

**File:** BMD Tony Kostick.mp3

**Duration:** 0:14:24

**Date:** 10/08/2016

**Typist:** 756

START AUDIO

Tony Kostick: Hi, my name is Tony Kostick. I am the club doctor of Stevenage FC and have been since 1995, which was my first season.

Interviewer: Would you describe yourself as a fan as well?

Tony Kostick: I am one of those rare breeds of being a Manchester United supporter from Manchester. I was born in Manchester and I was brought up in the '70s, going to watch United home and away. I used to stand in the score board [paddock 0:00:26].

So I've always loved my football. I moved to Stevenage, became a GP here in Stevenage and was actually approached by one of the staff at the club who was one of my patients to say they were looking for a new club doctor and asked me if I would be interested in doing it. Having a love of football, I said, "Sure, great."

Interviewer: Who was that person?

Tony Kostick: I knew you were going to ask me that. It was the guy who-

Interviewer: How did it work?

Tony Kostick: He was the accountant of the club, I think. He's a guy who does Stevenage Borough kids- I can't remember what his name is. My mind's gone blank on his name.

But he came in, I used to chat about football and stuff, and he said was I interested in just becoming the club doctor?

Interviewer: Did you jump at the chance?

Tony Kostick: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you get paid for it?

Tony Kostick: I get paid very little. I don't do it for the money, that's for sure. I do it because I enjoy football.

Interviewer: So in the course of time you've been club doctor, Tony, how far have you had to learn new things as opposed to what you were normally doing as a GP?

Tony Kostick: I had some experience as what's called a 'BASICs' doctor, British Association of Immediate Care, so I used to go to car accidents. So I have some experience with trauma.

This football stuff is all about trauma, it's about traumatic injuries, so I had some experience, but it's one of those things that you learn as you go along.

Interviewer: Would you say it's enhanced your work as a GP, in fact?

Tony Kostick: Absolutely.

Interviewer: In what ways?

Tony Kostick: Well, it's made my job as a GP more bearable because I enjoy the football side of things. But also people come to me knowing that I'm a club doctor in Stevenage, with sports injury type problems, which I have a good deal of experience with now.

Interviewer: So specific footballers' injuries, the ones that you get all the time that you don't tend to see elsewhere, what sort of things would they be?

Tony Kostick: So particularly you tend to get... Well, the really nasty ones are the anterior cruciate ligaments which unfortunately, we've had a lot of at Stevenage over the last 10 or 15 years, and they're the ones that you'll recall that Gascoigne had and various other people, that put them out for a long period of time; up to six months and longer, which can in some cases be career-threatening.

I do wonder sometimes whether, in the old days, footballers had those injuries and carried on playing with unstable knees, but they're the major ones. Then you get ligaments round the side of the knee joints and the ankle joints and various strains.

The other one which is a new invention is called the 'sportsman's hernia', which is a particular injury which lots of footballers seem to get, which seems to require an operation, although there is no actual physical finding. It's a collection of symptoms which requires an operation to put right.

Interviewer: And that's because of stretches of something they do that they shouldn't be doing or what?

Tony Kostick: It's to do with weaknesses in the muscle wall and the lower pelvis, which causes pain and lots of footballers seem to get them.

Interviewer: So the amount of time in an average week you'd spend on club business would be what?

Tony Kostick: When I first started, it was just match day official. I used to come to the matches on a Saturday. It's the responsibility of the home clubs to provide the medical facilities, both for crowd and for the teams. So I'm not required to go to away games. I go to away games occasionally if they're not too far and I fancy going.

So initially it was all about doing the crowd, which were relatively small in those days, and the team. As we've been progressing into the league, you require two doctors.

So initially it was just about the match days. Over time as they became more professional, as their training arrangements became more professional, they asked me if I would cover them at training and I go from time to time to training when there are injuries at training and to provide, a lot of the time, prescriptions for general practice-y type issues that the players have.

Interviewer: So you have to visit them?

Tony Kostick: Yes.

Interviewer: They would never come to you in your \_\_\_\_ [0:04:41]?

Tony Kostick: No, I mean, a number of players who have lived out of Stevenage have got residences in Stevenage and they move here or they move here permanently or semi-permanently, and so they're registered with me as a patient at the practice just around the corner. So in those instances we get them to come to the surgery.

But if it's particular traumatic injuries at training then I would go over to the training ground.

Interviewer: So who is responsible then for the medical welfare of the crowd if you're not-?

Tony Kostick: So now one of my partners, Dr [Baltsezak 0:05:11], since we've become a league team, he's now the crowd doctor, and I remain the players' and the team doctor.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm bound to ask about particular injuries to particular players that you see. All I can do is ask you to talk about particular career-threatening injuries you've seen or particularly interesting injuries that you've seen, and name the particular players if you'd like, if you're allowed to.

Tony Kostick: The one that immediately springs to mind is Sam McMahon who, when he came here, you know, you sit in the crowd as a fan and you watch the games, and I'm just like everybody else, you see really good players and you think they're too good to be here.

When Sam McMahon first came here he was too good to be here. He was a fantastic player. He used to run the games for about the first eight or nine games in the season that he played in. And I think we won, I think that was the season that we won the first eight games of the season. He was just absolutely fantastic.

Then he did his cruciate in one of his knees, and he was never the same player again. In fact, when he got better, he did the cruciate in the other knee.

So he was a player that in my mind stands out as someone who could have been anything in football but just got two bad injuries in his knees and was never the same player.

I remember a game, it was here against Farsley Celtic. I think Lee Sinnott was their manager then, just before he moved onto bigger things. We were winning 3-0 and we were absolutely fantastic that day. We played some really fantastic football.

One of the opposition players, a Farsley player went over awkwardly on the pitch and their physio waved me to come onto the pitch and he'd dislocated his shoulder. I put it back in place on the pitch, just in front of the dugout here.

As I was walking off the pitch feeling quite pleased with myself for having made a difference to this guy, their manager gave me a right mouthful and I couldn't understand what his problem was. He was just fed up that they'd been battered on the pitch. But he gave me a really hard time for I don't know what. Afterwards, he came over and apologised. He said he was just agitated.

Interviewer: Do you often sense a tension with regard to opposition managers insofar as in a sense you are responsible for what happens on the pitch for them as well?

Tony Kostick: Not really. I mean, all the doctors up and down the land, they're professional people and they do their job to the best of their ability.

You have more confidence as a club in your own doctor because you have experience working with them and you

know what they can do. Other teams are a little bit more suspicious that maybe you're taking a little bit longer to stitch their player up than you might do otherwise, but it's nothing other than that.

That was the only one occasion, that Farsley game where I just felt a little bit it was unfair that he was giving me a hard time after I'd just made a difference to one of his players.

Interviewer: What about tensions with managers? You don't have to name names, but they're desperate for a player to get back, that sort of situation. Are you faced with that problem ever?

Tony Kostick: Only very superficially because I've always made my mark right from the beginning is that I wouldn't allow players to play who weren't fit to play.

In the early days I used to get asked whether I would give a pain-killing injection and this, that and the other. If it's not the right thing to do then I wouldn't do it and once managers know that they're wasting their time asking you to do something, then they stop asking. And they respect your decisions in those instances.

Interviewer: Presumably there are FA or Football League rules that you have to abide by, decisions have been made on what sort of injury must result in a player coming off the pitch, that sort of thing. You have to obviously abide by those. What sort of things would you mention?



Tony Kostick: I don't think there are any particular FA rules. I mean, good medical practice is good medical practice wherever.

Interviewer: But blood?

Tony Kostick: Well, the blood thing is if you have blood, you have to come off the pitch until the bleeding stops and you can go back on again. I think there are lots of new ways of managing blood these days, we use glue a lot now. In the early days it was if you're bleeding from a cut, you needed to be stitched, and that would take 15, 20 minutes sometimes. But now you can seal the wound, slap a load of Vaseline over the top so that they're not leaking, quite quickly.

Interviewer: So that raises the question of how even in the short time you've been here, Tony, you will have seen medical advances that have benefited the work you've done, even in that short time.

Tony Kostick: Yes. Even in the 15 years I've been doing it.

Interviewer: Other things? The cruciate thing is-

Tony Kostick: Sure. The other area is the support staff around the ground. I rely quite heavily on the physios at the club in terms of their experience in assessing injuries. They're much better at it than me.

And the ambulance services, the first aid facilities around the ground have improved over the years, there are more, there's more medical equipment available in the event of any incidents. The crowd doctors have to go now on training courses for major incidents in case, you know, a plane crashed into the middle of the field during a match. And we have to be prepared for heart attacks and all those sorts of things. And we have the equipment now to manage those sorts of things.

Interviewer: You as a fan, though, you describe yourself as passionate as anybody else.

Tony Kostick: Absolutely.

Interviewer: For this club, I mean.

Tony Kostick: For this club, and having said originally I was a Man United fan, I'm now much more a Stevenage fan than I ever was.

Interviewer: Still red and white.

Tony Kostick: Still red and white, you can't get rid of that, and Stevenage are red and white. But I would much rather Stevenage did well, and they have been doing well, than United these days.

Interviewer: The special atmosphere of this club, every club's got a special atmosphere, but is there anything that typifies the way the club is run, the atmosphere that the crowd produces that's special? Or maybe it's not special, I don't know.

Tony Kostick: I think that for a town this size, I don't think we get as many people through the door as perhaps we ought to and I think we've been a bit spoilt in the last three years in terms of the amount of success that we've had hasn't translated into a big jump in the gates, which is a disappointment. It's the proximity of the big London Premier League clubs, I'm sure, that makes a difference to that.

But when you've been following a football team that have been bumbling along at a certain level for 10 or 15 years and they suddenly jump up, it's a fantastic, fantastic achievement. I'm not sure that the football lovers of Stevenage have quite flocked to the ground in a way that I would have hoped that they would do.

Interviewer: One game that sums up the excitement of being a Stevenage fan? Choose me one.

Tony Kostick: Well, I'm going to choose a surprising one actually, which is a game we lost which was the game against Macclesfield here when we were 2-0 up with 10, 15 minutes to go playing against 10 men.

Interviewer: The context in the league at the time?

Tony Kostick: I think we were the top two. We'd won the league the previous season, we hadn't gone up, we looked like we might win the season again and you know, we battered them, Macclesfield, for the first 70 minutes of that game. From nowhere, they scored 3 goals with their 10 men. I think we brought Barry [Hails 0:13:07] on, who hadn't played in that game.

For some bizarre reason, it all went pear-shaped. I remember watching Paul Fairclough sitting in the stand at the end of the game absolutely heartbroken after the result. For me, that summed up all about what football is. It's just so unpredictable. You get the massive highs, you get the monstrous lows, which makes it a fantastic game.

Interviewer: And a player to die for?

Tony Kostick: Barry Hails. I was spoilt my first season here. I didn't appreciate what a good team that was, that '95, '96 team, until I watched the following eight, nine seasons where we bumbled along as a mid-table conference side.

He was fantastic. We would be drawing or losing and one bit of skill and he would just turn the game. And the other one of course was George Boyd who by the time he left here could have won us the league single-handedly. I think it was the- What was the team that we beat in the cup? He scored about four or five goals in that game. He was just a different class at that point. My wife named our cat after him.

END AUDIO

[www.uktranscription.com](http://www.uktranscription.com)