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Interviewer: Good morning. Can I ask you your name please, sir?

Ian MacLeod: Ian MacLeod.

Interviewer: Thank you. Ian, what capacity are you involved with Stevenage Football Club?

Ian MacLeod: These days as a supporter, member of the supporters' club, and I own a company which provides a discount for supporters as well.

Interviewer: Excellent. So, can I first ask when did you first start your association with the club?

Ian MacLeod: My association with Stevenage football goes back to the '50s. I used to stand with my father in the Old London Road ground, watching the team in ___[0:00:41] league, I think that's what it's called. So, I mean, I was probably only about six or seven at the time. I remember the old stand and looking across the

railway line towards the George W. King factory. So, that's my earliest memories of football in Stevenage.

Interviewer: Okay. From those early days, can you remember any great games that you saw?

Ian MacLeod: No, and I can't remember any of the players' names, not from those days.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you remember the old ground and obviously, the move to Broadhall Way later on. What did you think of the new ground when you first came, can you remember?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, it was a big difference. Much, much better. I mean, again, I was still fairly young. I don't think you take things in quite as much then at that age as you would do when you're a bit older, but yes, it was a big improvement. No floodlights to start with still, though. I can't remember what league they were playing in at the time they moved, but yes, a big improvement.

Interviewer: Can I ask about your current involvement with the supporters' club?

Ian MacLeod: As I say, I'm a member of the supporters' club, and I run my own driving school, to which I give a discount to anybody that belongs to the supporters' club.

Interviewer: Okay. How often do you get to see the games at the ground now?

Ian MacLeod: I've probably seen about five or six games this season, all at home.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you ever travel to the away games?

Ian MacLeod: I have done in the past. I haven't done for the past two seasons. This season and last season I didn't.

Interviewer: The current side, obviously, playing in League One, how confident are you about maintaining that position in the division?

Ian MacLeod: Reasonably confident. I think they need to maintain it. I think it would be a big blow to them if they went down again. I think they should be able to just about hold their own. They're not going to win it, and I don't think they're ready to go up to another division, not at the moment.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you think of any games in recent years that are special to you as a fan, and that hold any special memories for you?

Ian MacLeod: Well, the one that comes to mind, but it's one I didn't actually go to, I watched it on TV, was the Kidderminster final at

Wembley. So, yes, I mean that holds good memories, and the recent Newcastle game, which again, I watched on TV. But I did see the first Newcastle game in 1998. I was here with my son.

Interviewer: Can you describe the game, of course, against Newcastle, a rather famous FA cup game, and perhaps as well a little bit about the build up to it, what it was like in the town at the time?

Ian MacLeod: I mean, I don't visit the town centre that regularly. A few days before, people were getting excited about it, and obviously on the way to the ground it was big. There was a lot in the local press, because there appeared to be a lot of bad feeling between the two clubs, but I didn't get involved in that. I mean, you start hearing stories after the event, and in fact just before the last Newcastle game, things were coming out about the first game, which I didn't know about.

I did hold a bit of a secret though, because at the time one of my pupils worked at the local hotels, and she said the Newcastle team were staying there, but it was to be kept quiet.

Interviewer: And your memories of the game itself, that tie at Broadhall Way?

Ian MacLeod: I mean, it was sort of over and done with so quickly. One of the things, a memory which I will hold about a particular player, and that was one of the Newcastle players, Alan Shearer. Up until that time, he was just, I wouldn't say an idol, but I thought of him as a good player. I don't think he did himself any good

the day he played at Stevenage. It was his comeback game after a long injury, but you can actually see him kicking, and niggling and pushing. I know myself and my son, our opinion of him dropped after that game.

But the atmosphere was great. I mean, you got a full house inside. I was just saying, the day before the game, my son and I, I don't know why we were up here but we were in the area and we ended up inside the ground on the temporary stand that they had put up for the Newcastle fans, and we just walked in. It really did look good. All of a sudden, this guy shouts out, "Come on you two lads. You know you shouldn't be in here. Let's have you out." But the next night, what a difference. It was full to capacity.

Interviewer: What's your opinion of Graham Westley and the way he's run the club?

Ian MacLeod: (Laughter) I'm not sure that he's running it in the right way. I mean, perhaps this is something that I should make known at a fans' forum. I mean, I've never been to a fans' forum. He doesn't play a [settled 0:06:54] team, and to me, I think that probably causes more problems than it solves.

So, I was speaking to one of my colleagues a couple of weeks ago. He doesn't get to the ground very often, but he keeps an eye on the results. He said, "When are Stevenage going to buy a striker?" I said, "That's what I think." Since they sold Steve Morison, they've not had an out-and-out striker. Whether that would improve or not, only time can tell.

Interviewer: Do you feel he is too defensively minded in his style of play?

Ian MacLeod: No. No, not at all. I'd like to say him play more ground football, pass it on the ground rather than sort of kick [and rush 0:07:44] like the old Watford team did a few years ago, but I mean, that's his style of play.

Interviewer: Going back to previous managers that have taken charge of the club, how do they compare, and their style of play compare with the current style, you said you like?

Ian MacLeod: Well, I think Paul Fairclough had a good team and he moulded a good team together. I'm not sure that any of the managers since have done it. I mean, they weren't here long enough really to do that. Graham Westley's been there, this is I think his third season back. Obviously, he's building the team.

Interviewer: How did Paul Fairclough's teams, their style of play compare to the current side?

Ian MacLeod: I think it was more entertaining. It was more for the spectators, but these days, football seems to have gone for... It's more for the results than for the paying spectators. Obviously, they've got to be careful to make sure they get the right results. It's a fine line, but there's a lot of money about in football.

Interviewer: You spoke about the current style of play. Has that had a negative effect on attendances at home games?

Ian MacLeod: I don't know, to be honest. It could well be the reason why I don't come as regularly. The attendance, from where I see it, appears to be disappointed. I don't know how the club feel about it, I mean, they must be getting an average of more than 3000 spectators this year, whether they feel that's good. For the size of the town, it's probably a little bit disappointing and where they are in status.

Interviewer: The club is obviously now an established member of the football league. How do you feel it compares to the other new town clubs, I mean, such as Crawley Town recently promoted to the league, Milton Keynes Dons and places like that? Do you think that the new town clubs, the sides are going to improve and we'll see more of them?

Ian MacLeod: Yes, although Stevenage is still called a new town. I mean, they've been in existence since the '50s, early '50s. Looking at the size of the town, as I say, they've taken a long time to get here. I just hope it doesn't spiral back the other way. My feeling is that if they do go any further than where they are now, they're going to need to move. They're not going to have a ground big enough to support a championship side, but that's down to the management of the club.

Interviewer: Would you still follow the club if they were to move elsewhere within a reasonable distance of the town?

Ian MacLeod: Yes. Oh, yes, in the same way as I do now.

Interviewer: The name of the ground has recently changed. How do you feel about that being named after a sponsor?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, I don't have any problem with that. I just wish the club would take a stronger line with people that still call it Broadhall Way, because it's still referred to as Broadhall Way on TV. If it's called the Lamex Stadium, let's call it the Lamex Stadium. Take a stronger line, Sky Sports and BBC, they both still refer to it as Broadhall Way. So, I have no problem with calling it the Lamex Stadium.

Interviewer: Can you describe your current favourite players in the squad?

Ian MacLeod: Not really. I don't have any favourite... I mean, the fact I don't get here, I can't always identify which players are which anyway. So, no, I wouldn't say I've got a favourite.

Interviewer: Going back further into the past, the club has had scary times where it looks as though the club may have folded. Were you coming to the club during those times, and if so, can you tell me anything about it?

Ian MacLeod: I can tell you what my memories are, but where they quite fit into everything that happened, I'm not quite sure. At one stage, I have worked in the tea bar, when the stand we were in there wasn't built and the changing rooms were on the far side, on the north side of the ground. There was a little tea bar next to it, so I worked in there.

I can't quite work out where this fits in either, but I used to go to help out with a bingo evening on a Friday night. The money was channelled back into the club somewhere, and I used to do that with one or two other supporters, one of whom, I know who he was, but I know he's passed away since. He was quite a bit older than me. Yes, I've worked on the gate, sort of, in and out. I've not been here and held a regular job, if you like, for any length of time but I've helped out.

Interviewer: Who would you consider your biggest rivals are currently, and past rivalries as well with the club?

Ian MacLeod: What, in football terms?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ian MacLeod: (Laughter) That's difficult to answer. I mean, before the season started, I would have said the two Sheffield clubs, Charlton Athletic, but then Stevenage go and get results against- You know, they beat Charlton, they beat Sheffield Wednesday, a game which I was disappointed not to see. It's difficult to know.

The results that they're achieving this year don't seem to fit in with their league position. They can go away and win at Brentford, they can go away and win at Bournemouth, games I probably wouldn't give them any chance of winning, but they did. Then they go and lose to other teams which you wouldn't expect them to. But that's football. That's not just Stevenage Borough, that's football.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Looking back a bit further to the non-league days in the early '90s, did you have anything to do with the club then, as either a fan or as-

Ian MacLeod: Yes. I supported and I used to travel to a lot more away games in those days. I mean, I remember... It's from then I can remember who the players were, because they were sort of well-known figures. Johnny Brooks, John Mills, Del Stevens. In fact, two of those, my father knew. So, he could sort of speak to them. I went to places like [Corby 0:15:23], and Plough Lane Wimbledon in the Southern League. Yes, more of a fan then, but I can't remember what years they were.

Interviewer: No. Do you feel that non-league football has its place, and how do you feel about that compared to now, being an established league club?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, yes, of course. Stevenage has come up that way, and if you can't come up that way then where do you go? There are difficulties. I mean, if you think of things like there's been a lot of talk over the past 12 months about goal-mouth technology, where the ball crosses the line. You know, you can put it into a Premiership stadium, you can put it into a Championship stadium, but where does it stop? So, there's a problem for the smaller clubs like that, but no, they've certainly got their place and people come and watch.

Interviewer: Have you been to see the... You spoke about the FA cup games at Newcastle. It's often said that the FA cup has a special magic to it that fans and players really love. Can you

think of any other memorable cup games in which Stevenage have been involved?

Ian MacLeod: Not really. There were some, but I didn't go to them. I mean, they played the likes of Swindon away and Birmingham away. My son went to them but I haven't been to them. He tends to travel a lot further than I do. Perhaps at his age, I would have done. I was driving, but I wouldn't have thought of driving those sort of distances in those days.

I think the magic of the cup, it only becomes magic if you've got a magic team to play, really. I mean, last year they played Wimbledon and that was in the cup [just 0:17:31] before they played Milton Keynes Dons, and that was just another game. When they get drawn against Newcastle, that's when it becomes interesting.

Interviewer: Yes. The Newcastle game is still very much, I think, in the minds of many supporters. Can you tell me about... You've spoken about Paul Fairclough and Graham Westley. Are there any other managers that stick out in your mind, that have bought the club on?

Ian MacLeod: I have to be honest, I can't remember the names of the managers in the earlier years. So, I can remember Paul Fairclough and then there was Stimson, and there's another guy whose name I can't remember. He wasn't here for that long. Then Westley was here and he's come back again. So, no, not really.

Interviewer: How did the fans that you know feel about the reappointment of Graham Westley?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, at the time he was very unpopular. I didn't think it was a good idea. My son certainly didn't think it was a good idea. He didn't come across very well, with either the media or the fans. He's addressed it, but I mean, I think he's established himself now as the manager but it took a little while. He had to do something, he had to win something to prove it.

Interviewer: The fans that follow the club, being in such close proximity to London and all the other professional clubs, do you find that fans don't just go to Stevenage, and they will have other teams to support as well? Or are there hard-core fans, that this is the club for them and that's it?

Ian MacLeod: I think there is a hard-core of fans. I mean, how many there are, I don't know. But yes, there are a hard-core of fans. Obviously, there's people like me who come and see some games and not others. I think the close proximity to London is probably a problem in the number of people they get coming to the club. If you're going to see Arsenal over a weekend, have you got the money left over to come and see Stevenage over the weekend? You may have the time, but if you want to follow your premiership club, it may not be so you can afford to follow a local team. So, that could be a problem.

Interviewer: The club, how do they cater for the younger fans?

Ian MacLeod: They're trying very hard to get the younger fans in. I mean, I don't think you pay until you're eight, I think it is, when you can get in. I know my grandson doesn't pay to come in with my son, and he's coming up for six. I believe they let some school children in from time to time. They don't do it every time. They take the supporters' club members because they do a draw for two tickets at every home game.

Interviewer: Can you give us a bit more detail about what the supporters' club do, and any events that you-

Ian MacLeod: Oh, I'm not an active member of the supporters' club. I mean, I see the newsletters that come around. They run coaches, which is their function. I think the biggest thing they try and do is to raise money for the club. So, I mean, whatever they're doing, they are raising money that goes straight into the club. Obviously, after paying for coaches and that, any profit, they have quiz evenings which I haven't attended. So, as I say, I'm not an active member but I do like to show support.

Interviewer: Absolutely. What do you think of the atmosphere at this ground now?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, it can be amazing at times, it really can. It was one of the games, a Portsmouth game, I think, at home earlier... No, that would have been last season, not this season. One of the games this season- Because it's such a small compact ground, the noise you get equates to the noise you might get at some of the bigger grounds. It can be amazing, and sometimes it can be quite quiet.

I was out with my wife Saturday before last, and we were not very far away from the ground. We were walking and I said to her, "There's not much noise coming from the ground today." That was the Charlton game, which was surprising. Obviously I wasn't there, but when I have been here, it can be... It makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck, as the old expression goes.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Do you find that the fans will keep supporting and cheering the team on and making noise when the team are behind?

Ian MacLeod: Oh, yes. If they're playing well, yes.

Interviewer: We've spoken about the current management of the club. How do you feel about the club, and the current chairman and the way he runs it?

Ian MacLeod: Well, from the outside, it seems to be quite good. It doesn't seem to restrict the manager getting players in. So, he's making some improvements, but obviously, the biggest improvement they need to make now is to do something at the north end of the ground. Their plans were shown in the local paper about 12 months ago, 18 months ago. Quite impressive, but it's money.

Interviewer: Would the north end development involve a stand with seating or terracing?

Ian MacLeod: Both, I think. I've just been speaking to somebody actually in the ground who said the capacity will go up to 10,000.

Interviewer: That would be a view, presumably, to attaining Championship status in the future, perhaps.

Ian MacLeod: It could be. I'm not sure the 10,000 would be enough, but it's a step in the right direction, certainly not big enough to go into it any further than that.

Interviewer: When you come to the ground, do you stand or do you sit?

Ian MacLeod: Stand, yes. Right opposite where we're sitting.

Interviewer: Okay. Unusually, the ground does have standing along on one of the sides, as opposed to just at the end. From seeing many football grounds, you don't often find that. Do you find that adds to the atmosphere, having more standing capacity?

Ian MacLeod: Yes, because I'm not sure that you would get the same people coming to a game if it was seated, not at this level of football.

Interviewer: The people that come regularly... Sorry. What does it mean to you to be a fan of Stevenage Football Club, and what do you think it means to others? Is it an all-consuming passion?

Ian MacLeod: No, it's not all-consuming. Not for me, not at my age. I mean, the reason I don't always come is it's not always comfortable standing to watch a game for a couple of hours. Then I've got to think about getting to and from the ground. It's not difficult and it's not far, but no, it's not an all-consuming passion like it was when they were in the Southern League. I mean, I used to come to every home game, and as I say, some of the away games. Although, I do see some people my age that are here for every game, but no, it's not.

Interviewer: You've spoken about the club trying to get children to come to the games. Have you seen any change, have you seen more women come to the ground over the years?

Ian MacLeod: There are quite a few women that come to the ground. Whether there's been an increase, I suppose there has been, yes. We've even got some women that are stewards. Whether they're doing that because they're interested in football, or want to earn a few bob on a Saturday afternoon, I don't know. There are quite a few female spectators.

Interviewer: Has the club ever had a problem, certainly I wouldn't imagine today, but in the '70s and '80s, there was a problem with racism in English football. Have you seen anything like that at the club?

Ian MacLeod: No, not that I can recall. No. There's a lot of swearing goes on. It's one of the things that puts me off, and there's somebody

that stands on the microphone at half time saying, "Cut out the swearing," but they don't seem to do anything about it. I haven't seen anything racist.

Interviewer: Okay. The away teams that come here, do they bring a good level of support with them?

Ian MacLeod: It varies. It varies quite a bit. Obviously, distance comes into it, where the team's position in the league will come into it. You need to remember that there are some big clubs in the First Division that have played in Premiership football. So, they're used to having big grounds. I mean, Sheffield Wednesday will get crowds in excess of 20,000 for every home game, so they're bound to bring a big away support, which apparently they did.

Interviewer: Do you know of any trouble between sets of fans at the ground, or in the area around the ground? Is that something that you have ever heard of?

Ian MacLeod: I've heard of it. I haven't actually seen it. Cambridge and Luton are the two clubs that come to mind when we're talking about trouble. The management of the club are also aware of that, extra police on duty and that sort of thing. Again, because they're both fairly close to Stevenage, they can get in by train. They've got the town centre to come through as well as surrounding the club. Sorry, surrounding the ground.

Interviewer: How do you feel about Luton Town as a club? Well, not really as a club, but more of their supporters?

Ian MacLeod: If you're a football supporter, you don't think in terms of their supporters, you know, the club. I was disgusted at what happened at the Luton ground when they played York City in the playoff semi-final. That was disgraceful for football, but that can happen anywhere.

Interviewer: The club certainly seems to be a community-focused club, and doing a lot within the town and for the supporters. Have you ever seen any behaviour like that from Stevenage fans?

Ian MacLeod: No, no. Not at all.

Interviewer: That's good to hear.

Ian MacLeod: I mean, they make a lot of noise and there's a lot of chanting going on, but I've never seen anything or heard of anything. I say, my son does travel to some of the away games but I've not heard anything from him.

Interviewer: Do Stevenage fans, do the club take a lot of supporters to away games? You say you're involved in the supporters' club-

Ian MacLeod: Again, it varies. Sometimes the club will publish the away support... If Stevenage play away, they will actually publish the

number of Stevenage supporters that were there. For example, at one of the longer journeys this year, there was about 29, I think it was. You know, Old Trafford last year for the playoff, I mean, they took a few thousand. So, for the big occasion, people will go.

Interviewer: You say you don't often go to away games now. Are there any favourite away grounds that you've been to, and you would go again if you had the chance?

Ian MacLeod: I wouldn't necessarily go away because of the ground. I mean, I would go away because of the game. I wouldn't be attracted to say, "Oh yes, I like that ground. I've got to go." So, no.

Interviewer: The recent games at Wembley, we spoke about the game-

Ian MacLeod: I've been to one of them. I didn't go to the Kidderminster game, although I watched it on TV. I went to the York game... Did I go to York? I can't remember if I went to York or not. I think I went to York and Barrow.

Interviewer: The York game, was there a big attendance there at Wembley for that? Did the club take a lot of fans?

Ian MacLeod: Well, obviously a lot more supporters than come to their home games. So, it makes you wonder where they all come from. People know that you're not going to fill a ground that size, so tickets are not going to be difficult to get hold of. Some of the

games like Newcastle at home, it wouldn't have been easy to get a hold of a ticket. To be fair, that's one of the reasons why I thought, "Well, if I don't go, somebody else can have a ticket who is maybe more of a supporter."

Interviewer: The York game in particular, can you describe the game at all? Was it a good game to watch attacking, or was it very cagey?

Ian MacLeod: That wasn't a bad game. I'm trying to remember which one they... Oh, they won that game. Obviously, you know, when you come away and you're winning, it wasn't a bad game. The Barrow game was a bit disappointing. I think it was the next season. Stevenage had a player sent off, although a lot of supporters at the time didn't realise that they were down to 10 men, Stevenage team were down to 10 men, because they didn't see the red card. When they did, "Why has he been sent off?" you know.

That was a bit of a damp squib, and the organisation, the club itself organised transport and they made a right hash of it. Anybody could have walked on to a coach at this end or the other end. There was no organisation for the transport whatsoever.

Interviewer: Do you feel the club have learnt from that?

Ian MacLeod: I think they would have done, yes.

Interviewer: So, what are your hopes for the immediate future of the club?

Ian MacLeod: Just to stay in the division that they're in, just maintain at least a mid-table position, for maybe this season and next season and then think about moving on. They've got to obviously build a team; they've obviously got to get a stadium if they want to move on.

Interviewer: You spoke about this ground maybe being too small to sustain a high level of football.

Ian MacLeod: That's a personal opinion, yes.

Interviewer: Have there ever been any noises made about relocating the club?

Ian MacLeod: Not that I've heard of, no. The only 'noise', as you put it, was the development of the Broadhall Way end, which would be a step up. Whether it's a big enough step to take to the next division, I don't know. Obviously, the management of the club would know. We're sitting right opposite a big area which could be developed into a football stadium. Whether the club have actually talked to the local council about that or not, I don't know. One of the things they do need to do, is to sort out car parking. Car parking around the ground is a disgrace.

Interviewer: Does that put fans off from coming to games?

Ian MacLeod:

I don't know. It puts me off from driving and parking over the road. I won't do it. I'm frightened of getting my car bashed. It's a free for all getting out the car park. There's no stewarding, nothing whatsoever. It's just a free for all. You're coming down to a dual carriageway which is busy, so there's nobody stopping the traffic. They need to take a leaf out of Crawley's books. They've got a properly stewarded car park next to the ground, and they charge for it, which I don't think people would complain about. At least you can get in and out quite safely.

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