

# Tony Goodall Fans' Conference

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April – 11am



## Attended:

Eric Eisner Andrew Cullen, Rich Hughes, Tony Brown, Mark Judges & Johnny Moore (PFC)

Barry Dewing (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), David Callahan (South West Supporters' Club), Donald Vass (TGFC Secretary & Chichester Portsmouth Supporters' Club), Gemma Raggett (London Supporters' Club), Graham Price (Pompey 808), Ian Marshall (Chimes Lounge), Jeff Harris (Armed Forces & Services Club), Kev Ryan (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Martin Callahan (South West Supporters' Club), Mike Fulcher (TGFC Chair & Social Media Groups), Mike Whittle (Pompey History), Nick Paul (Northern Blues), Pam Wilkins (Pompey Disabled Supporters' Association), Peter House (Pompey Independent Supporters' Association), Roy Gregory (Central Branch Supporters' Club), Simon Colebrook (Portsmouth Supporters' Trust), Steve Heaven-Gandy (Isle Of Wight Supporters' Club) & Steve Tovey (Legends Lounge), & Zachary Fox (Double E Pictures).

## Apologies:

Adrian Foster (South Wales Association of Pompey Supporters), Leon Tricker (Social Media) & Vicky Lamb (Her Game Too).

### 1. First Team

**Q: Both the men's and women's first teams are on the brink of possible promotions. If the sides are successful, are any public celebrations planned for supporters to celebrate with players and staff? Fans need to plan ahead, particularly if they're travelling to the Lincoln away game on 27th April.**

RH: In terms of any potential celebrations, we're only focusing on the next game. That's the most important thing. We'll keep going and see where we are at the end of the season. We do appreciate that everyone wants to plan ahead, but we have to just keep focused and keep moving forward. We don't want to give anyone else any headlines.

MJ: That applies to both the men and the women – nothing has been achieved as of yet.

**Q: Local media have reported that the club are set to appoint Brad Wall from Manchester City as the club's new Head Of Recruitment. How will this impact the club's transfer dealings moving forward, and what will the club's approach be in the summer transfer window?**

RH: I can't comment on any names at this stage. What I can say is that our approach won't change – much of our recent successes is as much to do with the structures we've put in place as the individuals. New individuals coming in will obviously affect our performance, but they will implement the strategy we've set out. For the summer window, we'll be proactive, busy, at games, and using our scouting network to continue to develop. When we went through the recruitment process [for the new Head of Recruitment], we were fortunate that Phil Boardman was around to be part of that process too. He's been a really skilled colleague and knows the work that has gone on here, and so made sure everything was left in a good place as he wants the best for this club.

Together, we've identified the next person to come in, and we're really excited about who we've got. That will be announced in due course.



**Q: Recruitment must be easier if we go up automatically rather than via the playoffs.**

RH: Absolutely. The extra time available would be useful to have – we want to be proactive. We'll obviously plan for all eventualities, and we will make it work whatever the circumstances, but the potential difference in leagues does affect things, so the sooner we have clarity on that the better.

**Q: Eric, what are your thoughts on how things are going at the club?**

EE: I'm completely exhausted and it has been great being here! We had a great 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration dinner last night. We're all still taking this season one game at a time, that's always the right way to do it. We're planning ahead for next season in all potential scenarios, but we don't want to put the cart before horse – we have to finish the job first. It was a huge goal from Owen [Moxon against Derby County] on Tuesday, to keep the team's belief going. John Mousinho's done an amazing job.

We use the phrase "football never sleeps" a lot, and that's absolutely true. There are still so many unknown variables which may impact next season – the NewCo for the women, a potential new PL deal for the EFL. There will be a lot of work to do over the summer, and everyone's working around the clock.

I got a lot of compliments last night about our approach. Many within the game are looking at Portsmouth as a good example of how to operate. Rich Hughes has been monumentally important in that. We adapted our January strategy, and brought in players who were ready to go. We'll continue our strategy of looking for young players, signed on long terms contracts. We've not got the highest payroll in the league, but currently we're in the top two on the pitch in the league and that shows the importance of strategy, planning and good operational management which can take you where you need to be.

Some people thought we held on to previous Managers too long. We'll reap the benefits of that now – it sets the precedent that we won't just sack the Head Coach if things are tough. We want to support Rich and John to succeed here long term.

## **2. Ticketing**

**Q: The away game at Lincoln City on the final day of the season will be one of our lowest allocations of the year but one of the most in-demand fixtures. What will be the process for ticket sales?**

MJ: The ticket allocation is likely to be very low – around 1,100. Ultimately, we need to ensure those with the right loyalty points can purchase tickets. We will continue to apply our away ticketing policy, which means that up to 30% will go to supporter groups. It works out to a maximum of 23 tickets per supporter group (or the group's highest away allocation since the turn of the year so far, whichever is lower). Then we'll move into the next phase of sales, which we'll prioritise using loyalty points.



We've mapped the proposed loyalty point windows for this game against live data and spent a lot of time looking at how this will work for supporters. Our focus is always that every single person eligible to purchase in loyalty point window 1 will be able to purchase a ticket in this time frame, and that's never been more important than at Lincoln. Setting loyalty point window 1 at 80 points for this fixture allows us to do that – it means we can give certainty to everyone in that window that they will definitely get a ticket if they purchase in that window.

After that, we want to avoid a minimal number of tickets going into a new window, creating false hope and a bad experience online for supporters. With that in mind, the windows are evenly spread out after that – though the likelihood for this fixture is that the game will sell out during loyalty point window 2.

The game is fast approaching, but we wanted to consult with this group first. The fact this game uses e-ticketing makes it easier to go on sale slightly later, but we'd like to go out to supporters this week.

There will be some supporters who are disappointed. Lincoln have been very accommodating and have tried to come up with creative ways to improve our allocation. Unfortunately for us - but fortunately for them - they're doing very well at the moment and have increased demand, and so have sold the tickets in the home end.

AC: We are exploring other possibilities for Portsmouth fans to enjoy the final game if match tickets sell out.

*(There was agreement around the room that this was a fair way to allocate tickets for the Lincoln City game).*

**Q: Why have Bolton Wanderers given us a relatively small away allocation? They have given some other clubs around 4,000 tickets.**

MJ: Bolton have given us an allocation in line with EFL regulations - 2,000, or 10% of the stadium's capacity if lower. They've acted completely within their rights.

AC: Like Lincoln, they believe they will have a high demand for home tickets and would rather sell to their own supporters. That's their prerogative.

**Q: Fans are eagerly looking ahead to next season. When will supporters hear about prices for next year's season tickets? Are people who haven't yet joined the waiting list unlikely to now be able to purchase a new season ticket?**

MJ: Prices for next season are still being discussed. We will share information with supporters as soon as we're able to. In relation to the waiting list, it's important to say that if you want to buy a season ticket this summer or in the future, we advise you to join the waiting list. We can't predict exactly how many season ticket holders will renew this year, but we currently have around 750 people on the waiting list, with 150 joining in the last week.

*[Post-Meeting Update: A further 150 supporters have joined the waiting list since the meeting. The total number of fans on the waiting list is now 900.]*



**Q: How are the number of loyalty points required for each window decided? What percentage of tickets go on sale after deducting allocations to the club, supporters' groups etc.?**

MJ: We apply our away ticketing policy, which means club staff and players take around 5%, supporter groups can take up to 30%, and the rest go to the main sale.

We map the loyalty point windows against our live data. We always aim for loyalty point window 1 to be a guarantee of a ticket, then our hope and aspiration for a normal game is to get out of loyalty point window 2. After that, there are other factors at play which will affect demand and dictate whether a game reaches general sale, particularly geography and the perceived importance of the fixture. 11 away league matches and 3 away cup games this year have reached general sale, so there have been plenty of opportunities for people to get loyalty points.

I've seen calls on social media for us to follow England's policy of stating how many supporters are in each loyalty point group. That's very hard to do for league clubs. For internationals, there are much wider gaps between each game, and far fewer opportunities for people's points to change. They can publish with real certainty of numbers. I can't do that, as with each passing day, the numbers change. What we can look to do is to add in confidence statements, for example '*you are likely to get a ticket in this window*'.

**Q: What provisions can be made for those living outside of Britain and can't attend home matches frequently to still apply for tickets?**

MJ: Our tickets are on sale globally and so are available to all via our website.

JM: We do work with overseas supporter groups such as Pompey Exiles Stateside to help them to access tickets.

**Q: Can the club do more to promote awareness of supporters' clubs, so that those who can't build up loyalty points in other ways know they can still access tickets?**

MJ: With anything we do, we can always do more, but we currently signpost in a number of ways. What we do currently is ensure all groups are listed on the club website. The club ticket office regularly signposts people to away supporter groups when they deal with disappointed fans who would like to attend away matches. I'd be keen to meet away supporter groups in the summer to see what more we can do.

**Q: With the move away from iFollow, is there an opportunity to reward fans that use the club's new digital offering by giving loyalty points to fans that buy match passes? This would help fans who can't regularly attend matches.**

MJ: The club's digital strategy is being reviewed and will evolve as we step away from the EFL Digital collective. Being very honest, it's unlikely loyalty points would be allocated for digital match passes.

**Q: There are differing views on the increasing use of e-tickets, with some older supporters having difficulty using them. What's the club's approach on using these in the future?**

MJ: E-ticketing has broadly become industry standard. We do understand that some still want physical tickets though, and that's why we offer it as an option for home games. To give some insight, on a typical matchday at Fratton Park, there's an 85% preference for e-ticket, with only



15% opting for a physical ticket. At some games, that's been as low as 5%. There's more the football club can do in future, for example working with Apple and Android to give the option to add your match ticket to your digital wallet – that would avoid the issues some people occasionally experience with rain-soaked print outs. Next season, my hope is that if you choose to purchase an individual match e-ticket you will get the option to add it to your phone's e-wallet.

There are lots of benefits to e-ticketing. There's no denying that digital tickets have less impact on the climate, which moves us forward sustainably. They also remove issues with the cost and reliability of postage. We can also give a better matchday experience with digital tickets, for example sending them through with added information about our Remembrance Day fixture this season. We're led by the other club when it comes to away ticket sales – though the e-ticketing system is much easier for our ticket office staff to manage, in particular if supporters requires a duplicate

**Q: Despite home tickets being in very high demand and games being sold out, there are still some empty seats around the ground where season ticket holders don't attend and don't list their seat on the ticket exchange. What more can be done to fill the ground?**

MJ: We've seen a massive increase in use of the ticket exchange – for the Burton game, over 200 people used the scheme. We've had a greater uptake, but we want to do more moving forward. One change we've made is that the scheme used to turn off at midnight before the game – we've now moved that to around 11am on the day of the game for 3pm kick-offs, and midday for an evening game. We've listened to fans on that – it allows people to make a decision about attending on the day of the game.

We're aware some fans pass their season ticket on to friends and family when they can't attend. Do be aware that when you do that, they don't earn a loyalty point for going to the game, which they're missing out on. If you pass on your ST to a friend, you are also liable for their actions at the game if they end up causing trouble for example.

**Q: When will away season ticket holders find out about plans for this scheme next season?**

MJ: I've mentioned previously to this group that I'd write to away season ticket holders in Q1 of 2024 – that's slipped a bit, but we will write to you by the end of this week. We'll invite those people in for a conversation and to discuss plans for next season. We want to consult with them before moving forward.

### **3. Stadium, Travel & Local Infrastructure**

**Q: Is there any update on progress with the council and Network Rail regarding Fratton train station, and on a possible matchday park and ride scheme?**

AC: Our discussions with Network Rail around Fratton Station continue. The various stakeholders have created a subgroup on different aspects we want to explore and are making progress on some of those issues. The Fratton forum hosted by Stephen Morgan is taking place again this month.

We've shared the results of our park and ride survey with Portsmouth City Council. Those show that the interest is certainly there, we are both now just assessing the economic viability. There's



scope to use the existing park and ride hub at Tipner. We're exploring potential pick up/drop off points for those buses. If we were to get to the Championship, we may have more away coaches – this could impact where potential park and ride drop-off locations could be, as those coaches will need pavement space near to the ground. We may be in a position to move to a pilot next season, which is encouraging. The survey also gave us a real indication of where people are travelling from on the train. 24% are coming from Fareham, many from Hilsea, but many more are from further afield. We've shared that with South Western Railways. The next stage is to have more communication with supporters who expressed interest.

MJ: We also have a commercial relationship with First Bus, which is helping to reduce traffic around the city on a matchday.

**Q: In a recent Q&A following the Pompey Supporters' Trust Survey, it was mentioned that any potentially future North Stand works could be funded by using land near Fratton Park to build 450 homes, a hotel, and a conference venue. Is the club concerned about the impact a development such as this would have on the local road network? How would the club address any objections to the development?**

AC: The Portsmouth Local Plan, which details the future strategic planning within the city, sets out plans for 450 homes, a hotel and other developments around Fratton Park. The condition for those developments, as set out in the Local Plan, is improved access from Fratton Station. That all forms part of the city's redevelopment plan for the Fratton and Milton wards. I can see, anecdotally, significant extra traffic around the Pompey Centre now with the addition of the Aldi store. There is a new version of the Local Plan due in April/May – I've offered thoughts on the issues which would affect the football club which will feed into this document. There will be the normal process for dealing with objections – that will clearly be a massive part of any future developments. Closing Goldsmith on a matchday is something I'm asked about a lot – but right now I can't see it happening. At other clubs, like Norwich City, there are spine roads around the back of closed roads which relieve pressure. We're an island city, and Goldsmith Avenue is a major arterial road. I'll continue to ask the question, but it's tough – it's too important a road for local businesses and residents, as well as for football.

**Q: In the recent Pompey Supporters' Trust survey, the most common topic fans wanted us to raise at the TGFC was the congestion in the North Stand kiosks. What can be done to alleviate some of the crowding seen at peak times?**

AC: We've got good news to share on that: the area in-between kiosks in the upper level has now been filled in, which will create a massive new space containing extra bars and toilets. Fans will be able to see that work today, and it will be completed in May and in time for next season. That will improve things and mean fans in the upper tier won't need to go downstairs. I can see the issues of crowded concourses in the North Stand on our CCTV – at the moment, the conflict in the North Stand between different queues for toilets and concourses on stairways are difficult. This will make a positive difference. We've been a victim of our own success – revenue in the kiosks has trebled, and what goes in must come out!

**Q: Some supporters have reported inconsistencies in the stadium's PA system – in places it's deafening, in other areas it appears to cut out.**



TB: The PA system is something we've spent money on in previous upgrades. It works well in certain areas of the ground, but we need to get sound balance right around the stadium after the recent stadium development work and we will continue to review it.

MJ: When people make comments about the PA system as part of our post-match feedback email, please put in your block and seat number. We're making a map of where the affected areas are. The greater detail we receive, the better.

**Q: Can we have the team line-up shown on the screens within the concourses at the ground?**

MJ: It's something we'd like to do in the future, but don't currently have the technical ability to put it on every screen. Following feedback at the last TGFC meeting, Barry Harris now announces the starting line-up in the Victory Lounge before matches. It's a role he's loving!

**Q: Are there any plans to enhance the Fratton End Fanzone next season?**

AC: Part of our plans to redevelop the Victory Bar include improvements to the Fanzone. We'll work with the Matchday Experience Working Group on suggestions to add to and develop this area, and I'd also welcome suggestions from other supporters on this as well.

**Q: Are there plans to raise the wheelchair platform in the mid concourse of the North Lower? It's not always possible for everyone there to see the pitch if people around them are standing.**

AC: I believe this impacts a supporter whose wheelchair is lower than others. We have spoken to the affected supporter about how we can resolve this.

**Q: Is the electronic screen recently installed on Goldsmith Avenue by the Fratton Station designed to give station access information on matchdays ?**

AC: I've spoken to South Western Railways who have told me it doesn't belong to them.

MJ: I would assume it is likely to be a third party electronic advertising board.

#### **4. Kits & Merchandise**

**Q: Are you in a position to give an update on the kit supplier and sponsor for next season?**

AC: I can't give a firm update in terms of who it will be, but a new commitment is in place which exceeds the terms of the deal we previously had. It's at the contract stage, so that's hopefully something we can resolve and announce in next few weeks.

**Q: At December's TGFC meeting, it was mentioned that new retro shirts designs would be available in March. Are there still plans to release more?**

AC: They're in the shop, available from today.

MJ: Some of the previous retro shirts are back in stock too. Jameson's have also produced a limited-edition bottle of whisky in the style of the yellow KJC shirt as well, which are on sale at various retailers including Amazon.

**Q: Will the club continue to produce a matchday programme next season?**

AC: Yes.

#### **5. Pompey Women**



**Q: Pompey Women played at Fratton Park recently and 2,405 supporters were there to see an enjoyable 4-0 win. Ipswich Women played on the same weekend at Portman Road and drew an attendance of 10,173. Both are in the same league, with Ipswich lower in the table. Do you have any thoughts on why our numbers were significantly lower? How can we grow this attendance in the future?**

AC: We only had two weeks to promote our game against Rugby, as we didn't know we could play it at Fratton Park until the FA Women's National League Cup finalists had been decided. Ipswich had much longer to promote their fixture, and it was also the very first time their women's team had played at Portman Road, which added value. We should avoid focusing on 'one off' events however and examine more this season's regular, sustainable growth. Our average Women's attendance has grown from 456 last year to 858 this season. That's very good growth, and we're pleased with that – we have by far the highest average attendances and growth in the National League South and outperform many in the Championship. We've seen a real rise in interest in the women's game. Our social Media team are doing well promoting the side. Digital content has significantly increased, with over 6 million impressions on Facebook and Instagram this season, an increase of over 300% from the season before.

Michael Eisner, Eric Eisner, Eric Coleborn and I met on Zoom with Nikki Doucet, the CEO of NewCo [the newly formed body who will be in place to run the top two tiers of women's football in England from the 24-25 season]. Nikki articulated that the women's audience represents a whole different demographic.– it's not just the same people who have traditionally attended football matches. Clubs that understand this are the ones who've particularly succeeded in growing the women's attendance. How do we continue to grow? Success on the pitch – going up will obviously help. We want to work with Mark Judges on ticketing – we're planning to put Men's and Women's season tickets on sale at the same time and offer a package to buy both at once. We've built in matchday entertainment to add to the family experience at Westleigh Park. We're seeing a younger crowd, and that family audience needs something different. We're hoping to stage a few more games at Fratton Park. If we do get promoted and sustain a place in the Championship, it's likely that 3G and 4G pitches will be outlawed within a few years in the top two tiers.

We won't let money spent on the women's team get out of control. We're trying to operate a sustainable model. We need to know what the central broadcasting deal will provide – it's likely to give around 75% of generated income to the top tier and 25% to the second tier. Part of our new digital platform may allow us to stream more games – but that's dependent on the new broadcast deal as well. We will continue the work to generate strong match digital content on our social channels profiling the team and individual players. This strategy has been excellently delivered this year by Max Swatton and Owen Leworthy.

## **6. Regulation & Broadcasting**

**Q: Does the Club feel an Independent Regulator for football will have the teeth required to deal with the many obstacles hindering progress at the moment?**

AC: The bill needs to pass through parliament without too many amendments. That's why you'll see lots of football clubs publicly working with their MPs across all parties – they're keen for their support. That's not a problem for us – Penny Mordaunt MP, as Leader of the House, has got it onto the Parliamentary agenda, Dame Caroline Dinenage MP is the chair of the Culture, Media and



Sport Committee, and Stephen Morgan MP continues to be very supportive. If the Premier League fails to give the EFL a distribution deal, there's the power for an independent regulator to step in, but that might take some time.



**Q: Will we see improvements in the club's digital broadcasting service next year, when iFollow stops being used?**

MJ: Everyone's expectation is Sky Sports-level of coverage – they use an astronomical investment for their coverage, and that standard may not be achievable. We're finding the right balance. The video footage will still be captured by IMG, that will continue moving forward. How we package that and deliver it in a new product is hopefully where we will add value for supporters.

AC: As part of the new TV deal next year, every League One club will have 4 camera coverage. We've already been using that, but that will now be the standard. Every Championship club will use 6 camera coverage. 2 seats will be lost in the Fratton End next year for this reason.

**Q: Why was the kick-off time for the Lincoln game decided so late in the season? Some supporters booked train tickets in advance.**

AC: The last game of the EFL season is always subject to change – every fixture has to kick off at the same time and be televised. Next season, there will be significant changes to kick-off times because of the new TV deal. We will need to be transparent with supporters about that when we sell season tickets. The good news is that there will be better notice periods. For example, you'll know when the fixtures are announced that games are set in stone until the end of September. The rules of notice periods of fans should be a contractual commitment – the EFL need to give us particular notice periods.

**7. Post-Meeting**

*[The following question was submitted after the meeting]*

**Q: Some supporters reported large queues in the Milton End concourse during the game against Shrewsbury Town, with some having difficulty accessing the toilets at half time. What can be changed to improve this for supporters in the future?**

The congestion at half time on the concourse on Saturday was broadly similar to that experienced regularly in the North Stand, as noted in a previous question above. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Milton End concourse width is the same width as the Fratton End. Over the summer we will see be installing additional toilets in the new building to the south of the Milton for both males and females. This will significantly improve any congestion. We are also installing additional temporary toilet provision in the Milton for the last two games of the season. Away attendance for both matches is unlikely to exceed 1,000, so we will have the opportunity, as we did for Shrewsbury, to make more tickets available to home supporters, through the creatively and flexibly designed home / away segregation measures.

- Minutes by Donald Vass