.

And Newcastle weren't particularly well. It was a game we thought that we could – if anyone was going to cause an upset - we could.

There was a lot of belief in the club, and nothing like that had really happened. I mean, the whole saga, as well, the fact that

it had been whipped up in the media, about the little club that decided to take the game on.

Bear in mind that, as fans, we were quite disappointed. I think it was the season before that we didn't have the Birmingham game at home, it was drawn at home, and we went to Birmingham's ground. So there was a big disappointment then. So to actually host it here, I think everyone wanted a ticket. So, yes, there was a big clamour for tickets.

Interviewer: And those people who are season ticket holders, were they in demand for picking up other tickets, or were fans rewarded for games they'd been to already?

Tony Creek: I can't remember if fans were awarded to games they'd been to already. Season ticket holders got a lot of new friends, I think, because they had the Holy Grail, they got the first snip at the tickets.

And then, obviously, it was Support Association members, which, at that time, I was a Support Association member, so I got my tickets. But everyone was worried that they wouldn't get a ticket.

And that's been the case for most big games, I think, since. Because of that, because of that memory of, you know, "I've got to get a ticket for that game," there tends to be a big rush on tickets when there's a big game, even though, generally, we find that there's plenty there.

Interviewer: And were you present for the replay or not?

Tony Creek: Unfortunately, I wasn't, no. I work, I commute quite a way, so it would have meant taking two days off. So, you know, I was really gutted that I couldn't go to that one. I still maintain the ball wasn't over the line for that first goal, though, and Smudger cleared that off the line. (Laughter)

Interviewer: And what other memories do you have, of the first period when Fairclough was manager?

Tony Creek: If I recall correctly, I think when Paul left us, we were still fairly high up in the division. And I think there was a sense – I certainly felt a sense - that he hadn't been treated particularly well, because of that.

Maybe he'd gone as far as he could. You don't know what's happening in the background. But I certainly remember, I remember the ultimate disappointment of not going up. I remember the feeling that we possibly wouldn't do it, for a long time. And, I don't know, it just, sort of, fizzled out.

Interviewer: But you carry on supporting, right the way through the thin times?

Tony Creek: Oh, absolutely. I mean, managers will come and go, and chairman will come and go, but as long as the stands are here, and as long as there's a team playing here, then the supporters will stay.

I think when we got to the end of Victor Green's reign, we realised – and there was lots of rumours about us joining up with Barnet – we realised then that it doesn't matter how

passionate a supporter you are, you have no power whatsoever. You know, you pay to go through the gate, you support the team, come hell or high water, but at the end of the day, you've got no power whatsoever.

I think a lot of supporters feel that way. We see clubs that have gone down the pan and, you know, there's nothing the supporters can do about it.

Interviewer: And so, was Green someone who was regarded well by the supporters, or was there some blame laid at his door for not upgrading the facilities here?

Tony Creek: I think, in terms of upgrading the facilities, the problem then, if I remember, was that you had to have your ground up to spec by the Christmas period. In the same season Millwall were top of their league at around about the Christmas period, and they almost got relegated.

So it was a lot of investment for clubs to make. They've changed the rules now that you have to have a ground that meets the spec, just to be in the Conference, which is far better.

So, no, I don't think there was the feeling of resentment that, you know, we hadn't got the ground up. I think most of the fans felt that it was an unfair ruling. We went to court and it was proved it was an unfair ruling.

In terms of Victor Green, though, I remember there was – I think he wanted to buy the ground at one stage – and the Borough Council were outside leafleting, because he'd put a derogatory comments in the local press.

And to show how well he was thought of, the chant from the terrace came over, "There's only one Borough Council." So I think I know where the fans were, thought of him, from that, really. (Laughter)

Interviewer: And what about the current chairman, what are the views on the stadium being named after his food company, and so on?

Tony Creek: Well, fair play, he's put a lot of his own personal money, time and effort into this club. When he took the club on, a lot of the money seemed to have disappeared from cup runs, etc.

He had a plan to get us into the football league. You can't argue. It's taken longer than we thought, but the Conference is a tough division to get out of.

I think, generally, most people think that if Phil hadn't have come here, we would still be in the Conference, lower, or even worse, not be here.

So I think there's a lot of... There's the usual healthy mistrust against [the 0:21:02] chairman. I mean, if you look at football, a football chairman.

But, at the end of the day, you just can't fault what's happened with this club, when you look around this club, especially in the last five years. I don't know of any other team that would have given so much fun to supporters. Stevenage to, you know, if you look at where we were five years ago, to where we are now.

So I think everyone - well, the majority of people certainly - would hate to see Phil go, and if he did, would thank him

enormously for all the effort he put in, and got us to where we are.

Interviewer: Has there been a big change, in the fact of your moving to being associated on an official level with the club? Has it made a difference to your supporting of the club? Do you think the difference between just going along as an ordinary fan, and now someone who has access to different areas of the ground, and so on, has that made a difference to your day?

Tony Creek: Yes. Well, it does to my match day, obviously, because I've got one eye on the ball boys and girls, and I've got one eye on the game.

I obviously get to know a lot more people around. I know most of the stewards by name, and I've spoken to them, because they're helping out, etc.

But, no, first and foremost, I'm a fan that's coming here. If you took away the ball boy and ball girl duties, I'd still be here. There's nothing that would stop me coming here.

So, no, there's a little bit more responsibility and the things you have to think about. There may be things that aggravate you, with things that you hear in the crowd and that sort of thing, with people that don't understand, but apart from that, no.

Interviewer: So is it a close-knit group of fans here?

Tony Creek: Pretty much so. Yes, pretty much so. I think, when you look at – well, it's funny – when you look at, for example, our Trophy

Final at Wembley, of course everyone wanted to get tickets for that because it was at Wembley, and it was one of the biggest attendances there.

I was on the independent coach, and it was clear to me that, well, half the conversation was about Chelsea, Tottenham or Arsenal, on that coach. They were calling us Stevenage Athletic, and no one knew who the players were.

And it made me realise that, if you take all of those people away, and you look at the actual hard core fan base, most of us know each other. There's a forum, which, we all go on the forum, and there's a healthy level of debate, and taking the Mickey out of each other on there.

But most of us know each other as well. I've got a lot of good friends here, who I don't know outside of the ground. I see them every other Saturday, and some away games, etc.

So I think there's a fairly close-knit, maybe 700, 800 people that are really close-knit, and know each quite well, and are attached by the football club.

And no matter what happened they would be here. I mean, I remember being here, in a crowd of 499, against Hitchin, in a County Cup game, in a roaring gale. Probably a couple of weeks before the Newcastle game, actually.

Interviewer: Right.

Tony Creek: And there was a lot more space on the terrace then than there was for the Newcastle game, which made me think, "Well, where have all these people come from?"

But, you know, you can see the hard core. But the more we progress, the bigger that hard core appears. So, for example, if it wasn't a big side, and if no away supporters turned up, a few years ago that might have been 900 people. Then it rose to, gradually, up to about 1,300. It's probably up to about 1,500 now, who will be here, no matter what the game is.

Interviewer: And with those Wembley finals revealing that, you know, there is an interest in the town, in the football club, if not passionate, then there is an interest there from what, 40, 000 people? What do you think is the realistic limit to the crowd sizes here?

Tony Creek: Well, as I said previously, because we're only half an hour away from London - you know, Arsenal and Tottenham, you can get down to there in half an hour - I think that hurts us, because a lot of people disappear into London, on a Saturday.

And I would have hoped that our crowds would have grown over the last couple of seasons. Into the league, they did grow by a couple of hundred, I think. I would have hoped it had grown more than that.

And, again, getting into League 1, you would have hoped that you would have added more onto that, and it hasn't really.

So it must be really frustrating for the chairman, and for the board of directors that run the club, that they can't fill this stadium. They should be able to with a town of our size.

And even the fact that some of them – and I know they've got a lot more history, and at one stage we had a trench down our pitch – but a lot of people from Stevenage actually go to Luton, to support Luton, who are non-league now. And that's a great bugbear as well.

But the trouble is, people, once you've chosen your team, you've chosen your team, and that's it virtually for life. So that's the nature of football.

Interviewer: So with there being that rapid change in divisions for Stevenage, who would you, you know, say were the rivals, then? Most teams have another team that the fans love to hate.

Tony Creek: Yes, that's a really good question now, because we've moved through the leagues.

Obviously, for a short while, it was Luton, because they thought they were bigger and greater than us, and they've got greater history, but history counts for nothing, really.

Who are our biggest rivals now? I don't really think we've got any. We certainly haven't got the rivalry we had, say - and I enjoyed the rivalry back in the Conference with Woking, when Woking were in the Conference. That was a clear rivalry. We loved to hate each other, and that was a real rivalry.

After Woking left the Conference and we moved up, really, there wasn't any local sides that we tended to [meet 0:27:00].

Interviewer: There was no one that's sung about by the fans, then, no team?

Tony Creek: No, not really, not any more, no. There are clubs that we intensely dislike, because of the things that have happened. I mean, Oxford are one of them, because they seem to think the

game's won on attendances. So we enjoy disliking them and vice versa.

I suppose, because of the comments from [Lowe 0:27:27], Bury and Chesterfield are two of the ones in our division that we like putting one over, if you like.

Interviewer: Was there any sense of justice, when Torquay United were defeated last season, after Torquay United taking Stevenage's place in the league, all those years ago?

Tony Creek: Yes, I suppose it was gratifying. And the thing with the Torquay thing was, Torquay obviously wanted us to stay down. And as I say, the rules were there before the season started. But they were always one of those teams that should have gone down, and they never did, because of the old ruling of one up, and only one up, rather than three up.

And at that time, as I say, a lot of the sides didn't have the grounds to support going up. So you tended to find the people at the bottom of Division 4, the old Division 4, were pretty safe. So, yes, I suppose so.

We've righted a few wrongs [though/there 0:28:29]. I mean, and obviously, we've – and that's under Graham – and that's, we obviously got promoted into the league.

And then in a matter of months we unceremoniously dumped Newcastle, out of the FA Cup. So within the space of about six months we've righted the two wrongs that I really wanted righting.

Interviewer: Yes, that's good.

And what about when you go to work, and people know that you're a Stevenage fan, what sort of stick do you get from them?

Tony Creek: Oh, no, that's brilliant now, because I've worked in Cambridge for 14 years. And when I first joined there, on Monday, when you have your football banter, I used to start talking about Stevenage, and they'd say, "No, we're only talking about proper football here," because most of them were Cambridge supporters.

Now, of course, I go in and I talk about our league game, and I ask how the pub side, Cambridge United, are doing, and playing the Dog and Duck, or what have you.

And I remember, a few seasons ago, Histon were doing remarkably better than Cambridge, so I'd always go on about the number one side in Cambridge, Histon, doing pretty well.

So it's actually been really nice, the last five years or so, since-

Interviewer: Although there was that Cambridge United two-legged semi-final, a couple of years back, wasn't there?

Tony Creek: Yes, I [remember 0:29:41].

Interviewer: That can't have been too great for you.

Tony Creek: No, I remember that well. I remember that well. And we went to Cambridge and we drew at Cambridge. And I think it was,

Ron Kirby was sent off, when Benjamin went down. Benjamin looks like Frank Bruno. He's got the same stature as Frank Bruno, and Ron Kirby brushed past him and he fell over. So he was sent off. I think he was sent off.

And we drew that game, and then they came here. And, of course, they had two players sent off in the game here. I'd kept very quiet between the two legs, because I know pride always comes before a fall.

But I went back into work, and one of the guys said, "You said you could only beat us with nine men." So my retort was, "Well, you thought you could only beat us by cheating. So that's how it worked, then, wasn't it?"

So, yes, that was good, because they were a league side then, obviously, and we were non-league. So that was probably the first bit of joyous banter I had with them, but it's [Crosstalk 0:30:37].

Interviewer: And what about the play-off match, sort of, three seasons ago, was it? When Stevenage got a good lead down here, and went up to Cambridge thinking all was done and dusted.

Tony Creek: Yes, I certainly didn't think that it all was done and dusted. I never do.

Again, I kept very quiet between the two games. The Cambridge were saying, "Well, you haven't conceded..." At that time we had a very good defence as well, and they said, "Well, you haven't conceded more than two, so there's no way, we're out of it." And they were pretty dismissive of the fact that they could beat us. I kept my mouth shut because I know stranger things have happened in football.

But, yes, I got some payback off of some of my work colleagues of that one. That's one of the really low feelings I've had as a Borough support, is actually losing that game, but you could just see it happening.

Interviewer: So, you still call them the Borough, then. Does this constant changing of names ever get to you?

Tony Creek: Well, when I started supported them, they were Stevenage Borough, and it's still officially-

Interviewer: If you look out of the window there and it stay says Borough on the stand.

Tony Creek: Absolutely. Our nickname is still officially The Borough. So, although we've dropped Borough from the name, we're Stevenage Football Club, the nickname is still The Borough. Just the same as if I was a West Ham supporter, I'd call them The Hammers, or The Irons.

But, no, I'll always call them The Borough. I think that's probably why the nickname is still The Borough, because you're not going to...

I still call The Lamex, the Broadhall Way, you know, it's because that's what it was when I started supporting them. I can understand the name change, but it doesn't mean I particularly liked it. But they'll always be The Borough for me.

Interviewer: What do your family think of your Stevenage affiliations?

Tony Creek: Well, they are pretty much Stevenage supporters as well. And my lad was at the Stevenage Academy for quite a while now.

He is in the youth set-up at Southend now, which, funnily enough, when he joined, Southend were a league side, and Stevenage really didn't have a youth academy, because we were non-league. And he's been there five years now, and Stevenage are higher than Southend, so it's funny how things work.

So he's always got an eye on the Southend result. And I know that if Stevenage are playing Southend here, I know who he'll support then. But generally we all support The Borough anyway.

Interviewer: And what are you like on a Sunday after – and I know it hasn't happened often in recent years – but what kind of a loser are you?

Tony Creek: I don't know, I've only been supporting them 14 years.

(Laughter) No, it depends on the context of the game. At the moment, to be honest, we're in League 1, we're in a new league. I'm expecting us to lose more than we win.

I know the manager doesn't think like that, and I know the manager and the chairman want to progress further, and they're very ambitious, in that they've got to drive the focus.

But, realistically – and it's funny, because I was saying this last year about League 2 – as long as we end up above the relegation zone, I'm happy. Consolidate and then go from strength to strength.

So at the moment, when we lose, generally, I'm pretty much okay. Having said that, there have been some games here – and I'm trying to think – and the Notts County was a perfect one where – and last week's game against Yeovil, where we should have won it – when we've played very well, when we've dominated games and just couldn't put it in the back of the net - which is one of our biggest problems at the moment, is putting it in the back of the net - I get extremely frustrated and I'm not a very nice person to be around. Because you look at games like that and you think, you know, that could really cost you, at the end of the season.

As I say, the first season I started supporting The Borough, we expected to win 5-0 regularly. So, you know, we had silly expectations, in as much as, if we conceded a goal, we would actually get really annoyed with it.

So I think you've got to set your expectations to where you are in the league, and what league you're in. It's all a bit of a journey at the moment, and I think we're all enjoying the ride at the moment. So as long as we stay in League 1, I'll be pretty pleased with it.

Interviewer: And what about those triumphant moments? I know you said you were a bit disappointed about the fact that a lot of your fellow supporters seem to not be proper Stevenage, but [where/when 0:35:04] there have been three trips to Wembley, one to Old Trafford, which of those do you have particular fond memories of?

Tony Creek: Well, I think it's got to be the first trip to Wembley, obviously. It was the first competitive game played at the new Wembley. It

was a bumper crowd, because people were there just to be there.

We were 2-0 down at half-time, and everyone thought I was an idiot for saying, "We could win this." I was pretty upbeat still. Everyone was saying, "Oh, we've lost it. They're playing us off the park."

The fact that we'd started with Plan B, in the game, was a bit of a surprise to me, but I knew we had Plan A up our sleeves. So, it was having that, in that game, it was having that knowing that something was likely to happen, more than the people around me, was quite nice, looking at the glory supporters, if you like.

It was also the fact that it was the new Wembley. And, obviously, we won the game. An absolutely superb goal. ____ [0:36:00] brought Dobson on. He made a difference.

And seeing Ronnie Henry being the first captain to lift a trophy up at the new Wembley, I mean, you know, it was all history in the making. So I think that one's got to be the best.

We got a bit blasé by the time we got to the Barrow game there because, you know, we said Wembley was our home ground anyway. So, there's not many teams that have been to Wembley that many times.

I would have liked to have gone to Wembley for the play-off, but Old Trafford was – I'd never been to Old Trafford before. That was a really good day. The people were good around us. I liked the Torquay fans as well.

So we had a bit of banter with them. They obviously thought they were better than us. We proved them wrong, so that was quite nice.

But, yes, it's got to be the first Wembley game, I think.

Interviewer: Fantastic.

And what about players who you particularly remember?

Tony Creek: Oh, well, there's been so many of them. Again, some of them for the right and wrong reasons.

To begin with, Sodje, Corey Browne and Barry Hayles. Absolutely superb players. Barry Hayles obviously went on – and Efe Ambrose Sodje – went on to better things. And it's funny that we now-

Interviewer: Barry Hayles went to Bristol Rovers, so I'm not sure that was [Crosstalk 0:37:12].

Tony Creek: Yes, [I see]. Yes, then onto Fulham, so that wasn't too bad. (Laughter)

But, of course, Sodje is still playing. He's playing in the league that we're in now, so it's funny how things turn around.

Interviewer: Yes. In fact, [you're] playing against him today [aren't you]?

Tony Creek: Absolutely. Yes, absolutely.

So, yes, I don't like him having a bad game, but I hope he does have one today.

But, yes, through the years, obviously, Carl Alford. Carl Alford was a prolific goal scorer for us.

I've got to say the likes of Jason Soloman, for his moment of madness, when we was taking his tracksuit bottoms off, when he was playing in goal. He'd been put in goal – I forget why now – the goalkeeper must have been injured, and we can't have had one on the bench.

But it actually ended up on a Question of Sport. As the ball was going down the field, he decided to take his tracksuit bottoms off, wasn't very adept at taking them off, and the ball came the other way. So he was trying to save a goal with his tracksuit bottoms around his ankles, which was one of the funniest moments. It wouldn't have been funny if they'd have scored the goal, of course, but at the time that was quite funny. (Laughter)

But I think, really, if you look at the squad of players that we've got today, our current squad, we absolutely destroyed Sheffield Wednesday this season.

When you looked at the players on the pitch, apart from John Mousinho, I think I'm right in saying – I can't remember if Craig Reid was playing – but if you looked on that pitch, apart from John Mousinho, all of those were members of the Conference winning side.

We've gone up two leagues, and we had the same players out there, you know, we haven't bought lots of players. So I think, as a group of players, I think the group that we've got now have got the best team spirit that I've seen.

Interviewer: Anyone who you would have in that team from previous years, who would make the difference?

Tony Creek: Barry Hayles. He could put it in the back of the net. Yes, we haven't got a prolific goal scorer at the moment, I don't think. Which, in one way is good, we score goals from all across the park. We score goals from our midfielders from our defenders, even. But I'd like to have a real target man who would always put it away.

Interviewer: [And there 0:39:11] may be one or two who didn't appreciate Steve Morrison quite enough, when he was here?

Tony Creek: Yes, absolutely. I mean, you can see how much talent he had, and how much skill he's got, by where he's got now. And, if you look at the seasons that he was with us, the goals that he scored, the Trophy Final at Wembley, he was, we need another Steve Morrison.

So all those people that just talked about the fact that he didn't smile when he was scoring goals. I don't really care if they smile, as long as they score goals, to be honest. (Laughter)

Yes, I think people didn't realise what we had with Steve Morrison. He was always going to go on and do bigger and better things, and I'm happy for him to do that, you know. He was a good servant to us.

The same with George Boyd. George Boyd would be nice in the squad now, as well. The same with George Boyd. I mean, I don't think many people could really begrudge him going on to bigger and better things.

Interviewer: And what about, in terms of, your view of the managers who have been here in your time?

Tony Creek:

Well, the two that stand out, obviously, are Paul Fairclough, because of what he did, and Graham Westley. We've had a lot of manager in between them. And, funnily enough, both of them have done two stints here.

Paul Fairclough had his second stint here, which was a bit disappointing. So, when I heard that Graham was going to be taken on for a second stint, I was pretty disappointed, at the time, because of what had happened with Paul Fairclough, which I think took the shine off of his hero status, if you like, the second time he was here.

And, also, the fact that a lot of the fans didn't actually particularly like Graham, the first stint that we was here. Perhaps we forgot the job he had to do. We were bottom of the league at Christmas. No one else would survive that, and he kept us up. He had a job to do. He was a very young manager.

So when he came here for the second time, I wasn't very happy that he came here. I've got to eat my words now, haven't I, really? Because of, you know, the Trophy Finals. We're in the league. We've got through another play-off. We've gone up two leagues.

So, they are the only two that really stand out for me: Paul Fairclough and Graham Westley. I'd be gutted if Graham Westley left us now. I didn't think I'd say that three or four years ago.

In between, obviously, we had Peter Taylor, the England manager, Peter Taylor. When he came here we were just in the play-off zone, and we just dropped out of the play-off zone, and I think we were quite disappointed with what happened there.

Stimson, obviously, was a good manager while he was here, but left a very, very sour taste in the mouth, when he left and took players with him.

In between, the managers didn't – it was when we had that rough patch - we were bumping around mid-table, and that was it.

So I think them two, that stick out really for me are, Westley and Fairclough.

Interviewer: Great.

The final question. Stevenage until you die?

Tony Creek: Absolutely. (Laughter)

END AUDIO

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