

NIALL PALMER

Proposed by Ben Thomas
Seconded by Johnny Hunt



Hi, I am 35, I live in South East Kent, with my wife (who also regularly gets dragged along to games), 2 young daughters and dog! I have been a supporter of Reading all my life. My mum & Dad were more into motorsports than football, so it was my uncle who took me along to Elm Park in the early 90's, when I lived in Berkshire/Surrey, that got me hooked.

I have had a season ticket for around 10 years in total and have lost count of the number of games I have attended. Like anyone who thinks about applying for the STAR board, I absolutely love and care about my club. I don't always agree with what they do but my passion and love for it is always there and always will be. I want my girls to come along to see what Dad spends his Saturdays doing and, who knows, maybe they can get into the women's team in years to come!

In my professional life I work for an Insurance Company heading up a Commercial and Product management team. This involves contractual negotiation, project management, relationship management, customer retention, customer research and market research. It also encompasses logistical work regarding the repatriation back to the UK of individuals who suffer medical emergencies whilst abroad.

My day job, along with my passion for the club, compliments well an application to the STAR board. In the current era, it feels like statements have been made by the club almost as throw away comments, it doesn't feel like there is an understanding from the club what it actually means to thousands of people, and therefore we are seeing fans feel more and more detached from the club. A very practical example of this are the matchday attendances that are falling year on year. Communication isn't something the club has always done poorly, and I think it is key the club recognises that. For the big clubs in the Premier League fans have become customers and I always felt Reading managed to avoid that but, with some recent events and the way the club is being run, it feels like that is what we are. Fans do appreciate the club is a business, but we aren't customers, we are fans and our views should be respected, even if not agreed with. I would want to research into fan feelings and what their expectations / wants are from the club and to then feed this back.

Going to the football is more than 90 minutes of football. It's a time where friends and families get together. Where routines are made and kept to at all costs. Its where memories are made with loved ones, that live forever (as I've said a few times when I think of my late nan, my first thought is Yaks winner against Wigan when I took her to her first game and

hugging her). It has been a frustration of mine that total matchday experience at the club feels to have been forgotten. A simple example at the moment is the pricing and quality of food and drink, this may seem small in the grand scheme of things but is perhaps a nod towards how fans are viewed by the club.

So if nominated to the STAR board my focus would be to drive more fan engagement between STAR and the Club. I would want to become active in the communications between the club and STAR holding the club to account, in the right way, to the promises or statements they make and ensuring that the wants of fans gets to them and that it is clearly understood. There should be a firm yet professional tone taken with the club from STAR and is something I would like to be a part of.

I think on a STAR front, there is a need to engage further with fans through social media. It would be amiss of me to ignore the fact the STAR admin has been very active on the Twitter front recently which has gone down very well. So to take this to the next level perhaps a STAR channel of club content could be started, speaking to fans, getting fans opinions post-match and uploading them could be an idea for something to grow from. Perhaps a STAR twitter space on a matchday evening, look how successful it was for Benjy. STAR is for the fans, members or not, and I think as our fanbase and their needs change, STAR need to keep up with it.

Thank you very much for the consideration to the STAR board, and particularly to Ben and Johnny who have very kindly agreed to propose me.

Niall