

NICK HOULTON

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I am writing this statement as part of my formal application in becoming a STAR Board Member. I have been supporting Reading since I was young and my dad took me to my first game in 1998 when we drew 3-3 with Bournemouth (voted the best game at the Madejski Stadium in 2005 I believe). In 2004/05 I got a half season ticket with my friend, prior to this I would go to a few games a season and as my interest and passion for the club grew I just couldn't stay away any longer and fortunately managed to witness the highs of 2005/06 and 2006/07.

When I went to University to study Sports Journalism in 2009 I gave up my season ticket but still attended as many games as possible over the following three years. Upon graduating University in 2012 I then got another season ticket with my dad (Brian) and we have had one ever since and see it as quality time we can spend together (even if it is awful at times). Having previously sat in The Sir John Madejski Stand (Y23) with my friend, my dad and I now sit in The Eamonn Dolan Stand.

My general interests are very sport driven and outside of football I also really enjoy tennis, Formula 1, Boxing, Horse Racing, Rugby and Cricket. I also love to travel and prior to buying my apartment I managed to visit many countries, missing a few months in 2016/17 and 2018/19 in order to visit China and South America. I also like to stay fit and play football in a six-a-side league with my friends on Monday nights and regularly use the gym. The downside of the Monday night football is that I can't get to many U23 games anymore and I have always been interested in watching Reading's next stars.

Having been born in Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, I grew up living in Holyport, a village in Maidenhead (it's actually now where Junior Hoilett resides). I now live in Bracknell so I seem to be edging closer to Reading as the years go by.

I was recently approached and asked if I would be interested in applying to become a STAR Board Member and despite being very honoured to have been asked this it was also something I really wanted to think about first and foremost. On a personal level I wouldn't want to become a Board Member unless I felt I had the hunger, desire, passion and belief in making change, I want to be able to make a difference if I am to apply and help bring change, to make a difference.

Some of the areas I would like to help improve and change are the relations between supporters and the club, STAR and the club and also STAR and the supporters too; this is imperative so that we can all move forward as one, Reading has always been a family club, a well run community club and something that has been completely lost in recent years, something we need back in order to move forward, to stop supporters and STAR feeling alienated from the club.

One idea I have is to do a 'fan engagement' survey whereby we ask questions on how the fans feel about the club and also STAR and using this feedback to see where we can help implement positive

change and growth. The engagement survey would be half regarding STAR and half regarding the club (for example 10 questions re each) and the plan would be to do this annually at a season's end.

This will then give STAR an indication in what is working and what is not and then change can be considered internally whilst proposals can be made with the club regarding issues raised regarding them. It also provides positives so we can understand in what is working.

Another idea I have is to propose that the club improves communication with a quarterly statement made by someone high up within the club (this could be Dai, Pang, Bowen etc.). It has been far too long since we had regular communication and an understanding from the club behind the scenes and something like this can reassure supporters that the owner cares and that the intentions are good, we want a sense of direction and everything currently sounds secretive.

With regards to STAR I would also like to help increase membership and would like to discuss ways we can do this, one idea I have is offering an incentive to join. Maybe (I don't know costing obviously) we can offer each member 50% off travel for one away game. We could do a draw once a month where say two winners can have one free away travel token for a game of their choice (only win once a year). Things like this could be a good way to bring in new members, especially if they go away frequently. I would like to offer new ideas over time also.

Finally I would propose that STAR does a social media quiz night once a month, fortnight or even week, it will improve engagement across the fanbase and also increase social media activity.

These are just a few of my ideas which I would love to add to over time and I am passionate about being a part of a team looking to better the club as a whole.

I look forward to hearing your response and would like to thank you for considering my application.