

# Tony Goodall Fans' Conference

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January – 11am



## **Attended:**

John Mousinho, Rich Hughes, Andrew Cullen, Tony Brown & Johnny Moore (PFC)

Andrew Prismall (South Wales Association of Pompey Supporters), Barry Dewing (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Barry Thompson (Northern Blues), Colin Farmery (Pompey History Society), Donald Vass (TGFC Secretary & Chichester Portsmouth Supporters' Club), Gemma Raggett (London Supporters' Club), Graham Price (Pompey 808), Kev Ryan (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Mike Fulcher (TGFC Chair & Social Media Groups), Mike Whittle (PHS), Mike Whittle (Pompey History Society), Pam Wilkins (Pompey Disabled Supporters' Association), Peter House (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Phil Pike (Isle Of Wight Supporters' Club), Roy Gregory (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Simon Colebrook (Portsmouth Supporters' Trust) & Tony Howe-Haysome (Armed Forces & Services Club).

## **Apologies:**

Steve Tovey (Legends Lounge), Ian Marshall (Chimes Lounge), Gez Johns (South West Supporters' Club)

### **1. Welcome to John Mousinho**

#### **Q: John, welcome to Pompey. You've had a whirlwind 24 hours – how are you feeling, and what has your first day as Head Coach of Pompey been like?**

JM: Whirlwind is right! Nothing can prepare for you for it. I ran out to buy a pair of trainers yesterday and was recognised straight away – I realised I'll have to be careful where I go shopping! I'm massively excited and feel so privileged to get this opportunity. I'm grateful to everyone at the football club – I've already felt huge support and goodwill. Everyone here has the best interests of Portsmouth Football Club at the forefront of their minds. I'm hugely excited and want to bring success today, this season, and most importantly long term. Everything is set up brilliantly here for the future.

Whenever there's a managerial change, it's hard for players. They're thinking 'what does it mean for me?' For my first session with them, I wanted to instil some calmness in them, and lift the energy around the place. We only did an hour on the grass and a quick 20 minute tactical session – it wouldn't have been the right thing to do to have a longer session the day before a game. Moving forward, I want to see front-footed, positive football. I think I understand what you guys want to see. That's what I want to see as well. It will take time, but I know everyone here is right behind us.

#### **Q: The players seem to be in a deep rut. How do you build their confidence back up?**

JM: I've spoken to the players and they're well aware of their own responsibility for where we are. They're extremely disappointed by the current run of form and know it's not good enough – they're very conscious of that. How do we arrest it? Confidence comes from winning games. It will be difficult to do too much tactically this week and next week because we've got a run of games, but we'll strip things back to basics. We won't overload the players with too much to think about, we'll

strike a fine balance. Confidence is a big thing in football – it's one of those intangibles which we'll need to instil in the players over time. I've played in this league for a long time – I know promotion from League One is difficult, but it is achievable.



*[John Mousinho was thanked for attending, then left to focus on the day's fixture against Exeter]*

## **2. 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Q: Colin, you've been working on the club's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary which is coming up later this year. What can you tell us about the projects being prepared?**

CF: We'll start off the celebrations with a 'birthday game' on 1<sup>st</sup> April vs. Forest Green Rovers, for which we'll have some special events planned. After that, there will be a whole season's worth of activities which will both celebrate the club's rich history and also leave a legacy at the end of the year. The Pompey Supporters' Trust have been working on the Jimmy Dickinson statue, which is on course to be completed and unveiled this summer. The claywork is nearly complete, and looks superb, and some teaser images will be released next month to support some further fundraising to get the project over the line. The club are have contacted several suitable opponents for a prestige friendly at Fratton Park this summer, and have had some positive responses. We're working on kits and merchandise, and there is 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary book in the pipeline. The hospitality team are looking to do some social events, and we have lots of former players confirmed for the April 1<sup>st</sup> game, which they'll be attending as guests. The Pompey History Society are also working on a legacy project which will involve creating a full database of the club by taking on the data from the dormant 'PompeyRama' website. We've also appointed a poet in residence for the year, while Clare Martin from Pompey In The Community is working on 'The Pompey 125 Cup', which will become a community football tournament to be played year on year. Pompey Women will be involved too – there will be a special friendly for them and we're exploring a potential project with the National Football Museum on the history of women's football in the city.

**Q: Some fans are concerned about a podcast for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary which Joe Michalczuk is reportedly involved in. Is he the right person to be working on projects at Portsmouth Football Club?**

CF: Joe was a controversial commentator here 10 years ago. He was perceived to be a supporter of Balram Chainrai and anti Supporters' Trust ownership. Last March, he phoned me and said he was doing a PHD in broadcast journalism and wondered whether I could help him get some interviews with former players as part of a project he was working on for his course. I thought this could also be of value to us, as he was going to be spending a significant period of time working on this, so took the idea to the 125 committee. We had a discussion about it and invited Joe in to present to us. The idea is that he'll be doing interviews with former players and people connected to the club and that the audio will then be archived and belong to the Pompey History Society. We'll be managing the project and retain editorial control, and the club can then decide at the end if it would like to publish any final product which comes out of it. Joe will be interviewing people about their time at Portsmouth – not offering his own opinions on the history of the club. As Chair of the committee, I gave the group - and the Pompey Supporters' Trust in particular - a veto from the outset if they felt involving Joe wasn't appropriate. They indicated that they were happy for us to

continue, having heard the context of the project and knowing that the Pompey History Society were in control of it.



*[Colin Farmery was thanked for attending, then left to conduct a matchday tour]*

### **3. Head Coach Appointment**

**Q: The search for a Head Coach lasted more than two weeks and some fans are underwhelmed at the eventual appointment. Can you tell us about the process, and why you arrived at John Mousinho?**

AC: We spoke to a range of candidates. Some were very experienced in the game, including some who said they were flattered by our interest but were waiting for opportunities in the Premier League or at top clubs in the Championship which they believed to be imminent. We didn't just look at people like John who were young and fresh, we approached it with a very open mind. That's why the process took a bit longer – we cast the net very wide. We did our due diligence on the candidates – they all made presentations showcasing their coaching and identity, and had to convince us they could deliver it.

RH: The very first time I came across John, I thought 'what an impressive man'. The way he's just spoke today in the meeting with everyone, that's not an act – he has such high integrity and values. The way the game is going, footballers live short, heavily-pressurised careers. It's incredibly important that a Head Coach has an understanding of what the world looks like to a modern footballer, and having someone who can connect with the players on a personal level is a good thing. John's only had an hour with the players on the grass so far, but he has a strong identity he believes in and he wants to integrate this across the club. His big thing is accountability – 'The buck stops with me. I'm Head Coach, it's my responsibility'. That gave us confidence – you do need a special type of person to be involved in this club.

**Q: This appointment is a significant gamble – you're gambling with our club and your own reputations.**

AC: When you're doing something unexpected, you do question yourself. Ultimately I own the decision. Every night I went to bed thinking about who we'd seen that day, all while we had lots of external noise, fans discussing who they would and wouldn't like to see, plus a run of poor results going on at the same time. I had to step back and return to the criteria we set out right back at the start of the process. That was hugely important – to trust the process.

RH: If John had experience, he'd be much higher up the pyramid. We really believe in him and think he's got all the qualities needed to be a top Head Coach for us.

**Q: Despite not having any managerial experience, John Mousinho has been a captain at several of his previous clubs and was the leader of a big organisation as Chairman of the PFA's Players' Board. Was that leadership an important characteristic you were looking for?**

AC: At MK Dons, we took Russell Martin as a player out of the dressing room and into the First Team Manager position the same evening. I had confidence in that decision as I'd seen the leadership skills Russell demonstrated and, like John, he had gained the highest coaching qualification, the UEFA Pro Licence. Although Russ didn't get MK Dons promoted, he created a strong footballing identity for the club which was taken on and developed by his successor.



RH: At Forest Green Rovers, I took on Rob Edwards in similar circumstances. He hadn't led an organisation before, but showed all the attributes needed. There's a big difference between Forest Green Rovers, Milton Keynes Dons and Pompey – that's not lost on us. That's why it's so important for us to provide the individual with a strong structure throughout the club. We've appointed someone really strong though.

**Q: Alongside the announcement of John Mousinho as Head Coach, the club have also said they are in the process of appointing an experienced coaching team to support him. How close are you to making appointments?**

RH: We want people who will complement John. We have some names that we've already had conversations with. We need to make sure John has what he needs around him. We're not going to rush it. We've seen those strong pairings at Portsmouth before - Danny Cowley and Nicky Cowley, Kenny Jackett and Joe Gallen, Paul Cook and Leam Richardson - we think it's a great opportunity for us to start that Head Coach and Assistant pairing for John.

AC: We weighed up getting both the Head Coach and Assistant Head Coach together and announcing them at the same time, but there was a need for immediacy with John's appointment.

#### **4. Sporting Director**

**Q: Richard, welcome to the club. What are your roles and responsibilities as Sporting Director?**

**Q: When appointing a Head Coach, how important was it to find a candidate who would fit into the club's existing structure, rather than someone who would come in and expect to have wide-reaching control?**

AC: It was very important to find someone who fits our structure. When I first came here, the board all agreed about the need for a Sporting Director. I took my time to do that – I wanted to establish what we wanted their roles and responsibilities to be first. Ultimately it came down to having long term strategy for this club, so that when coaches do move on you aren't going back to square one every single time. What do you want your Head Coach to focus on? Coaching the players and football matches. Everything else that a Manager would deal with under a traditional model – the sports science, medical team, analysts, ground staff and so on – are all distractions that take time away from their main aim. A Sporting Director can take all of that away from the Head Coach so he can focus on what's important. Having appointed and committed to a Head Coach / Sporting Director model we can't then flip-flop on strategy and appoint a First Team Manager / Head Coach who doesn't fit that structure.

RH: Most mornings, my first 30 minutes at work are with the chef and the ground staff. That's the sort of thing we're protecting the Head Coach from – they shouldn't have to worry about the menu, pitches and things like that. We had a performance chef in from the FA this week to improve our work in this area. We're building a culture of letting the experts do their jobs – we want to let experts lead their departments. Previously, when a Manager leaves you're left with a huge vacuum. We don't want that – we need to be a brilliant football club in everything we do from top to bottom.



**Q: Some fans are sceptical of moving away from the traditional model where managers are in sole charge of transfers. Can you explain why progressive clubs bring that under the remit of the Sporting Director?**

RH: It's to protect the club. Sometimes managers and coaches make decisions which will benefit them in the immediate future for the next 6 months. We want to win now, but we also want to be well set up for the future as well. We want to consider both the short term as well as bringing someone in who will benefit the club for a longer period of time.

**Q: Injuries have had a significant impact on our fortunes this season. Have you begun to investigate why these appear to have affected us so badly recently?**

RH: I've done a big investigative piece of work on everything that's been going on in the past six months, some of which predates my time at the club. We've been through every factor which has impacted upon the number and type of injuries we've had and reflected on what we can do differently in future. Tom Lowery's is one of the most unusual hamstring injuries I've ever seen in football – it's in a really unusual location. We've got to get the right systems in place so that everything is reported and captured properly and we've invested in a new piece of medical equipment to assist in this area.

We've got players in the treatment room right now who would help us on the pitch. We can't afford for that to be the case. I've got experts in the field who I speak to regularly – we want to push the standards all the time. We're speaking to the players more about their individual needs. To give you one example, Ryley Towler is really big on Pilates – we're investing in him, so we want to give him what he needs and tailor his programme to him. I'm really passionate about it.

## **5. January Transfer Window / Recruitment**

**Q: To what extent has our recruitment in this window been hampered by the change of Head Coach? Is there room in the budget to support him going into the final 10 days of the January transfer window?**

RH: Has the Head Coach situation hampered our recruitment? It hasn't helped. We were still able to do Ryley Towler, which we're really pleased with. We've got a few more that we're looking at, but we want to make sure it suits what John wants to do in the shorter term. There's still 10 days to go – and that's a long time in football, particularly during a transfer window! There's lots of time left to influence things. On Monday and Tuesday, we'll work with John on what we need. I've articulated to [Head of Recruitment] Phil Boardman what we're looking for, but there will be a bit of a twist from the type of player Danny Cowley wanted to what John Mousinho needs. If we get the opportunities to do things, we will do.

TB: There is a regular monthly recruitment meeting with the board and we have one scheduled for next week. There is a maximum EFL squad cap of 22 outfield players aged over 21 plus goalkeepers so there is not much more room in the squad numbers, but we will be looking at all options and after the two January signings to date we now have one more remaining loan space.

**Q: If the Head Coach wanted to sign a player and the Sporting Director didn't, who has the final say?**

RH: Hopefully we won't get into that situation too often! The Head coach can ultimately say no, but our recruitment process is designed to ensure we're aligned. Our job is to provide players John



wants to use. Ultimately, if I sign a player the Head Coach doesn't want to use it's a waste of money – no one wants that. We want to try to reinvigorate this squad. During the interview process, we asked all the candidates to audit the current squad group. What do you see? Where do you think we need to get better? There was a real symmetry between John's thinking and ours. A Head Coach doesn't have time to work through all the different layers in the pyramid of a transfer – they only need to look at the top layer and make a decision on whether they like the players we've scouted, analysed, researched and put forward. We want to make decisions which work for everyone.

## **6. Ownership / Fan Discontent**

**Q: A group of supporters have said they will be protesting against the owners at today's game. What's the club's – and owner's – response to their planned action?**

AC: I've obviously been fully focused on the Head Coach recruitment process. I've read the statement and have passed it on to the owners, as the group requested. The email is not from any named individuals but sent in the name of PFC Coalition and from an email address in the name Show Ambition.

I will of course invite the group in to discuss their concerns in person, as I would do with any other concerned supporter group or individual, but the PFC Coalition have already stated in their email that they have no desire for a one-to-one meeting with the club, going on to say that for far too long, supporter groups focus on access rather than holding owners to account.

Protests are becoming a recurring feature of football, although I'm never going to criticise a protest, or the right of any supporter to do so.

**Q: Beyond the protest group, there appears to be growing unrest among some sections of the wider fanbase, with this poor run of form meaning many fans are now anticipating a 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive season where we have finished lower in League One than the previous campaign. What is the owners' plan to put us back on an upward trajectory?**

AC: The owners are frustrated too with our league position. As you know, we made a change in Head Coach a few weeks ago and we appointed a new Sporting Director, Rich Hughes, a few months ago in October. This is all about delivering a better long term strategic plan to football operations, aligning our medical staff, sports science department, recruitment and analysis teams and the Academy and establishing a clear playing identity. The immediate aim this season is now to win football matches and climb up the table. We will provide every support to the new Head Coach to achieve this plan in the short, medium and long term.

**Q: An individual who appears to be linked to the protest has alleged that the club contacted the police with his name and contact information. Did the club pass this supporter's details on to the police, and if so was this in compliance with GDPR regulations?**

AC: As part of any event held at the football club, we have a legal obligation to ensure the safety of anyone in and around ground. We regularly liaise with Hampshire Police and have a Dedicated Football Officer police liaison team. The most important thing for us is that everyone is able to attend Fratton Park safely. That's always the most important thing for supporters when we survey them about priorities. The word 'protest' raises concerns – when you read that, you are duty bound to ensure everyone can attend and enjoy safely without fear of disruption. When you read that,



you have to prepare appropriately. If you don't know precisely what form it will take, it can be hard to form a risk assessment – we have done that, but we've had to go in blind. Last week, when the news of a potential protest first came up, the club received a call from our Dedicated Football Officer at Hampshire Police asking if the club had any information, so the police and other safety agencies could accordingly plan appropriate resource inside and outside the stadium as well as the stadium approaches. We had no specific information – but were asked if we knew anybody who may be involved. The club shared the information it had seen circulating on social media with the Dedicated Football Officer. At no time were contact details of any supporter passed by the club to the Dedicated Football Officer and there was no breach of GDPR. We understand the Dedicated Police Officer already had the personal details of any individuals contacted. We understand that those supporter calls made by the Dedicated Football Officer were to reassure them they were not in any trouble, but they needed as much information to plan police resource accordingly, as well as wanting to share this with all external parties engaged in matchday safety, to properly prepare the appropriate risk assessments.

## 7. Ticketing

**Q: Several supporters report experiencing problems with tickets at Spurs, with some having issues with both physical and e-tickets. Do the club know how many supporters were affected, and can any lessons be learnt to avoid problems like this in the future?**

**Q: Ongoing postal strikes are still affecting delivery of tickets. Can the club do any more to help limit the impact this is having on fans?**

AC: E-ticketing is 100% the way forward, and would have solved a lot of the issues which we saw at this fixture. The difficulty is that for our away games, it's not our ticketing system – it's the home club's. Sometimes, like at Wycombe who use the same Ticketmaster system, we can offer e-tickets as their system is compatible with ours. We did this for our recent away game and it worked well. Tottenham use Ticketmaster and we asked them if we could use the same system, but because we'd taken such a big allocation and they had to relocate 6,000 of their own season ticket holders, they were unable to configure it in time. We will go down that route wherever possible in the future though, and look to provide supporters with e-tickets where an away club uses a compatible Ticketmaster system. We're conscious of those who don't use technology, and will always have a solution for these supporters as well.

For Spurs, we had 350 duplicate requests for people whose tickets hadn't arrived prior to matchday. The ticketing team here worked with Spurs until midnight the night before the game to ensure these were ready. Some people had requested an e-ticket replacement as a contingency however, and then encountered problems at the turnstiles as their paper ticket had been voided. Some supporters had selected the option to collect from our ticket office, but didn't do so. We ended up with 400 not collected, which needed to then be picked up from Tottenham.

The postal strikes posed an added complication – that was always my big fear for this game. The alternative to posting the tickets would've been to avoid an online ordering system and asked more than 9,000 people to queue up for several hours at the stadium, in one of the coldest weeks

of the year! There are definitely improvements we can make and we will discuss this at the forthcoming Away Ticketing Group meeting.



**Q: Are the club still planning to implement changes to the loyalty points system next year?**

AC: We convened a meeting with supporters and supporter groups in October to revisit the current away ticketing allocation system. We will reconvene this group shortly to consider what improvements we can make for next season. We will also review the allocation system for Spurs, to learn what we can do better and so we have a strong plan in place for future high profile away cup matches

**Q: There have recently been staffing changes in the ticket office – who is in charge of away ticketing?**

AC: Sian Ellis and Vishvaraj Chauhan.

**Q: When our supporter group purchases a batch order of tickets for our members, do the individuals each get a loyalty point if we provide a list of their client IDs with the order?**

AC: Yes, you should do – please contact Sian or me if there are issues.

**Q: Our supporters' group feel we could have sold more tickets for the Tottenham fixture. Why did we get a relatively small allocation?**

AC: We wanted to make it as fair as possible for all supporters. The proposal was to take each supporter group's highest amount of travelling fans from last season and this year, then add 15% to that, so if 60 was the most you took to a game over that period, we were able to offer you up to 69 for Spurs.

## **8. Fratton Park**

**Q: What's the current status of the Fratton Park redevelopment? Are there any updates on progress made with other local stakeholders?**

AC: Work has commenced on the Milton End which will be fully completed in Autumn 2023. A video update will be released to supporters next week. There have been a number of issues that have slowed the work including methane gas, contamination and, digging deeper, massive concrete pads in excess of five foot which were unexpected. Rail safe standing seats will be included in the Milton End and we are in discussion with the SGSA and SAG regarding how we can replicate this in specific areas of the Fratton End to reduce the risk of capacity cuts due to persistent standing issues.

New P rails will shortly be installed on the North Lower gangways. We are also creating additional WC facilities in the southeast and northeast corners of the ground. It is also evident that some supporters are having difficulties accessing seats in the North Upper and Lower and therefore the new lift being installed will be upgraded and enlarged to serve 14 people at a time rather than wheelchairs only as originally planned.

The temporary steelwork in the South Stand and other areas will also be removed soon

In order to develop Fratton Park further, planning conditions require improvements to local



transport infrastructure. With the help of Stephen Morgan MP and Portsmouth City Council, quarterly forums are held and attended by all local stakeholders to do our best to develop options whilst exploring different funding opportunities



## **9. Stewarding / Policing**

**Q: Fans have reported issues with stewarding, particularly in the Fratton End. Some disruptive supporters are standing in other people's seating areas and the stewards are not dealing with the issues. Can we encourage matchday stewards to be more proactive?**

AC: The club are aware of a recent incident, and if there are further incidents it would be beneficial to share this information with the club. Additional signage has been placed on some of the seats in the areas where persistent standing occurs which advises everyone to be respectful of their fellow supporters and ensure they are in the seat they have purchased. The stewards are deployed to check in these areas periodically and will continue to monitor each game. In addition, the reporting line is always operational if people need assistance 07500 77 88 44. We will look to engage in discussions with all those impacted.

**Q: The club faces the prospect of an FA charge after recent fan behaviour issues. What are the likely consequences for the club, and what needs to be done moving forward?**

AC: We're responsible as a club for supporter conduct. Every time there is an incident reported in the match officials' report, this is given to The FA and they make a consideration as to whether to charge the club. This might result in a warning, or it could result in sanctions ranging from a financial penalty to parts of the stadium being closed down. We have had seven separate investigations this season at home matches on a range of matters from objects being thrown at match officials, players and visiting club staff, to discriminatory abuse aimed at players, coaching staff and officials. Each incident has led to an investigation asking us to 1) explain the actions taken prior to the game; 2) the actions taken on the day once the incident was reported; 3) actions taken against identified misbehaving individuals; 4) actions to be taken going forward to prevent a recurrence of such behaviour. Some of these incidents have led to FA warnings regarding future spectator conduct and that recurrences will lead to a high risk of an FA charge

Where do we go forward on this? We don't want any part of the stadium to be closed. The police are taking a more visible presence inside the ground in certain areas as a deterrent. We need to be more proactive in highlighting the potential consequences to the club of receiving a charge and in promoting the text reporting line. That's anonymous – no one will be accused of grassing someone up and there is no fear of being approached or asked to give a statement. Some supporters have suggested having visible body cameras on stewards – we'll look into it. We will increase the visibility of signage around the ground too. It is vitally important to do this and highlight to The FA the action we're taking.

I acknowledge that some of these issues are being seen across clubs – it's a national trend – but my concern is to improve the situation at PFC.

## **10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

**Q: The current slide door of the club shop / ticket office is unsuitable for anyone in a wheelchair or lacking in strength to open. Can an automatic/push button be installed?**

AC: Yes agreed – we are looking to rectify this as quickly as we can.



- Minutes by Donald Vass