

Tony Goodall Fans' Conference

Saturday 17th September – 11am



Attended:

Andrew Cullen, Tony Brown & Johnny Moore (PFC)

Barry Dewing (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Donald Vass (TGFC Secretary & Chichester Portsmouth Supporters' Club), Ian Marshall (Chimes Lounge), John Canning (Northern Blues), Kev Ryan (Pompey 808), Peter House (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Roy Gregory (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Simon Colebrook (Portsmouth Supporters' Trust), Steve Tovey (Legends Lounge) & Tony Howe-Haysome (Armed Forces & Services Club).

Apologies:

Gemma Raggett (London Supporters' Club), Mike Fulcher (TGFC Chair & Social Media Groups), Mike Whittle (Pompey History Society) & Pam Wilkins (Pompey Disabled Supporters' Association).

1. Summer Transfer Window / First Team Squad

Q: How do you reflect on the club's transfer business over the summer and the team's start to the season so far?

AC: We began the window looking at players we wanted to re-sign. We gave a new contract to Sean Raggett, took up our extension options on Jay Mingi and Louis Thompson, then agreed new deals with Reeco Hackett and Michael Jacobs. That helped put the foundations in place for the rest of the window. We were able to make the early signing of Marlon Pack, which was a big signing for us. Marlon obviously has an affinity with the area and that was helpful, but nevertheless he had plenty of opportunities elsewhere. We faced competition from Championship clubs and some of League One's biggest spenders. With some deals, we had to show a degree of patience. Many selling clubs didn't want to do deals until after pre-season tours or had new managers who wanted to look at players first before deciding on their futures. We could have done business earlier, as free agents were available, but every deal you do impacts what you can do later. Our forward line is a good example – there were players we could've signed early, but that would've impacted who we could bring in later. There was no guarantee we'd get players like Colby Bishop and Dane Scarlett, but we held our nerve and kept in touch with the parties involved. Danny and Nicky worked tirelessly presenting to players, parents and representatives on where we want to go as a football club and how we were going to get there. We had to be patient, and the players were patient too. Obviously, there was lots of external angst about not getting forwards done quickly, but we had to show determination and remain strong and firm. There were some players we wanted and didn't get, but that's a factor in every transfer window. We've brought 12 new players into the squad, and all have made an impact early on, which is hugely encouraging. One important change this summer was the introduction of the five subs rule – you can now really impact the game with substitutions, and that tends to be more in the attacking areas. So, we were always looking at opportunities in these areas. Josh Koroma at the end of the window a good example. We were alert and agile with Tom Lowery – he was on his way to the Championship before we were able to bring him to Portsmouth.



We've had lots of people working on these deals - Phil Boardman worked very hard to identify a whole range of players, doing the groundwork with agents and clubs and then putting them forward to the football department. Our coaches have been very busy watching video clips and constantly scouting games at all levels. Tony Brown worked extremely hard to complete deals. It's been a collective effort. Obviously, we'd like to go into pre-season with the whole squad already assembled, but that's not always possible. Looking ahead to next year, we have a number of players already contracted and others who we hold extension options for. There was a huge overhaul in the summer of 2021, there was still much to do but fewer players needing to be replaced this summer, and the same again next year. Recruitment is always an ongoing process – we have our regular monthly Board recruitment meeting on Monday week as usual. The business we've done has been reflected in the positive start to the season we've had, but let's not get too carried away, it's important not to judge the success or otherwise of the window on 1st September, but at the end of the season!

2. Ticketing

Q: Some supporter groups have experienced trouble purchasing away tickets recently, with tickets for both Crawley and Port Vale reportedly being sent out in good time but having still not arrived. Supporters have instead been advised to pick them up from the home team's stadium on the matchday. Whilst we appreciate the ticket office has been busy supporting season ticket moves and that postal strikes have had an impact, this does not appear to be an isolated incident. What can be done to improve this moving forward?

Q: The club appears to have a high turnover of ticket office staff – this seems to create issues where good systems are established but then break down when staff move on. How can the club retain ticketing staff for longer?

AC: The biggest issue has been the delivery of tickets to us. EFL regulations say that home clubs should deliver tickets to the away side at least four weeks ahead of fixtures – that's not been happening. Sometimes we get them two weeks or even ten days prior to the fixture – that's been putting big pressure on our ticket office. It's a 12-15 hour process to sort away tickets out when they arrive and prepare them for fulfilment. We want to tighten up all our processes to do our very best to serve supporters. Our Ticket Sales and Supporter Experience Manager, Sian Ellis, will work hard to request our allocation from the away club so that we have them here from four weeks out, and that will enable us to get things out by post on time. If not we will refer matters to the EFL. We want to avoid causing angst for fans who are having to travel without tickets and collect them from the home club on the day. I have to recognise that several clubs are suffering from staff shortages, especially in hospitality and ticketing. Further to that, August has been a particularly unusual month for us, with the one-off North Stand Lower and South Stand season ticket seat moves and then the successful 19 game season ticket campaign to organise. One thing that has happened is that more supporters are visiting the ticket office for queries rather than going online – we now have double the number of phone calls to the ticket office compared to pre-pandemic. It is great to see everyone but that brings its own challenges. We hope that with the conclusion of the seat moves in the North and South Stands, that things will begin to settle down a little and more supporters will revert to an online engagement, wherever appropriate



Q: Tickets for our trip to Forest Green Rovers are likely to be in very high demand – how will purchases be prioritised?

AC: We have an allocation of 1,224 tickets. Of that, 30% will go to members of supporters' groups and the remaining 70% will be sold in priority windows according to loyalty points as per the scheme rules designed previously in consultation with the TGFC.

One problem we have encountered for sales of Ipswich tickets was the application of the loyalty points scheme. Some supporters believe that others are abusing the system by sharing their ticket ID to allow other supporters to purchase during a priority window that they weren't themselves eligible for. The problem is, there seem to be no rules in place for it, so it's hard to say whether people were abusing the system or whether they had the right to pass things on. As a club, we're committed to the loyalty points scheme, but we may need to look at it again. We'll form a group of supporters to help us review and where appropriate tighten things up and properly communicate the scheme's procedures on the website.

Q: A Portsmouth XI is due to play a Southampton XI in the Hampshire Senior Cup. Are supporters encouraged to attend this fixture, and if so when will tickets be available?

AC: The Hampshire Cup is usually a good money spinner for local non-league clubs – if they draw one of the bigger clubs like us or Southampton, it's a great payday for these community sides. It's why we usually seek to play all of our games in this competition away. It's surprising that we've been paired with them as it denies other clubs the chance to play either side and earn money from it.

We will now need to police the game, and that coupled with additional security measures means it will cost the club significant money to stage this fixture. We're looking at when the fixture can take place but so far it's been hard to agree a mutually convenient date or time. We've even looked at the possibility of playing it behind closed doors so that the losses of staging the game might be mitigated. It is a tough one as we don't want to deny our supporters any opportunity to watch the team play any fixture.

Q: Season tickets have again been printed with the 'Fortress' logo on – do the club still intend to run a rewards programme with them, and if so when can supporters expect to see it?

AC: We pulled this scheme last year as it wasn't fully ready. It's something we could look at but would need to be properly tested before it goes live. Our Head of Marketing, Matt Barker has arranged for Fortress to come to the next Matchday Experience Working Group in October to make a presentation and gather feedback.

Q: How many season tickets have been sold to date, including those on 19 game season tickets?

AC: We've sold 13,833, including 800 of the new 19 game tickets. We would ideally want to cap sales at around 14,000, which would keep some seats back for general sale and provide the opportunity to sell a limited number of half-season tickets around Christmas. We may reach a stage now where any season tickets sold may not be for the same seat every game, as tickets have gone on sale for individual fixtures, and we can't guarantee a specific seat will be available for every and every game.



3. Fratton Park Redevelopment / Matchday Experience

Q: We've seen high attendances so far this season. Has this encouraged the owners to push on with further stadium redevelopment?

AC: It helps the discussion. If we are at season ticket capacity and have a waiting list it gives you confidence going forward. Then it demonstrates that attendances won't fluctuate too much with results and you have some certainty. But there are other factors at play. We are obliged to improve the transport infrastructure and access to the stadium. Stephen Morgan MP and Portsmouth City Council have been incredibly supportive. Stephen has set up regular forums with the key stakeholders - The Pompey Centre, Network Rail and Portsmouth City Council – and brought us all together. Network Rail are experiencing an uncertain future with their structure under government review and South West Railways' business model has been decimated by the loss of commuter customers with more people are working from home. We're also keen to support the park and ride proposal at Tipner – especially as it provides a realistic opportunity to provide a dedicated route from Tipner to Fratton Park.

Q: What is the new capacity of Fratton Park after the redevelopment work to the North and South stands?

TB: The total capacity will fluctuate between around 18,500 and 19,500 this season, depending on building work going on.

AC: Today, we're able to sell just over 17,000 tickets in home areas and can house around 1,900 in the Milton End.

Q: Work is due to start on the Milton End in October - how will it affect away supporter capacity in the second half of the season, and will it have a knock-on impact to home supporters?

AC: Work on the first third of the Milton End will begin in October. That will bring the capacity of the stand down to around 1,600, and so below the 10% minimum we are obliged to offer to away clubs. We've made an application to the EFL to temporarily allow for this reduction and we're hoping it will be approved. One of the downsides is that we won't be able to have any home fans in the Milton end during the works, as we'll be left with only one entrance and set of kiosks and toilets. That means we will not be able to entertain home fans in the Milton End once the work starts.

Q: With home tickets beginning to sell out for some fixtures, will the club be operating a ticket exchange for season ticket holders to pass on their seats to other supporters if they can't attend?

AC: We're looking at that now and would like to reintroduce a ticket exchange incentive for fans who can't attend games to pass their tickets on in this way.

Q: Would the club consider having a year-long direct debit scheme for season tickets, which would split the cost more and so bring down the monthly payment for fans?

AC: It's something for us to explore. I introduced such a scheme at Milton Keynes Dons and at Norwich City, but it would be a big change and we'd need to get to a position where season ticket sales begin early. At both Norwich and MK we launched season tickets as early as February / March and took the first payments then.



Q: The club have recently begun hosting a matchday fan zone behind the Fratton End. Has this been successful, and what else can supporters expect to see in this area in the future?

AC: I totally credit this to the Matchday Experience Working Group and they have achieved a brilliant early win – they looked at ways we could improve matchday atmosphere and suggested this. We piloted something similar behind the North Stand at the end of last year, particularly for kids. The reason we couldn't then do it behind the Fratton End was the conflict between pedestrians and the away coach, which used to park there. We solved that by creating a secure compound for the away coach, with players coming through a different corner now, which has allowed us to be really creative behind the Fratton End. We have a DJ, Pompey in The Community with inflatables, and now a shipping container selling food and drink, with a sizeable investment from our catering partner Piglet's Pantry. They've been really keen to develop this. We've set up the equipment with Greene King, so the bar there will be ready today. We can use this space to trial new products and give them a go. We've tried serving Moretti in one of the North Stand kiosks instead of Budweiser for example, but are hesitant to switch completely as there's a huge price increase for Moretti over Budweiser. We can however trial things in the shipping container and see whether fans prefer certain products. We can also try new food products – we've tried mac and cheese previously and will have nachos available today.

The fan zone is going to become a real hub on a matchday – I think it's helped improve the atmosphere and it could be something really special as the season continues. We'll bring in other partners from around the city, and we're looking at sponsorship in that area to help support and enhance facilities. The good weather lately has helped, but we're going to explore the cost and feasibility of installing temporary weather covers for the winter.

Q: Can you show the iFollow feed on stadium TVs, so people can see the game while they're on the concourse?

Q: The concourses have been quite busy at half-time. What can you do to alleviate the pressure here?

A: We've increased the number of TVs in the stands and have these showing Sky Sports. We need to check where these create bottlenecks and overly busy areas though, as we're still finding some conflicts between toilet queues and the kiosks, for example. We're monitoring behaviour on CCTV to see where people congregate and will move the TVs accordingly. We've already made some adaptations, for example converting one queue in the North Stand to a one-way system.

The new mezzanines in the North Upper are working well and have provided some extra space adjacent to the bars. We're currently trialling a token scheme, where supporters can buy a token for a beer before the game and pick up a pre-poured pint from a priority queue at half time. We'll do a full launch around the ground once it's fully working. The matchday spend per head has significantly increased compared to last year which is remarkable given the current economic constraints facing our supporters.



Q: Some supporters report having difficulty walking down the steps in the North Lower as they're quite steep. Do the club have any plans to reinstall the railings either side of the walkways?

AC: We're required to have them in the South Stand where the rake is less steep. It's become apparent that some elderly fans are having trouble in the North Stand too. We are looking to remedy this by installing 'P' rails on every 4th step so there's something for supporters, should they require some additional support. We'll focus these on the blocks where people have reported issues.

Q: The big screen has proved very popular since its introduction a few years ago but some supporters are unable to see it. Are there any plans to create a second anywhere else in the ground during further phases of stadium redevelopment?

TB: It's actively being looked at.

4. The Academy

Q: Some supporters report that one age group has been closed by the academy. Is this true, and can you tell us more about the rationale behind this decision if so?

Q: Can you give us an update on the overall strategy and performance of the academy?

AC: The story just isn't true – we haven't closed any age group at the academy.

TB: This is not permitted under the Elite Player Performance Plan Academy rules and regulations.

AC: Zesh Rehman has recently started with the academy as the Lead Professional Development Phase Coach. He's very well connected in the game, and well respected by the coaching staff here as well. We're up to 9 scouts now, which is a big increase on where we were before. We'd like a 10th in the Guildford area – we'd be keen to hear from people in this area with experience in the youth football scene.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Q: Why do we still not have a Matchday Disabled Liaison Officer at Fratton Park, and when will one be appointed?

AC: Marie Stedman is our Disabled Liaison Officer – we'll look at training up stewards for the matchday role.

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

TB: The doors there are currently under review – we're looking at options to improve them.

6. Cost Of Living Crisis / Finances

Q: How will the change in energy prices impact the club? Would the club consider moving kick-off times to avoid needing the use floodlights?

AC: There's been some talk of this from Bradford City but it's not something we're looking to do.



TB: We wouldn't change kick-off times, but energy cost is a massive area for us. Prices have gone up significantly and it's not just Fratton Park we have to think about, it's also the Pompey Health and Fitness Club. The big impact of energy prices is likely to fall on businesses and we are already looking at a range of options to save costs.

7. Retail

Q: Adult replica shirts cost £55 this year, and £39 for juniors – this is the most expensive in League One. Some fans also report that larger sizes of clothing in the club store are routinely unavailable or shown as 'out of stock' online. What can we do in the future to ensure more fans are able to afford and access club clothing?

AC: In terms of deliveries, like most clubs we've been affected by suppliers who manufacture in the far east. Countries like Vietnam and China went into lockdown again in 2022 during the pandemic, which has had a knock-on impact on production and shipping. Junior sizes only came in at the end of August. We're not happy about it – we placed our orders in October last year, so there was no delay at our end, but manufacturing and delivery is outside of our control.

We want to take that feedback on board in terms of pricing – Just Sport run the retail operation and determine the pricing, but there needs to be greater dialogue between the club and them in future. I will put that in place. It's something for us to revisit with them, and we can re-evaluate how that relationship works. The mint green third shirts have been extremely popular and have sold out. We have a shipment of 500 more coming shortly, but we have been told that will be it.

8. Policing

Q: Have the club received any feedback from Hampshire Police in relation to the 'kettling' incident at Port Vale?

AC: The police have asked supporters to speak with them directly if anyone has any reports or concerns about this incident – they're keen to hear feedback from fans. We would encourage people to speak with Adam Robson at Hampshire Police if they have any comments or observations.

9. Club Staffing

Q: What's the latest on the Director of Football search?

AC: There was a lot of external noise around the process in May. It was unhelpful and the process became too open, which compromised matters and made life difficult for candidates and those who initially expressed an interest became dissuaded by the media speculation. We are going to have a Director of Football / Sporting Director, but we'll keep that process as tight as we can.

Q: Some club staff have recently moved onto new roles. Will the club be recruiting or restructuring as a result?



AC: Two important members of staff have left recently – Anabel Roman has been our Club Secretary for 14 years but is stepping away from football. This year has seen lots of Club Secretaries leaving their roles. The stresses, strains, and various changes in regulations have had an impact. It's a very tricky job where you're constantly on call 24/7. Anabel been a real loyal servant and much loved and valued member of PFC and knows the club inside out. Our new Club Secretary Ally Knell will be starting on the 4th October, joining us from Stevenage.

The other member of staff to leave us was Anna Mitchell, who left in August to join Fanatics after delivering some incredible revenue growth for the football club. Anna's departure gave me time to reflect on the role and the chance to review our commercial structure. I have decided to split the roles and responsibilities into two different areas. We put out an advert for a Director of Sales this week - that person will focus on driving hospitality, sponsorship and ticketing, our main revenue generation areas. They'll also work with two key partners – Mosaic, who run the Pompey Health and Fitness Club, and Piglet's Pantry, who will take on our matchday hospitality as well as the kiosks. This new person will develop these partnerships and also look at any new opportunities. We've also created a new role – Head of Marketing and Communications. This individual will focus on the delivery of the marketing plan, including working with our retail, lottery and streaming partners.

10.AOB

Q: How many Pompey supporters are streaming games on iFollow?

Q: Are the EFL likely to stick to individual revenues for iFollow, or move to collective deal?

AC: We had 2,800 streams on Tuesday night from Pompey fans. With the new TV deal in 2024, it's likely that streaming will become an even more important component. There will no doubt be much debate on the revenue split between clubs with many looking for the guarantee of a fair distribution system.

Q: Are there any plans to hold a Hall Of Fame event for the club's 125th anniversary?

There are still some outstanding servants who haven't been inducted.

JM: I was at the training ground with Alan Knight and Jake Payne yesterday – we're looking at what's possible.

Q: At the Millwall League Cup game last year, some fans missed the last train back from London. The Charlton game has been moved to a Monday evening with an 8pm kick off, which will again make it difficult for fans to get home by train. Have the club had any discussions with train networks about putting on later trains?

AC: I'll drop them a line and see. There's also potential disruption on the line for Ipswich away [October 1st – Rail strikes] and Oxford and Shrewsbury at home [October 25th and 29th – bus replacement service between Havant and Haslemere). We will need to communicate that with fans.

[AC later advised that he had contacted South Western Railway – "They confirmed that there are later services from Waterloo at both 23:00 and 23.32, however, these are affected by overnight track works south of Guildford, where a replacement bus service will operate. Unfortunately, there



is not anything that can be done to suspend the track works. Lucketts will operate the usual coach service.”]

- Minutes by Donald Vass