

File: BMD Roger Gochin.mp3

Duration: 0:56:18

Date: 03/08/2016

Typist: 675

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Roger Gochin: My name is Roger Gochin and I've been a supporter and business partner, I would say probably is the best way to describe me, of the club since about 1991. I can say a lot about the club but I thought you might be interested in two particular things, which maybe other people don't know about.

I was the principal of North Hertfordshire College between 1991 and 2005, so that was about 14 or 15 years. The two big issues that we had, and we worked in partnership with a football club at that time, were first of all the development of the original youth scheme which was called EFCO, which we developed with Victor Green who was then the Chairman and Paul Fairclough, the Manager. That was the first big issue.

The second big issue was the development of the Shephalbury Football Centre which was originally inspired by the college and I can talk about that.

So, if I go back to the EFCO scheme, which stood for Education Football Career Opportunity, what happened there was that at that time, about 1994, '95, the football club didn't have a youth side, not a 16 to 18 side. What we did was we approached the football club, that is the college approached the football club, and made them an offer.

The offer was that we would support educationally and financially a football scheme for 16, 17, 18 year olds who

would do full time education. They would be footballers for the football club and would be full time footballers therefore, full time youth footballers, like a Football League apprenticeship except it wasn't part of the Football League obviously but outside the Football League.

At the time we were the first football club and the first college in the whole of England to offer a full time non-Football League youth football apprenticeship. Paul Fairclough was absolutely fantastic, he supported it wholeheartedly.

I can remember being at this ground here when we held the first trials, we had 120 applications from all over England. We'd advertised it in the football press, we were going to take about 20 young people on the first intake and then they would go through into the second year and then we'd take another 20.

So, there would be 40 young people on the two year programme. They would compete in the Football Conference Youth League and they would be in the FA Youth Cup as well.

We had, as I said, 120 young people who came for three trial games, 40 at each. Paul Fairclough sat and watched each of the games, oversaw them, put the lads through some training process. I sat here as well along with a couple of members of staff to have a look at them.

Paul then got it down to about 40 and they came back I think later in the week, on the Friday, for a final trial football game on the ground here. Just to show you how big an event it was, all the parents came along. We probably had 200, 300 people in the crowd.

It was such a unique event and we finally chose 20 lads, both for their football and for their commitment to the education programme. Then in the September time they came to the college. They started the football in the July, they had pre-

season training, like the first team. Of course very quickly one or two of the lads started coming through to the first team...

Interviewer: Was that the aim, to make players for Stevenage Football Club?

Roger Gochin: Yes, I mean- you know, you have to be realistic. Most of them weren't going to make full time footballers, as they don't at Chelsea or at Spurs or whatever, you know the drop out rate. But, the whole idea of the programme was that education was the prime aim, to educate the young people properly and give them the opportunity of making it in football.

Of course over the years we had hundreds of people, we had an intake of 20 over the years right until 2006 when Phil Wallace moved into a different type of programme and then in the Football League [scheme 0:05:06].

So, the scheme actually ran for about 12 years and produced many young people who went into the first team football, one of them of course was the right-back for the Newcastle games, who'd come through the scheme and was one of the first people to get into the first team.

We had others, Boyd, George Boyd obviously was probably one of the best footballers we had. I wouldn't say the best young footballer we had over the years but certainly one of the best, and has gone on to great things. Of course has made a lot of money for the club. He was on the scheme at the college for two years and of course we worked with all the managers, with Paul, with Wayne Turner, Graham Westley in his first event.

Interviewer: The players that made it, the two that you mentioned, for you were they always going to make it? Did you think there were others that perhaps should have done as good as them?

Roger Gochin: Well, we've had quite a few into the first team. We've had Paul Armstrong, he was a striker, he played probably 30, 40 games for Stevenage. We had Jack Midson, he's now playing- he played for Oxford but he's now playing league football at Wimbledon.

Sam Hatton, he's at Wimbledon and he's an England C International. We've had Callum Reynolds who went onto Leicester. Was picked up first by Rushden & Diamonds from Stevenage and then when Rushden were in the league and then went onto Leicester.

So, over the years not only have we produced first team players for Stevenage, we've produced a lot of players for other clubs as well who Stevenage have let go.

Of course we've had a lot of players who don't play in the league or in the premiere of the Conference but who play for local clubs like Hitchin or Arlesey and so on, in slightly lower leagues. So, we've produced a lot of good footballers over the years.

But, the importance of the scheme was it offered young people locally in Hertfordshire and also elsewhere, that first opportunity because if you weren't picked up at that time by a league club there was no full time football opportunity for you. There were no schemes, now there are hundreds across the country but we were the first, Stevenage Borough with North Hertfordshire College.

Interviewer: Did it get much attention from the football...

Roger Gochin: Oh yes, we had a lot of attention in the press. There were articles in most of the major newspapers about the scheme, The Times, The Telegraph, Guardian. Particularly when we played Newcastle and they picked up on the fact that one of the players had come through the scheme and was doing well and other players had done well.

So, the scheme was very successful. It was funded by the college through the income that the college got. Over the years we've probably had 15 or 20 players that have appeared in the first team for Stevenage Borough.

We've probably had six or eight players I would say over that time who've gone on to make really good professional careers in football. You know, that would rank alongside most of the schemes that league clubs would have as well.

When I was principal of the college we worked very closely with the club on that, particularly when Paul Fairclough was here because Paul was an ex-teacher as you probably know. Paul was very keen on continuing education and always gave the lads an opportunity and so on. Wayne Turner was a bit different, Steve Wigley when he was here was a bit different.

Interviewer: Did they not have so much enthusiasm for the scheme or did they feel it wasn't useful to players?

Roger Gochin: I think they weren't as- I don't think they were as confident of their managerial ability. You're always taking a risk with young players, that's the fact of the matter, whether it's Wayne

Rooney or whether it's Rod Well, whoever it happens to be when you first play them in the first team against men in a professional league. It's difficult for young people, so you always take a risk.

I think Paul was always more confident of his own ability to actually teach young people how to work in a man's game. So, he was always willing to give young people a- more willing to give young people a go. I'm not saying the others are not willing, I think there are some managers in the professional game now who are more willing to give young players a go than others.

Alex Ferguson gives young players a go, doesn't he, but maybe- David Moyes gives young players a go but maybe other managers are not as keen on letting young players develop in the first team, they let them develop elsewhere.

So yes, I think it was a terrific success and it was a disappointment, I think, when for financial and other reasons I think the club decided to move away from that scheme. They've now, fortunately, gone into the league scheme and of course the Football League Scheme is a different scheme.

The Football League give the club about £170,000 a year to run the Football League Youth Scheme. But, of course before we were in the league there was no money in the Football Conference to do it.

Interviewer: In a way do you feel that it's a shame that the college still can't run that sort of scheme or do you think it's time has finished?

Roger Gochin: Well, the Football League Scheme is an excellent scheme. The Football League Scheme is an excellent scheme and it

makes sure that young people are looked after and so on. I've got no complaints about the Football League Scheme at all. The club has to move on, it's in the Football League now, it has to adopt the procedures and practices of the Football League.

Interviewer: What about the College's role with say Hitchin?

Roger Gochin: Well, I think the college's role has to change with the club. You can't put the clock back, that's life, isn't it? I left the college in 2005 so I can't speak for the college now but the club has to move on, the club has to do things differently and it has to follow the Football League Scheme, which is an excellent scheme.

My concern has always been that whether it's the Football League Scheme or whether it was the original EFCO scheme, young people, 90%, 95% of young people who start an apprenticeship in sport don't become a professional in that sport. It doesn't matter whether it's football or cricket or rugby or any professional sport.

So, you're only talking about 5% every making it, so the key fact is you have to make sure that those young people have alternative professions to go to.

Interviewer: Was it extra special when a player did break through for you but was it also special for the fact that you gave everyone an opportunity and if they couldn't that you'd created a scheme that meant that there were other opportunities in life for them to move onto?

Roger Gochin: We were just as pleased if somebody went to university than if they got into the first team of Stevenage. If they did both, which a few of them did, that was even extra special. So, it didn't matter whether they succeeded academically and went onto other things or whether they got in the full team.

But, of course for many local people certainly originally Stevenage was a local club, so I think in the early days of the EFCO scheme the supporters were very, very appreciative when young people came through the scheme into the first team and supported them.

Interviewer: Do you think it means more to the fans for a player to be from the local town?

Roger Gochin: I think so. I think that's true everywhere, it doesn't matter whether it's Newcastle or Darlington or Bristol. If somebody sees somebody in the first team who started at 16 or started at 11 or something, that always gives you a nice warm glow and that's what football clubs are about.

They're about involving the community in a common purpose, which is about the town and the club. That's why the college and I, when I was principal of the college, was always keen on that partnership because that partnership does things for the town, does things for the community and offers opportunities for people which perhaps they wouldn't get otherwise.

It's a bit of the history which I think helps the club develop both football wise but also develop as a community club. It did both, it helped both. Times have moved on, a different situation now

but at that time it was definitely a force for good and it helped the football club terrifically.

And, of course some of the players, Neil Trebble for example, taught on the EFCO scheme, so they'd played football but their job was also working with us at the college. We also offered opportunities for the footballers in the first team to learn how to coach and become trainers and teachers and so on.

So, there were good opportunities for some of the professional footballers, or semi-professional footballers, to learn their trade and go into coaching and training and so on. That was another side benefit for many of the players who came and worked with the young footballers. Jason Goodliffe was another one, so there were a lot of spinoffs.

Of course one of the other things is we had deals about entrance to the games so that our students who weren't on the football scheme could come in cheaper to the club, that helped the fan base and so on.

So, that was the EFCO scheme. The other thing that- if I move on...

Interviewer: The creation of the Football Academy.

Roger Gochin: Yes, well how that happened is that...

Interviewer: Whose idea was that?

Roger Gochin: Well, if I said it was mine that would be true. What happened was the college owned Shephalbury and it had two bits to it.

What happened is we sold one bit of it because it was an old school that we had taken over and it was redundant really.

We sold half of the land for housing development but the football fields, the school, the original school, college sports field we wanted to retain because we didn't want Stevenage to lose sports facilities. So, we sold the land where the original buildings were but we wanted to keep the- so, what we did was we approached the football club and Stevenage Borough Council.

Interviewer: Had the EFCO scheme broken down at this point?

Roger Gochin: No, the EFCO scheme was still going but Phil Wallace was now the Chairman and had taken over from Victor Green.

Interviewer: Just before we move on, the EFCO scheme under Phil, did Phil still see it as a great...

Roger Gochin: Yes, Phil still supported it and was still using the players and so on. Phil could see the benefits of it.

Interviewer: Still felt it has a role to play?

Roger Gochin: Phil still felt it had a role to play. You know, Phil is always, and I support in this and there is no difference between us on this, Phil always said that you had to improve things, you had to

develop things, you had to change things, you couldn't stand still.

Therefore the football club had to change, EFCO had to change, finances, [the cover at the gate 0:18:00], all of that is true and that's, any of us who have ever run a business, that's how you run a business. You don't stand still.

Phil when he came said, "I'll have a look at the EFCO scheme. If we need to change it we have to change it", and that's absolutely right. No problems with that. But, the scheme was still going but where we were was the college asked the football club and the council if they wanted to come in with us to develop Shephalbury, the football area, the sports area, as a football facility.

We would, that is the college, would approach the Football Foundation to see whether we could get a Football Foundation grant, and that's what we did.

The football club said yes, they would use the facility for training. The council said they would support it and they would want some community use of it. The college would want- so, we went to the Football Foundation. The Football Foundation gave the college approval for a grant for that. The Board of the college then considered the conditions of the grant. Some of the conditions we didn't like.

Interviewer: Like?

Roger Gochin: Well, there were loads and loads of conditions and when you're in a public sector, when you're a college or a university or a school, you have to balance the risk of taking somebody's

money with if you don't manage to hit all the conditions you'd have to pay it back.

The college said these conditions are not right for the college, even though you've offered us the grant. The grant was a lot of grant, it was over £700,000. So, we were rejecting £700,000.

What we did was I went to Phil Wallace and the Board of the football club and said, "Look, this is too good an opportunity to pass up. Can we change it so that the football club actually makes the bid?"

Interviewer: So, the college turned down the bid?

Roger Gochin: The college turned down the money on the basis of the conditions, okay, but the land, Shephalbury land, was our contribution to the facility. We also put in additionally £400,000 into the facility.

So, we gave the land which has a value and £400,000 of money as well, which was part of a planning condition which I won't bore you with but whenever you do a development you have to have planning conditions and so on.

Phil took it up and he then began the negotiations, new negotiations with the Football Foundation. So, the partnership which had originally been led by the college was now led by the football club.

Interviewer: Would it have been different if it had been led by the college? Would what we've got there today have been any different?

Roger Gochin: I don't know whether it would have been different in substance, I think it probably would because the money was to do what happened, you know, a grass football pitch, the all weather surfaces, the car park and so on. Probably the changing facilities are probably better and more extensive than the college would have put up there. I think that's probably true.

Interviewer: Would it have had more community use if it had gone the other way?

Roger Gochin: I think the college would have used it in the way the college uses all of its facilities, so that's not a criticism of where the football club are with it. The football club is the football club and deals with things as it sees its role. The college has a different role in life and therefore the college would have used it in a different way.

So, the answer to your question is yes, we would have done it differently but that's not a criticism of the way the football club- because if the council had taken it the council would have done it differently or if a school had taken it.

Each organisation has to do it according to its mission and its vision of what its role is. The football club sees itself as a particular thing and the college sees itself as a particular thing but anyway...

Interviewer: So, the switch of the driver, Phil became the man that was going to take it forward, the football club?

Roger Gochin: I could not have taken it forward without the help of the football club and the council and Phil couldn't take it forward without the help of the college and the council. So, it's always been a joint thing in my eyes. Somebody always has to be the driver and drive it forward and so on.

The land is still owned by the college, so the college is the landlord. The football club is a leaseholder, it has a lease. It doesn't own the ground, it doesn't own the facility and pays a rent, a lease charge to the college and must fulfil certain conditions of use, as the conditions are laid down.

Interviewer: Community use.

Roger Gochin: From my point of view and from the college's point of view, I think the college for those two things has been instrumental in helping the club develop in a particular way. You know, times have moved on, it's 2011, nearly 2012, so we're going back 16 years in what I've just related to you. But, those are two quite important events I think in the recent history.

Interviewer: The Football Academy, did that change the EFCO scheme?

Roger Gochin: Oh yes, the idea of building Shephalbury was always so that you would be able to have young people coming through from the age of five and six, right through to eighteen, local youngsters. So, instead of local youngsters being captured by Arsenal or West Ham or Tottenham, you know, local youngsters would want to play for Stevenage Borough.

You'd get them into the Academy from the age of five and each year group and so on, and that would lead into what is now the Football League Scheme. Of course I'm sure that's the way they're trying to operate it and I'm sure that's the way they'll try and operate it in the future. So, you have a continuation of training and so on.

But, you see my point is this, I think the football club, any football club, cannot exist in a vacuum. What Victor Green and Paul Fairclough did originally, and what Phil has done as well, and what the college was about but the football clubs work with other partners as well, you always have to have partners, you cannot do it yourself. A football club cannot develop without having partners.

That's the point about football, football should be and football clubs should be housed in their local community because that's where they get their strength from, that's where they get their supporters from.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the Stevenage team today is as involved in the local community as it was back then with the EFCO and the team effort for the Academy, the Shephalbury?

Roger Gochin: No, I think what I would say is I think there was a period when there was really a lot of involvement, I think then it went down. Now, last couple of years, they've relearnt that, they've re-energised that, they're doing it in a different way but they're doing it. I think it's very important they continue it and don't lose it again.

That's true for any football club, not just Stevenage. Stevenage has to build community confidence that the football club want

to participate in all sorts of things in the community. Then all these other people who work in the community will come and support, it's a two way street.

Interviewer: You agree then that the community involvement is vital for the continuation of the success of the team and the survival of the club?

Roger Gochin: If there was a harsher word, a harder word than vital would say- it's more than vital, it's the life blood. You cannot be a successful football team because football is about survival and it's about a word called sustainability. You have to have a business plan which allows a football club to be sustainable over many years. Phil understands that, the current Board of Directors of the football club understand that.

You only make a football club sustainable or one of the ways you make a football club sustainable is by making sure that you work in partnership with your local community. If you divorce yourself from your community why would anybody support you?

When I mean that I don't mean just people paying at the turnstiles to watch the game, I mean doing the advertising, taking adverts, being involved in the dinners and all the other things that are money raising activities. You have to- it's a two way street.

The community must be involved in it, that's where the strength, the sustainability of a club at this level. You know, you've got to be honest about it, if Roman Romanovich bought it it would be a different club because he's a billionaire.

Clubs at this level operating in these types of communities have got to forge [agreements 0:29:06]. I think one of the things that several of us did, not just me but others as well, right from the early '90s through that period tried to get local organisations to support the football club and vice versa, and the football club...

Interviewer: Did you always find enthusiasm from the community to get more involved with the football club and the community projects or was that a task?

Roger Gochin: Sometimes it's very hard and it's very hard for all sorts of reasons. The problem with the area around here of course is that when you ask adults let alone young people who their favourite football team is they'll almost always either go to a London club or maybe Manchester United. To turn that around takes a generation.

Interviewer: Do you feel that 15 years on if you like Stevenage are getting closer to being the number one team in this area or do you still think they have a way to go?

Roger Gochin: I think they've still got a way to go, which just shows you how hard it is because the club have made, with its partners, have made valiant efforts to do that. You have to keep working at it and the crowds, yes, are not big enough to reflect unfortunately all that good work that's gone on before.

There are other things, with its partners, not on its own, there is no point in just sticking an advert in the paper saying there is

a game on Saturday, they have to work at it in many different ways over long periods of time. The football club know that, it's not me, I can't teach them to suck eggs. They understand that it's a very, very hard task.

Interviewer: Can you see reasons why perhaps there were larger crowds being drawn at Broadhall Way in the mid '90s amongst that success than now? Sometimes you can get a lower gate in League One to the crowds that have been drawn in that Championship winning team under Paul Fairclough.

Roger Gochin: Yes, if I had- if there was a single answer to that, okay, that would be easy, wouldn't it? It's not a simple answer. I do think the club has to be more imaginative now about how it motivates, attracts and advertises the whole game. I think it's got to be more imaginative, it's not imaginative enough yet.

I think they've got to do a lot of work like that but you have to be honest, there are only certain periods in football when a club, when everybody senses the club is actually really, really going places.

Interviewer: Was that there in the build-up to the famous FA Cup game?

Roger Gochin: Well yes, but I would say it was before that actually. When we were playing Woking and crowds 5,000, 6,000 here packed out. The excitement was unbelievable. We've not ever reached, not in the last few years even though we've been very, very successful, there's not been that excitement in the town.

It may be that people have got used- it's a funny thing to say but maybe people have got used to the football club being successful.

Whereas when we first became successful it was new, it was dynamic and it's a bit like bursting a dam. There was a lot of pent up feeling that we wanted football club in the town to be successful but it wasn't. When they started winning the Rymans and the this and that, going up through the...

Interviewer: Years and years of winning.

Roger Gochin: It was like a dam bursting. Now of course what you get then is you get this huge flow of water when a dam bursts but six months later it's a regular flow. I think that's where we are at the moment and therefore the club cannot just say we're a successful club, come and watch us. That's no longer sufficient.

What the club have got to do, they've got to find other unique features which will draw people into the football club. Some of those features might be on the field of play, yes, you know they attract two or three really, really fantastic players and people want to come and watch the fantastic players. They become an attacking football team, they score nine goals...

Interviewer: Do you feel that particular players of the past had that impact on the town or do you feel it was more, as you said, the winning and that being new?

Roger Gochin: Well, you always have players at particular times. You know, whenever you support a football team there are always periods when a player or maybe one or two players are better than the team that you're- you know, they're better than Stevenage or they're better than Manchester United and they go onto Real Madrid or something.

Every football team has a period when they've got one or two players, so we've had periods when we've always had one or two really good players who could go on and play at higher things. The crowds come and see those players, of course they do.

We've probably got one maybe at the moment who deserves to play above a League One standard I would say. Whereas when we were in the Conference we probably had quite a number of players, as has been proved, who were better than the Conference over the years.

If you say well, will we ever see the likes of a Barry Hayles down here again? Well, if Barry had been playing in League One instead of in the Conference he wouldn't have scored as many goals. But, he was a hell of a player in the Conference but he wasn't our best player in the Conference, in my judgement.

Steve Berry was a midfield player during that team, was probably much more influential if you understand football. So, when Hayles scored the goals and was a terrific player but there are other things you want in a football team and so on.

Interviewer: Is Steve Berry as you like then the leader of the team?

Roger Gochin: Steve Berry was a midfield player, a very astute midfield player. I don't know whether you play football or not but when you play football at a reasonable level teams have tempos. What a manager will always try and do is get a team to play at the appropriate tempo that it wants.

Now, you need particular players, particularly midfield players, who can make that team play at that tempo, whether it's slow or fast or whatever. They are skilful players without a doubt, they are not ten a penny, they are skilful players these people.

Fàbregas is a player who can play at different tempos, slow, fast. These are people who can make a team tick, okay.

Sometimes you want fast tempo, sometimes you want a slow tempo.

Steve Berry was a player who can marshal the midfield and get the team to play at the appropriate tempo. So, Fairclough said, "Steve, we can demolish this team today but we need to do it by playing fast football." He would play fast football in the midfield. If it was a slower tempo with long balls, because that was the way to bet the team, he could do that as well.

You need rhythm in a team, tempo in a team and you need to be able to play different tempos for different games. So, if you say to me have we got anybody at the moment, I don't know really quite but then again Steve Berry was playing it in the Conference. If he was playing in League One he might not be as skilful.

Interviewer: Barry Hayles, as you mentioned, the one that scores the goals. Was there, from watching Stevenage, was there a special moment when you thought that he was outstanding and deserved to be leagues about Stevenage?

Roger Gochin: Well, he started off as left-back. His first games for Stevenage were at left-back. Paul Fairclough bought him as a left-back, bought him in as a left-back. He was a rubbish left-back. I think Paul saw something in him, which is a credit to Paul, and put him upfront and he took to it like a duck to water.

Interviewer: What was the fear amongst the ___[0:38:42] I'm sure they didn't mind too much when the goals started coming but what was the feeling from moving a left-back to forward?

Roger Gochin: Well, as you can imagine I suppose, you know, bloody hell, haven't we got anybody else in the club who can play? It was right because he was so strong and fast at that level of football. Of course he went on to make a good career for himself.

Interviewer: Paul Fairclough did mentor in the EFCO scheme in the beginning, helped take it on with you, the starting manager of it, was Paul- you know, he's considered one of the great managers of the football club, do you think that Paul made modern Stevenage what it is today?

Roger Gochin: There is no doubt, there is no doubt his nous, his drive and energy was instrumental in it. What I would say about all organisations, you can't do it by yourself. Paul had some good assistant managers over the years who helped considerably, you know, things off the field, he was given a lot of support

originally by Victor Green and then by Phil, before Phil sacked him, but you know.

Yes, Paul was a natural manager, an excellent manager, that's why he's the England C Manager, that's why he's been a professional manager in the league.

Probably had he been more successful when he was younger instead of being a teacher, he'd probably have been a premier league manager or something. He's got all the skills but a lot of it came to him later in life of course because he'd been a teacher full time.

It's absolutely the wrong thing to believe that any football club is where it is because its striker scores a lot of goals or its manager is an astute manager or its Chairman is, you know, if it was that simple it would be different.

I would say that Paul was an exceptional manager. He's a great bloke and he was helped by a lot of good people and the best thing that any football club can do is make sure that it has enough good people and doesn't rely on two or three. If you rely on two or three good people, if they have a bad day, that's it, isn't it? You need a lot of good and the football club needs that.

Interviewer: Have you got a particular favourite memory of one of the Cloughey days, if you like?

Roger Gochin: If you asked me a single game that kick started the whole methodology of Paul's reign at Stevenage Borough, I don't know how many other people would mention this, but we had a good cup run and we drew Leyton Orient away in the cup.

Peter Shilton was their goal keeper and we beat them two one at Leyton Orient.

There were a number of things that were important about that game. First of all that was the first league club, I think I'm right, we'd ever beaten, certainly in a competitive game. Secondly, it started us on a significant cup run. Thirdly, Leyton Orient were no mugs and they'd got a lot of good players.

We played a good game and you could see that we were playing proper football, not amateur football or semi-professional football, we were playing proper football with a good team, well drilled by Paul and so on.

The last thing, Ian, that Stevenage took probably to that game I would say, I don't know the figures, somebody may have the figures, I would say we took 500, 600 people away which for the club at that time, it was a cup game, Saturday afternoon I think it was, but that was the breakthrough moment for me.

Interviewer: Was that when you believed that Stevenage could go and achieve more things?

Roger Gochin: I think it wasn't for me because I always thought they could do that anyway because I was more on the inside track but I think for the ordinary supporter and those players at that time who then formed the core of the players who went on in those cup runs and so on.

I think it actually was the breakthrough game because I'm sure everybody came away from that game saying, "Crickey, we can really hold our own here. We can make breakthroughs against league clubs and so on." The spectators, the supporters, felt that.

I think we then went on to play other league clubs and we always thought we could- so, I think that was the game that changed it for me. I've got the programme from that game.

Whether others would say the same, but I think from somebody who was both involved at the senior levels with people and also involved with the supporters, to me that was the one game that everybody came away and said, "Crickey, we are a good side. We are well drilled. We can really go places." That was the one game for me I think. Others will talk about all sorts of things but to me you have to take steps in life.

Interviewer: And, that was a step?

Roger Gochin: That was the one, that was a big step. That was a big step.

Interviewer: Other people will turn to Newcastle as being one of their favourite games, have you got any from the EFCO scheme and that, have you got any particular sort of stories from that game that might not have necessarily been discussed before?

Roger Gochin: Well, the first Newcastle game, you know, you'll have had all the information from Paul I'm sure, so we were heavily involved at the college because one of our lads was playing in the game. We had- the college was crawling with camera crews and reporters wanting to know about the scheme and wanting to know about players and youngsters coming through and so on.

So, it had an effect on the college and it had an effect on the students and so on, all of which was excellent. But, if you said to me did I think that was the biggest game, I think it was the biggest game in the sense that the national media made it into something really, really big and important.

Therefore in terms of national coverage and becoming a national name, it put Stevenage in a different place. That was important and I'm pleased it happened.

If you said to me do I think that that was the game that changed everything for Stevenage the answer is no I don't. I think it was a national exposure step but it wasn't a footballing or a football club development step. It was a particular type of media exposure step and that's a different thing entirely.

Interviewer: For development then would that make you go with the greatest season achieving the Football League status to move that step, to build up the Football League development for the younger players?

Roger Gochin: Yes, I mean I think there have been a number of significant steps for the club. I think starting the EFCO scheme was one. I think winning the Conference when we didn't go up was one.

Interviewer: What was significant about that then? The need, the want to finally achieve it because it had been denied?

Roger Gochin: I think it taught everybody a number of lessons. First of all we were good, we deserved to win the Conference. I watched a

lot of games that year, well I watched every game, we were by far the best side.

We were fast, we were the fastest side in the Conference. We were a good side, we were quick, we were fast, we were strong, we had all the attributes to win the Conference, the original Conference.

But, what it taught us and it took the club a long time to get over it, was you're not a league club simply by winning the Conference and getting in the League. What it taught us and which I think Phil Wallace to his credit understands and which several of us had been saying to the club for a long time before then is, you have to be as professional off the field as on the field to be a proper Football League club.

I think we didn't go up because the ground wasn't ready and all that stuff, which everybody knows, but that's not the issue. The issue was that we weren't as professional as we should have been off the field because if we were professional we wouldn't have allowed ourselves to get into that position. So, whatever people say the football team was right, the football team was ready but the club wasn't ready.

I think what's happened in the last few years is we've become increasingly ready on and off the field. If there is one thing missing at the moment it's we don't get enough people through the turnstiles. That's the third bit in the equation, you've got a football team, you've got...

Interviewer: A club infrastructure.

Roger Gochin: A club which is professionally run and somehow or other the third bit in the equation has got to start coming good, hasn't it,

because if not the other two will fail. I think the issue about the club as was, that it had terrific success on the football field mainly through Paul but it didn't organise itself correctly, as professionally as Paul was doing on the field off the field.

That's what held us back for a number of years, it wasn't just the fact that we lost a bit of momentum on the football field, which was not surprising when you win the League and then you don't go up. So, there is a good learning point there for any football club.

Interviewer: Have you seen the town benefit from the Football League status happening?

Roger Gochin: Oh, yes. I'm involved with the Chamber of Commerce and all these sorts of thing in the town. Of course there is a benefit. There is a benefit for the name of the town. There is a benefit for working in partnership with industry and so on. There is a benefit to young people in the town. There are those sorts of benefits definitely.

If you say to me a different question, if you said to me do I think that we are maximising all the benefits? That's a different question and the answer is both the town and the football club are not maximising all the benefits. The issue to me is those are the steps now.

Interviewer: So, what's next?

Roger Gochin: Yes, has the town and the football club got a joint plan which would involve improving the number of supporters coming

through the turnstiles, which will maximise the benefits of having a League One football club. It's unfair of me because I'm not a Board Director of Stevenage Football Club but, you know, I'm sure the Board of Stevenage Football Club may have a plan for it, I don't know.

Interviewer: Can you see Stevenage- we talked about the need for more fans but can you see them growing further? I mean, when you first got involved the goal was Football League. Within a year of Football League they're now League One, is that the highest they can go?

Roger Gochin: My experience of running organisations, and I've run many different organisations over my working life, is it's not a nice linear upward graph, life isn't like that, football isn't like that. Even Manchester United got relegated to League Two once, life isn't like that. So, there will be periods when Stevenage will plateau, you know, might stay in League One for three years or something and so on.

What you need is you need a plan which you hope will be that nice continued growth, don't you, but you need a plan that says well look, that's plan A, plan B, which we also manage is we could be League One for three years and just become a middle of the table normal League One club.

So, how do we survive if that's what happens? Where we lose half the games, we only ever come mid table or we have a scrape with relegation occasionally or something.

Every football club, every cricket club, every rugby club, every sports club who plays in a competitive league, that's the reality of life. So, you have to have a structure that says we're not

always going to keep expanding, expanding, expanding, getting better and better.

I would say that the club has got, and I'm sure it has, I'm not trying to teach the club to suck eggs here, it will have, it should have, I am sure it has got, it's got something in its back pocket which will allow it to be, my word again, sustainable in the difficult periods as well as sustainable in the good periods.

You can't run a business by just believing that life is always going to be rosy. If you believe that you're stupid.

You run a business in such a way that you try and do that every year but for example a business would always keep enough money in the bank so that if it didn't sell enough one year it didn't go broke, to be simplistic about it. So, that's what you have to do. I'm sure the football club need to devise ways of being sustainable in the difficult periods as well as in the good periods.

END AUDIO

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