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Chris Forster: Hello, there. My name is Chris Forster and I've been a fan of Stevenage since 1995.

Interviewer: What first encouraged you to support Stevenage?

Chris Forster: Well, I was encouraged by my friend, David, who is a member of the Supporters' Association, and also by my wife, who thought that it would be a good education for my two boys at the time, who were, I think, 14 and 12-years-old.

Interviewer: Was going to Stevenage the first match they'd gone to?

Chris Forster: Was what?

Interviewer: Was your boys' first football match they'd ever been to a Stevenage match?

Chris Forster: It was, yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember that game?

Chris Forster: I do. It was Stevenage v Macclesfield, and, as I recall, Stevenage won 4-0. Tony Lynch scored a really cracking goal outside the area.

Interviewer: Did your boys go wild with the goal?  
Did they feel the excitement straightaway?

Chris Forster: Oh, yes, I think so.

Interviewer: Do you find Stevenage a good family club?

Chris Forster: Very good. Yes, I think it's always had a warm, family atmosphere and I've never had any doubts about bringing friends and family to the games.

Interviewer: Where do you normally sit in the stadium?

Chris Forster: Normally, in the main stand, the West Stand.

Interviewer: Have you always gone there?

Chris Forster: No, occasionally, we've been on the East Terrace. In fact, I can say I've been on all the terraces over the years.

Obviously, the South Terrace is now reserved for the away spectators, so I haven't been there for a long time.

I've occasionally been on the North Terrace.

Interviewer: Do you go to away matches as well?

Chris Forster: Sometimes.

I haven't been to one for a little while. I don't know whether you count the play-off final at Old Trafford as an away match.

That's the last one I went to.

Interviewer: How do you find the experience of going away?

Is it tougher, do you think, that if you were at a Premier League side?

Chris Forster: Well, it's interesting to go to other grounds.

You don't always get sat in the most pleasant part for spectating, I suppose, but there's always a good atmosphere with the fellow Stevenage supporters, going away, which I enjoy.

Interviewer: How do you find away atmospheres compared to home atmospheres?

Do you feel like you sing more when you're away because you're a minority rather than a majority?

Chris Forster: No, I enjoy both, really.

As I say, it's interesting to go to other grounds. Obviously, you're in the minority there and you feel that perhaps you're a bit under siege, but, otherwise, no, it's good fun.

As I say, I don't go to many away games, but the occasional one, I think, adds a bit of spice to the spectating experience.

Interviewer: As a crowd, in an intimate stadium such as the Lamex, do you feel like you have direct influence over how the team plays?

Chris Forster: Yes, I think the team does respond, and I always enjoy spectating here because, as you say, it's a smallish ground and the crowd are on top of the pitch. You really feel part of the proceedings.

Interviewer: Do you prefer smaller pitches like this compared to bigger stadiums like Old Trafford where you're further away from the ground?

Chris Forster: Yes, on balance, I would say I prefer going to smaller grounds. I think you get a better atmosphere because the ground is always full. Whereas, if you go to a large ground, as I have done for some of the play-off finals, it's half full and the atmosphere is not quite so good.

You feel more remote as well from the action.

Interviewer: You came to Stevenage late as a fan, you were saying, around about 1995?

Chris Forster: I would say so, yes.

Interviewer: What's made you keep coming?

Chris Forster: Well, I think it's good to support one's hometown club, and Stevenage has always striven to play quite a good standard of football.

As I say, they cater for the family. I think the atmosphere in the ground is good.

They've improved the ground over the years since I've been coming. It's become a more enjoyable experience, I think.

The Club seems committed to improvement, and long may that continue.

Interviewer: Do you feel the Club treats you as a supporter or a customer?

Chris Forster: Well, that's difficult.

I, myself, am not a member of the Supporters' Association because I find it difficult to get to all the home games. I'm more of a casual supporter in that respect.

If there's a game to go to, then I will try and attend if I can. As I say, it's not always possible, owing to other commitments.

I've always felt that the Club treats you as an individual, not as a faceless person. You get a friendly welcome on the gate, from the girl selling the 50/50s, and even from Andrew Green.  
(Laughter)

Interviewer: It's a really nice, familiar kind of environment when you come?  
  
More often, you get to see the same faces and the same people?

Chris Forster: Oh, yes, I recognise people. I guess they recognise me as well.

I tend always to sit in the same part of the stand because, as I say, my friend, David is a season-ticket holder so he's got a reserve seat.

Fortunately, this season, the one next to him has not been bought, so I can usually have that one when I do attend.

Interviewer: When you do come to the games and you do see, like you say, familiar faces and that, is it more welcoming to have that than, say, plush seats to sit in and better coffee facilities?

Do you prefer the overall stance of more emphasis on the people rather than the facilities?

Chris Forster: Yes, definitely.

I definitely think that's more important to me.

I find the seating is perfectly okay. I don't particularly want a cushion. (Laughter)

Interviewer: How would you go around improving the overall experience for a match day?

Like you say, you've been watching Stevenage for a while, even though you are relatively a new fan.

How would you go around improving it, looking from the outside in?

Sorry, it was a bit of a broad question, that.

Chris Forster: It is a broad question, isn't it?

Interviewer: Would you like me to ask another one?

Chris Forster: I'm trying to think.

I think maybe the access to the car park could be improved a bit or have the car park marshalled, because that's the one bad part, I think, trying to get in and out of the car park, especially getting out at the end of the games.

Once in the ground, though, everybody is very friendly and we usually get a programme. I think the programme is a high standard. We always buy a programme, and I enjoy reading that.

I can't think that there's ever been any crowd trouble, certainly not in the parts around where I sit.

I think we've had one or two away fans ejected, but that's very, very rare.

As I say, this is a friendly place to come and I don't really feel any sense of hostility or danger at the Club.

I guess the only thing now is to perhaps improve the ground and make it a little bit bigger. The plan to build the North Stand and make that bigger is a good plan. I go along with that.

Interviewer: Over time, you've seen the stadium develop and you've seen the team develop.

What's had the biggest impact on your watching experience - the stadium modifications or the teams?

Chris Forster: Well, I think it's both, really.

If the team hadn't improved, I probably wouldn't have kept coming. As a consequence of the team improving and moving up the leagues, they've generated sufficient income to be able to improve the ground.

The two go hand in hand, really.

As I said before, I like it that Stevenage is an ambitious club and they want to improve and move up. I think that's very important and keeps the fans interested. It keeps the town interested.

Interviewer: How has the team developed over this period since you first started watching until now?



Chris Forster: When I started watching, Paul Fairclough was Manager. Then, he left for a period and came back.

Then, we had Graham Westley. He went away and came back.

I think the team at the moment have built a very strong defence, and our success has been founded upon that.

If you get it right at the back and concede few goals, then you can start developing a team in attack and move on from there.

Interviewer: Do you think Stevenage has got a definitive style of play?

Chris Forster: Well, some people describe them as “rugged”, but...  
(Laughter)

They are a fairly well-built, athletic team. I think the fitness levels are pretty high and Graham Westley concentrates on that.

As I say, they try to play from the back with a sound defence.

I think their style has become more varied as they've moved up the leagues. They've probably found they've got to vary it a bit to...

Interviewer: Match the opposition?

Chris Forster: Match the opposition and achieve success at a higher level.

Interviewer: History is showing that Stevenage like that rugged centre forward, really, like Barry Hayles and Steve Morison as good impact players.

What players stand out most for you?

Chris Forster: Well, Hayles, certainly, when I first started watching. He was really good, technically. He could dribble, score goals, and was a very good player.

That was borne out by the fact that he progressed up to the Premier League with Fulham.

I haven't seen so much of Steve Morison. I know he's moved on.

George Boyd was the other one that stood out. Again, he was a bit in the mould of Hayles, and very good technically with the ball at his feet.

Of course, he's gone on to better things with Peterborough.

I was fortunate to be here for the Carling Cup tie at the beginning of the season when Peterborough visited us at the Lamex, and I saw Boyd score a goal, unfortunately. (Laughter)

It was good to see him playing again.

Interviewer: What sorts of players do you look out for?

Do you like your more technical players or jinky players?

Chris Forster: On the whole, yes, I would say so, although I've got a lot of respect for players like Ronnie Henry.

Mark Roberts, I think, is a tower out of the defence.

Scott Laird is developing very well, I think. He's come on quite a lot since he's joined us and he's scored some cracking goals.

Otherwise, it's always exciting to see Lawrie Wilson sprinting down the wing and then turning inside and crossing the ball.

Interviewer: Do you feel like then, sometimes, there needs to be a bit of individual skill or to up the tempo to get the whole crowd going?

Do you see a big lift in the fans and the players, themselves, with incidents like that?

Chris Forster: Yes, when we attack in numbers, that certainly gets the crowd going.

I was fortunate to be here for the game against Sheffield Wednesday in September, and the way we started that was phenomenal. The crowd really responded to the team's efforts, and it all coalesced from there.

To play that first half and end up leading 4-0 was fantastic.

Interviewer: You mentioned Fairclough as a manager.

What managers have really stood out for you?

Chris Forster: Well, certainly Paul Fairclough, because he was the manager incumbent when I started watching, and he had a very intelligent approach to the games.

Of course, he led us to the Conference title in 1996, but they couldn't go further owing to the restrictions imposed by the Football League.

He was a bit unfortunate in that respect, I think, and he couldn't quite repeat the trick in ensuing seasons.

He stood out.

Richard Hill: I remember some matches with him. I think he was feeling his way a bit in management and couldn't quite maintain the level we'd reached.

Then, Graham Westley came in. I've probably seen more games under his managership than any other.

He's the prime man for me. (Laughter)

Interviewer: You obviously mentioned there 1996 and not being able to get promoted.

How did you react that day?

That must have been devastating.

Chris Forster: Well, it was very disappointing, of course, but the rules were really framed against Non-League sides back in those days.

There was only one promotion slot and unless you fulfilled the criteria, which you had to meet by 31<sup>st</sup> December in the previous year, it was really difficult for a Non-League side.

You'd have to be very confident that you were going to win the title only halfway through the season to make the necessary investment in your ground if that was what was required, as it was here.

Unfortunately, it didn't quite happen for us that way.

Interviewer: Do you think they could have done more to help Stevenage in that situation?

Chris Forster: Well, possibly. It's going back 15 years or so now. I can't remember all the ins and outs of it, except that it was disappointing, especially after the way we triumphed over Woking on that Easter Monday.

I was here for that game. That was one of the games I watched from the North Terrace.

We were right down near the goal, and it was really, really exciting, that.

Interviewer: Contrasting nicely with that, how did you feel on promotion to League Two?

Do you remember how you celebrated that?

Chris Forster: I wasn't there in person. My son went to Kidderminster to watch the game, but I didn't go, myself, because I had a family commitment that day.

I remember listening on the radio, and I was really, really pleased to hear that we'd won and got promotion at long, long last. It was like a weight off your shoulders. (Laughter)

Interviewer: The weight off your shoulders: did that then lead to the apprehension that you wanted to stay up the next season?

Chris Forster: Oh, indeed, yes. Of course, yes.

I think, on the whole, I felt pretty confident.

The top of the Conference and the bottom of League Two: we'd played a lot of those sides in League Two in the Conference days anyway, so I felt we'd have a fair go at it.

That was borne out.

I hadn't really expected that we'd get to the play-offs, so that was a real bonus, having that surge towards the end of the season when we won six in a row.

Interviewer: It was thrilling, wasn't it?

Chris Forster: It was.

Then, we tailed off a bit around Easter and it was heart-in-mouth time. They did just enough.

I remember coming on Easter Monday to watch us beat Port Vale. That's really what turned the tide, I think. It just gave us that little impetus to get up into the top six.

Interviewer: Do the results on a Saturday affect the rest of your week in your moods?

Chris Forster: I wouldn't say they do greatly, no.

It's not the be-all and end-all of my life, to be honest.

Obviously, I'm disappointed if Stevenage lose. I'm sometimes

disappointed when they draw, like we did last week against Yeovil. (Laughter)

No, I'm maybe a little bit downcast for a day or two, but I don't let it weigh on me. I look forward to the next match when we can improve and get the win.

Interviewer: Do you still get butterflies in your stomach when you're going to a game?

Chris Forster: Sometimes, yes, especially when we're playing what we perceive to be stiff opposition.

Certainly, when I went to that game against Sheffield Wednesday, I was a bit apprehensive. (Laughter)

Interviewer: If you could just describe your pre-match routine or rituals to getting down here...

Chris Forster: Well, I usually come down with my friend. He gives me a lift.

He generally phones up around about lunchtime, just to check that we're going and what time we're going to meet.

We agree the time and he comes around usually about 2:20pm. We drive down and we usually listen to the early kick-off match in the Premier League on the radio.

Then, we get here and get into the ground, buy programmes, read programmes, annotate programmes with the teams, listen out to all the announcements, and watch the new scoreboard. That's good.

It was nice surprise, when I came last week, to see the nice scoreboard.

Then, at half-time, we generally have a leg-stretch.

I usually walk down to the away end and take a peek at the away supporters to see what they look like. (Laughter)

Then, I go back and watch the game for the second half.

Interviewer: Are you an animated fan or are you one of the fans that generally just likes to watch and see how the team is doing?

Chris Forster: Well, I like to watch, but I give them a fair few shouts, especially when they get on the front foot, or even when they're on the back foot and need a bit of geeing up.

Interviewer: When you come down with your friend, do you feel like it's an atmosphere that you like to share, in that football seems a great release for people to moan at contentious decisions and talk about players and tactics?

Do you feel like that's a good release?

Chris Forster: Yes, we do have the occasional moan, but, generally, we get behind the Boro and cheer them on.

I think you've got to be positive.

Some of the rancour is reserved for the referee, of course, fairly or unfairly. (Laughter)



Interviewer: Have you ever witnessed any, what would you perceive as, excessive abuse, whether towards the referee or the opposition?

Chris Forster: I don't think I would describe it as "excessive".

No. In the games, I've watched, there have obviously been a few jeers and catcalls at the officials, but, as I say, the occasions when I've been here and there has been any crowd trouble which has resulted in fans being ejected, I can probably number on the fingers of one hand.

I would think it's three or four times at most over the years.

Interviewer: Obviously, a lot of fans at Stevenage also have a second club, with Stevenage being a new town and people coming up from London.

Do you follow another side?

Why do you think there are so many fans that do follow other teams?

Chris Forster: I follow Arsenal, to some extent, although I haven't been to an Arsenal game for a number of years now.

I can understand why Arsenal have a following in Stevenage town because the rail links are so good. It's 20 minutes down the line to Finsbury Park, and then another 10 minutes to the ground, so that's a no-brainer in a way.

Interviewer: Do you think lots of other people have their local team and have their team in the Premier League or a higher division?  
If they're not on TV or if they haven't got tickets, do you think they come to support their local team?

Chris Forster: Yes, I would think, possibly, when their Premier club is playing away, they might come and support their local club.  
I think we've got a fair smattering of Tottenham and Arsenal fans here, certainly, by the whoops of joy or jeers at half-time when the latest scores are read out.

Interviewer: Even though Stevenage are playing in a higher division now, attendances are lower than what they were when they were lower down the league.  
Why do you think this is the case?

Chris Forster: I guess it's probably partly owing to the straitened financial times in which we live.  
People have got just less money, perhaps, to spend on what they would see as a bit of a luxury going to a football game, particularly as prices have gone up a little bit as well here, which I can understand.  
Obviously, you're getting a higher standard of football and they're wanting to improve the ground and so on.  
I think it's always difficult with a club that is relatively new in a new town to get that level of support and bring it up.

As I said, I think we've maintained the level pretty well this season. It's not leapt up, but it's not too shabby, all in all.

Interviewer: The FA had a new initiative, whereby they played their international games on a Friday to allow people to go to their Non-League football matches.

Do you think the FA should be doing more for lower-league teams?

When Stevenage were in the Conference, do you think there was enough done?

Chris Forster: It's difficult.

Obviously, the bigger clubs get the lion's share. That's the case.

I think the fact that we can still watch football at three o'clock on a Saturday is good.

One of the downsides of supporting Championship and Premier League clubs is that your fixtures get pulled all over the place by TV, and the FA are rather complicit in that.

It's not altogether a level playing field, I sometimes think, in that respect.

At the One, Two and Conference levels, generally, you find that the teams all kick off at the same time. That, to me, is the fairer situation and one which I prefer, certainly knowing that I can go to a football match at three o'clock on a Saturday.

I don't have to disrupt my social life to go in the evening, on a Sunday, or even sometime on a weekday.

Interviewer: How do you feel Stevenage gives back to the community?  
As you said, you live in Stevenage. Do you see them impacting on the community?

Chris Forster: I think so, yes, because we've got the training facility at Shephalbury, which is made available to the populace at large.  
The players do a lot of work for charity, especially with sick children and so on.  
I respect all that. I think they play a good part in the community.

Interviewer: For you, then, personally, what are the great games that you remember?  
We've got the Newcastle games and pre-season friendlies against the likes of Arsenal.  
What stands out to you?

Chris Forster: The first game I saw, which was when we beat Macclesfield 4-0: I remember that one well.  
I remember going later that season when we played Stalybridge here and we were losing 2-0 until about the 80<sup>th</sup> minute. Then, we got two back and snatched a draw, which was really exciting.  
The, then Easter Monday game against Woking where we clinched the title was absolutely brilliant, followed, of course,

by the disappointment of not actually being able to capitalise on that championship and go up.

Then, we had a good Cup run in 1997/1998.

Or even 1996/1997, actually, didn't we?

In 1996, I remember going to Leyton Orient, which we won, when Peter Shilton was playing for them in goal.

That took us on then into the third round at Birmingham at St Andrew's. I remember going up in the coach to that one with David and my sons.

It was a pretty cold, snowy day, but, fortunately, the match went ahead. We lost narrowly, but it was a very good experience to go to a big ground like that. It was the first time my lads had been to a...

Well, it wasn't a Premier League ground then, but it had been in the past, of course, in the First Division.

Interviewer: How did they take the defeat and the long bus ride home?

Chris Forster: Oh, pretty well, yes. They were alright. They were okay.

Interviewer: Yes?

Chris Forster: Yes, it was a good day out for them.

It was assuaged by meeting John Motson after the game.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. Nice.

Chris Forster: We had a little chat with him and got his autograph on our programme.

It was a good day out, that, and we got back in time to watch it on 'Match of the Day'. It was quite unusual to see Stevenage on TV. (Laughter)

Then, the following season, we had the tie against Newcastle United. I remember going to that.

I took my older son because I think we could only get two tickets. Tickets were restricted. I think you couldn't buy more than two at a time or something.

I remember going. We went down to the match pretty early. It was on the Sunday evening. It kicked off at something like 4:30pm.

I remember we walked down because we thought it was going to be really difficult, parking and getting away afterwards.

We walked down to the match and it was a cold, grey day, but it wasn't wet, which was good because we were on the East Terrace, which was all open at the time, of course. There was no roof on it then.

I remember the game.

I think it was Michael Love who missed his tackle on Keith Gillespie, who came up the right wing, crossed it and Shearer headed in the first goal.

In some ways, I felt that that settled us down a bit. Then, we really applied ourselves and it was fantastic when we got the equaliser, with Grazioli heading in.

We were at the far end from that.

Both goals were in the first half, weren't they?

Then, we played really well after that and hung on.

They hung on. (Laughter)

At the end, we thought, "They're hanging on. It's not us."

I wasn't able to go to the replay, but I saw it on TV.

Yes, that was another thrilling game.

Interviewer: What were the differences between watching, say, the Newcastle game here and watching a normal game?

Chris Forster: Well, the crowd was bigger, of course, for one thing.  
I think that's still our record crowd, isn't it - 8,040 for a home fixture?

Interviewer: Does a bigger crowd constitute a better atmosphere?

Chris Forster: I think so, especially in a cup game as well. It's sudden death.  
Well, almost, anyway. (Laughter)  
That always gives a good atmosphere.  
I always enjoy the cup ties here, actually.

Interviewer: Is there definitely a magic about the Cup?

Chris Forster: Oh, certainly. Yes, I think so, certainly for teams in the lower leagues when they come up against the big boys.

Of course, we got our revenge against Newcastle earlier this year, back in January, didn't we?

Interviewer: Did you go to that?

Chris Forster: Unfortunately, no. I was unable to go to that one, but I saw it on TV.

Interviewer: What did you make of the pitch invasion?

Chris Forster: Sorry?

Interviewer: What did you make of the pitch invasion?

Chris Forster: The pitch invasion at the end?

Interviewer: Yes.

Do you think it marred it slightly or were you not too fussed after the result?



Chris Forster: It was a fantastic result. I'm not surprised people invaded the pitch at the end. It was just a pity that Scott Laird got involved in that fracas.

That took a little bit of the gloss off it, I think. Apart from that, it was really good.

Interviewer: When someone asks you who you support and you say, "Stevenage," what elements make you proud to say, "Stevenage"?

Chris Forster: I think we're a small club punching above our weight, but a club that believes in playing hard but fair.

It enjoys a good following. It's on the radar of the football public at large, largely through our Cup exploits and the way we've come up through the leagues recently.

Interviewer: If someone said, "Ah, I want to follow a local team. It's either going to be Stevenage or St Albans City," what would you say to make them definitely come to Stevenage?

Chris Forster: Well, I think I'd say that they'd get a much better standard of football, with no disrespect to St Albans.

I'm a native of St Albans. I used to watch them when I was a lad.

I think, nowadays, it's worth coming to Stevenage because we've got a really good ground, a good atmosphere, and a good standard of play.

It's a club that's run professionally, in my view. We've got a very good team running the Club. Not just Graham Westley, but the Chairman is obviously behind the Club. He's taking them in the right direction.

All the people who come and help, like Andrew Green, are very professional with pitch announcements and so on.

As I say, the programme has improved to a very high standard now, I think.

Interviewer: Looking out on the pitch today, it's immaculate.

How has that changed over the years?

Has it always been this nice?

Chris Forster: No.

It's really in very, very good nick, isn't it?

I don't know if it's due to the high temperatures that we've experienced this autumn. Obviously, the weather has helped.

It hasn't been very wet, has it?

The tendency of the goalmouths to become mud patches has perhaps been delayed.

I think, on the whole, it's a really good pitch.

Certainly, when we were in the Conference, it must have been one of the best if you compare it to somewhere like Barnet, where they've got a pronounced slope and a rather ramshackle stand.

Interviewer: It's always been a good pitch?

Chris Forster: In my recollection, yes, although it tends to get a bit torn up in the goal areas as the season progresses.

I think that's just an effect of the weather, isn't it?

Interviewer: Wear and tear?

Over the years, you must have seen some great players.

Who really stands out in your mind?

Chris Forster: As I say, when I started watching, Barry Hayles was obviously a special talent.

I think we did very well to bring him on and give him a chance to get into playing football at a fairly high level.

Of course, he went on from there to Bristol Rovers and then to Fulham, and played in the Premier League.

He was the first of our players to do that, but certainly not the last.

Of the others, I think Efe Sodje stands out. I remember him again from the first match I saw here. He was very dominant in defence, and obviously was very distinctive with his bandana.  
(Laughter)

He was a real talent. Of course, he went on to play for Nigeria in the World Cup, so Stevenage has spawned some really top-class players in that respect.

Interviewer: Do you think Stevenage has helped with their careers in the type of football they play and the facilities they hold?

Chris Forster: Yes, I think so, because, as I said earlier, Stevenage has a very professional approach to the game that the Club will run.

We try and bring on young talent. Obviously, we've got our Academy. It's good to bring young players through, I think. You've got to keep doing that.

I think they get a good opportunity here. If they've got the ability, then they'll be allowed to show it and take it on from there.

Interviewer: If you had to think of a player who could encapsulate the Stevenage ethic of playing, is there one that stands out?

Chris Forster: I think Mark Roberts at present, certainly.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Chris Forster: He's a big man in all respects.

He's a really good leader of the team, very resolute and very strong, defensively, but he's not afraid to go up the other end, get involved in the opposition's penalty area, and crack in a few goals.

I think he leads by example, and he's the sort of player that this club is built around.

Interviewer: The hard-working player?

Chris Forster: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think the fans appreciate hard-working players, when they see players coming off the pitch shattered?

Chris Forster: Yes, I think so.

Yes, especially people like Chris Beardsley, who will run all day. He always gets a very good reception from the fans.

Interviewer: Do you ever socialise or have any interaction with the players because of being so close?

Do they ever give you a nod and a wave if you shout their name?

Do you ever see them in everyday life?

Chris Forster: No, I can't say I've ever done that.

I suppose the closest I've come to interacting is catching the ball when it's been kicked out and throwing it back down to them. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Any hot prospects that you see in the team where you think, "They can go on"?

Chris Forster: I think Byron Harrison is improving.

He's probably finding it fairly difficult to come from Non-League, have just one season in League Two and then go up to League One, but I think he's really worked hard and he's beginning to blossom now.

Interviewer: Some players play really well at home, but don't seem to turn up away.

Do you think that ever happens here because it's such a nice home ground?

Especially in the first few years you were coming here, there must have been some stadiums out there that weren't a patch on this.

Chris Forster: Well, that's true, yes.

I don't know whether that affects the players so much or not, although I remember some fairly dismal performances at Farnborough. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Historically, who do you think will be remembered when people think of Stevenage?

Will it be the players who are playing now, who are taking the team up?

Will it be the Barry Hayleses and the Sodjes who made the team what they were?

Will it be the players who were playing when the Stevenage football team were playing at King George's?

Will they always be remembered or do you think they will be forgotten by the mainstream of fans?

Chris Forster: Well, that's difficult to say.

As I say, my watching history only goes back 15 or 16 years.

I can certainly remember the team I saw back in 1995 - the Championship-winning team that year.

Those players live in my memory.

I suppose, over the intervening years, it's been the bright sparks like the George Boyds and the Steve Morisons, who have gone on to greater things. They've stood out.

I think the current team will stand out because of their achievements, really, in getting promotion from League Two to League One at the first attempt. That was a really, really, really good effort, that.

Interviewer: Do you hope that your sons will keep bringing their children to Stevenage or, if they move away, would you expect them to support their local team?

Chris Forster: Well, they've both moved away now.

My eldest son lives abroad in Frankfurt in Germany, so he doesn't get very much opportunity to support his local team in Stevenage.

My younger boy lives in Birmingham. He occasionally goes to away games. I think he went to Macclesfield for an away fixture last season.

If he comes home for the weekend, he'll go and watch Stevenage.

In fact, he did come home for the match against Sheffield Wednesday. He saw that one.

I think he went to the away fixture with MK Dons as well, so he does get to see them from time to time, but probably not quite as often as he would like.

Interviewer: Finally, where would you like to see the future of Stevenage?

Chris Forster: Well, onward and upward, but I can't see that we'd compete all that well in the Championship, to be honest.

I think perhaps League One is a good level for us at the moment, certainly.

If we can maintain a good presence in League One, get a satisfying consolidation, improve the ground and get the crowds up a bit, maybe then we'll have the financial clout to buy the sorts of players that you would need to stay in the Championship.

Interviewer: A less meteoric rise than you've been accustomed to?

Chris Forster: Yes, because I think you can outgrow your strengths.



As I say, we've started well in League One. I hope we can maintain that and be a good, tough opposition there.

When you come to watch the team, you want to see a good game, and a game that's a fair contest, not a one-sided game.

Interviewer: Do you put more emphasis on performances or the results?

Chris Forster: Well, it's always nice to get a result, but I've enjoyed some games that have ended in our defeat.

Not as much as when we win, I guess, but I wouldn't say the result is everything. I think it's important that the team plays well and that there are the performances.

As long as I feel that I've had fair value for the price of admission, even though we don't always win, that's good.

There have been some disappointments. Sometimes, we've been 2-0 up and lost 3-2, which is always a bit gutting.

Equally, there have been games where I've felt that we should have won and haven't.

Then, there have probably been games where we have won when we perhaps shouldn't have done. You occasionally get away with it. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Football is very unstable, as you just said, with results. You can be 2-0 up and then lose 3-2.

Football is unstable in terms of relegation.

Is that a constant threat?

Is there a constant fear of relegation and the fact that it could lead to a downward spiral?

Chris Forster: At present, I don't feel in fear of relegation.

As I said earlier, the team has made a good start in League One. They appear to be able to compete. They've not been thrashed in any of their defeats.

It's just finding that little bit extra, I think, in order to contest the games with the top clubs, but they did that against Charlton Athletic to good effect.

I thought they got a good win at Brentford earlier in the week. I hadn't expected us to get three points there, to be honest.

END AUDIO

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