

Ben Thomas - Election Statement for STAR



As a supporter of the club for over 28 years and as a season ticket holder for 20 of those, I have experienced my fair share of ups and downs along the way. Supporting this club has always been something I have been immensely proud of, but as I've grown older, has provided not just a club to support but also a community.

Having made the transition from The Tilehurst End (who, oddly enough, I now write for in the shape of the 'View from the Dolan' column) at Elm Park to the Dolan Stand at the Madejski Stadium, I have seen plenty of players, managers and, in recent years owners, come and go. What has remained is a core group of fans who would be there regardless of the league or level we were playing at. These people form the backbone of our football club.

As a teacher in the local area, I have seen firsthand the impact sport can have on the physical and mental health of young people. Over the years, the club and the supporters' groups have tried to re-engage with the community and 'get back to our roots' after years of disparity between the club and the fans. Of course, having a successful team is a big part of that, but if the pandemic has taught us anything about relationships, it's that they cannot be taken for granted in any way.

That is why, if I were nominated to the board at STAR, my focus would be on continuing to strengthen the bond between the fans and the club, making sure that supporter's interests are at the forefront of what the club are trying to do and how they should do it. Engaging with younger fans to form the future of the fanbase, whilst respecting the older generation and making matchdays as enjoyable as possible, regardless of the result, would be at the very top of my focus in my role on the board. Continuing to improve the matchday experience must be at the forefront of the club's plans and regular dialogue around this is vital.

Furthermore, continuing to enable a two-way dialogue between players and fans by creating a regular 'Q and A' session with current players would be something that, as a current member of STAR, I would love to see happen. As a supporter, I want to like my team, not just support them and this is a view I know many fans share.

Finally, creating stronger links between the community and STAR, with the club's help, to spread the word of Reading Football Club in the local area, would be hugely important to continue to attract new fans along with those who have perhaps fallen out of love with the game and the club in recent years.

This football club has been hugely important to me. I want to be able to share that importance with a wider audience and give back to a group of fans and a club I care about.

Ben Thomas

Proposer: Johnny Hunt

Seconder: Andrew Mathewson