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Interviewer

Interviewee

So for the purpose of this interview would you just tell us your full name please?

My names George André Savva

Thank you, and will you spell that for me?

Er so George obviously G E O R G E, er André A N D R É acute, and then Savva S A double V A

Thank you, and your date of birth

XX XX, 1969.

Right thank you. Erm, so George can you tell me, where, where were you brought up?

Erm, I was born ion er, just north of er, Tottenham, in the borough of Enfield, erm but I was, we moved away quite early so I was really bough up in Luton to start with, erm, and then as my Dad moved around with work, I also spent a couple of years in Windsor, around there, and Ascot, and then also a couple of years in Wales, although I lived in Chepstow for a while as well cos I was boarding at a school

Oh right-

An then came back to Luton an then I went to university in London, so went back to Enfield, so I've gone right round in a circle.

Right so what- the earliest memories that you have do- what, that were they? Can you

In my life?

Yeah

Er, earliest memory was being carried in my mum's arms, I can just about remember what the walls looked like, which is really bizarre, that's all I can remember, but I remember that, and I remember a little bit of my nursery school as well.

Right, where was that?

That was in Luton.

Right, so how old were you when you left, er Tottenham to do-

I was erm, no more than a year and a half, 2 years old

Right, so where were your parents from?

That's a good question. So my Dad er, is, he was born here, an' he was born in Swindon, but he's of Cypriot blood. He has an Irish mother and a Cypriot father, Greek Cypriot. And then my mother's French. She came over and married someone after the war. Erm, but then, er divorced him and married my dad, and she's got a Maltese mother and a French father, so, erm, that's, so that, I've got a very bizarre mixed er family

Right, and do you have any brothers and sisters?

So I have one blood brother, with the same two parents. Erm and he's a younger brother, he's 2 and a half years younger than me, Andrew. And then have an older brother and 2 older sisters from my mums first marriage, and then I have er some step sisters and brothers from my dad's subsequent marriage.

Right so where, where did you erm go to school then, primary

Erm Primary school I went in Luton, it was a private school called Moorlands, erm, then I kind of hopped around for two years, so I went to Wales Chepstow, and I went to St John on the hill in Chepstow while my dad was working in Wales. Then I came back and went to Stubbington House for a year, erm in er Sunningdale. And then went back to Moreland's again and finished my primary education. Then I went to Bedford school, erm, secondary public school, and I went all the way through that school.

Right. So what was it like sort of moving around all the different schools?

Not ideal. Erm, I did really well in each of them an' they wan'ed me to stay but it was, I would imagine that it didn't help that I was moving around and had to make new friends, but looking back it didn't really damage me too much. My younger brother didn't take to it too well. He didn't perform quite as well as probably should have done. Er but it was ok for me.

So what did your dad do?

My dad started as a waiter, worked his way up in the cabaret club show business Erm, er area, and ended up running, he ran a nightclub in Windsor called Blazers, for, and this is kind of the cabaret Tom Jones Shirley Bassey type night club. He ran that for a guy for a number of years, and then he opened his own in Wales, er which was really successful, so er I had a real show business upbringing, I know a lot of kind of stars through that

Oh right [laughs] Who do you know?

Tome Jones, Shirley Bassey, Iris Williams, er all the comedians that you see on TV like Jim Davidson, sort of off that era. Pretty much the Three Degrees, erm, all of Sister Sledge all of those kind of people, Rowan Atkinson, Smith and Jones, I mean I say I- I had dinner and lunch with them, but really I was a child, my dad was, was running there, but obviously I was hanging around the place sometimes.

So was he, he booked all the acts-

He owned the nightclub that they performed in yeah, and he booked them. So he know- he was in the business for 50 years, an unfortunately he died a year and a half ago now, but he, he was in that business until really the 90s, and then that business kind of died out a little bit,

but then he got into the hotel business, and ran that for my stepsisters husband, so it was always in that kind of catering show business area.

So whereabouts in Wales was that?

Usk. It's called Savvas. An when I moved around, the year I was in Wales, when I was in Primary school, it was a nightclub called Stardust and he ran that for someone, but when he came back her and he ran Blazers of winter for years, for another guy, and then he decided to go off and do his own, so he bought the Stardust and converted it, called it Savvas.

Right, right, and did your mum work?

My mum was originally she was a chef and a cook, erm mainly in hospitals. Then she worked in the nightclubs which is where she met my dad, but then after that no not really. Obviously once, once my mum and dad got married my mum stopped and she had us.

Right, right, and grandparents, where, did you, erm meet your grandparents

Just er, my, on my father's side, er my er, my nan was Irish so I knew her. She lived in Luton as well, and my grandad I only met when I was very young, I don't remember him very well. Erm, if at all really. He died quite, when I was quite young. Erm my mums side, I did apparently meet my mums mum in Tunisia which was where she was bought up, er once, re and once when she came over, but I don't remember, It was when I was very young she dies, and I never met my, my er grandfather on that side. He died during the war.

And er, the secondary school, what was that like?

Yeah, loved it. I still have my best friends, are still from that school. It was a- I mean it was a tier 1 public school, so it's not for everyone, but I enjoyed it. Probably-

What is tier 1 public school, what, what is-

I'd say, erm, so if you look at the way independent schools are, the, the tier 1 ones are the ones that you know, generally they'll send people off to Oxford and Cambridge, they're in the higher level.

Oh, ok

Not necessarily the most expensive, certainly the better performing ones, and the bigger ones that have the most facilities.

Right

So yach there's been a few famous people from that school. Alistair Cook, the English cricket captain, er Paddy Ashdown a politician, and Alistair Murry, the pub landlord on TV

Oh right, ok, that's interesting.

An eclectic mix of people you know. So. But you know, it was a good school, er, lots of facilities, I was lucky to be sent there, an, and like I say my best friends I still have from that school.

Right, an did you say you boarded there?

I didn't board at that school. I boarded once when I was at primary school, just for a year, when we're in Wales because erm, the nightclub in Wales, in Usk it was quite remote. So erm, I went to school in Chepstow over the border actually in England, erm it was just easier to be a weekly border. So I went home at weekends. But the rest of the time I was a day boy.

Right, so what were your favourite subjects at school?

Maths, English, er, and then computing later on, although it was a new subject really so it wasn't like it is now. E, but Maths and English for certain. Defiantly Maths is my best.

Right and activities, like social activities?

Played football, er, obviously being a public school I played rugby. Erm, which I didn't mind, I was quite good at it being, I'm very tall, er. I wasn't keen, we played hockey and in the summer I was an athlete rather than a cricketer. Er high jumper. I did that to quite a high, quite a decent level. Erm and I represented the district and the county at high jump. Erm, but football was my main... love really. I wasn't that good at it, but- And we weren't allowed to play it until we were 16. Er it was always hockey before that.

Right, was there any reason for that?

Yeah, it was public schools don't play football, they play hockey. Especially my school because the headmaster played for Great Britain er hockey and the Great Britain coach was my Geography teacher, so they were a big hockey school as well, I mean their main sport is rugby in the winter, sorry in the Christmas term, but in the, in the middle term it was always hockey. We had no choice.

Right. So after, did you go out social, sort of socialising with-

People from school? Yeah. And so er, I really when I was about 16, 17, I was in the 5th year doing my O Levels as they were then, erm, and after that I met a couple of guys, we used to go to the debating society, that was our excuse, to go out with a £5 and go to the pub and still manage to have change from it as well. Erm and then I went to school on the coach, so it was an all-boys school, and there were 2 of them in the trust, and then 2 girls schools. All 4 schools were part of the same trust, all in Bedford. And I used to go to the, to school on a coach and one of my friends was a girl who went to the equivalent girls school. Erm, so we had a group, there were a few of her friends, a few of our friends, we used to go out on a Saturday night occasionally, it wasn't anything particularly complex. We just went for a few drinks, or if we went to each other's houses, we still know each other now, all of us.

So university, how did you, did you-

Er, didn't, yeah, I was oohing and airing about what to do with the university, in the end I had to really take a place very quickly. I went to University in north London, erm, partly because, so growing up in Luton, despite the fact I'm from London I wanted to be in London. Like I'm going through the opposite with my daughter at the moment, cos she lives here, but therefore she wants to study outside. I wanted to be in London so I went to North London, er Holloway, it was where I was based, erm but I was so late applying that I didn't get a hall of residence

place, so I, I ended up in a house for a term with another guy and a family, who basically, he was from a different college, and then he left and rang me up one day and said we've got a place in a house, so I ended up sharing a house in Southgate the first year and then subsequent year as well. Did a year out, erm so, did 2 years doing my degree which was buy the way in Maths and Computing, er then I did a year in industry at Unisis, that's a sandwich degree, er, so I spent a year working there to get experience at Unisis, that was good, that was in Slough, and then one more, did my final year in college where I was in halls because I didn't take a first year place, er met some good friends in the hall of residence there, erm, an then er, the halls were in Caledonian Road so, before it was gentrified like it is now, it wasn't the nicest area, but er, but did the job.

Right. And did you do any sort of activities, or sports-

Played football three. Other than that, no. Erm, mainly I was working as well while I was at college. Erm I got a grant, but, because my parents had split up so, otherwise I wouldn't have got one, but I also worked to earn some money, so I was a bingo caller for a while at Wood Green, top rank, er which was different, but ok. And then I worked behind the bar a couple of times in different jobs, but ultimately where they needed a uniform they couldn't get one big enough for me, so I had to go and get a different job.

Right. So what was your first job then on leaving university?

Leaving university? Er, I, er went to work for an insurance broker in the city, called Minet. They took me on in 91 and I worked there for about 5 and a half years. Wasn't great salary, but in computing which was what I wann'ed to do, you have to get experience to get a decent job, and you don't get job, you don't get experience without a job. So it was difficult to break into that circle, so I got into it that was, gave me a, gave me a good idea how it was working in the city. Erm, like I say it wasn't a very good salary to be fair, but it did the job, I was there, yeah, 5 and a half years.

Right. An, right, an where did you live at that time? Did you-

Erm, where did I live? I lived in, er Bush Hill Park with some people from college, then I moved to er, so near Enfield that is, again my area, and then I moved to Southgate, then back to Enfield itself with, er actually a guy, guy from school who moved to London. Erm, so always around that area.

Right. aANd erm after that, the first job, what, what was your career after?

So after 5 and a half years there er, I took a salary cut, moved to a company that had a more, was a better role, so it was a consultancy called Northdoor. It was in the city again. It was around insurance, but it also gave me the ability to work with much better technology, and there was only 29 people there, so it was quite small. Er I went there in 97 an I was there 9 and a half years. It was the best job I had because it allowed be to, er first couple of years I was developing software which was fine. Er I was pretty good at that, I ended up managing a team there. Erm, and then I realised I didn't really like management too much, but then I got involved in some technology which really allowed me to kind of grow.

Right, what, what was that technology?

Called Brio, so analytics software. Erm I ended up doing consultancy for Brio themselves through this company an actually, I'd say I was probably the best in the country.

Right.

By the end.

Right. So then, erm, how many years were you there?

9 and a half

9 and a half years ok. And then how did you, did you meet your wife?

Erm, I met my wife at a party in- So when I was working in my first job and I was living with this guy I said I went to school with, erm in Bedford, we were in a pub one night, we had such a poor, we had no money, so we couldn't even afford any heating, so the only way we could er keep war was to go to the pub and have one pint, and just sit there for hours

[laughing] It's an excuse isn't it

Yeah, yeah, basically. An' it was a Weatherspoon's pub so it was, so the meals were cheap as well. Er, you have to do what you have to do, right?

[laughs]

And at the end of the day actually we were there so often we were invited to the staff party

[laughs]

But we, a girl came in, 2 girls came, actually it was 4 of them, and one of them my friend really liked, and I really had no interest in this whatsoever

[laughs]

But he really liked her so they, he invited them back to our, our place to which they drunk all our whisky and left, er and then they rang up and said do you wanna come to a party, and I said no, but then he got the 'ump, and said you must come. So we went to a house party with another friend from school, took him along, erm, and my wife had also from the other side, from these girls had been bought along even though she didn't wanna go. So we met, firework night, so we met over a sparkler.

Oh lovely, that's nice. So, so and, what was your courtship like?

Yeah, I mean pretty standard. 18 months, so we met 93, 18 months, er so no actually 92. So we were together a year and a half, then we got engaged, and then we got married a year and a half after, so 3 years.

Right

Nothing, nothing to speak about really, it was just standard. We went out a lot. Er she lived in Harrow, she was from Harrow, erm, she's a teacher, primary, erm, she was at the time. She

erm studied in Manchester, Manchester Poly, erm so she used to come to see me in Enfield, which is where I was living, Oakwood in fact, near Southgate. Erm and I'd come over here. She plays the trombone so I used to come to her er concerts. Erm but we, even though we were at either end of the Piccadilly line, it was like 400 stops between the two, so it wasn't ideal, so yeah, so and then we got married in 95.

Right, and what's your wife's name?

Rachel

Rachel. And erm you said you had children, so

2. Yeah, got er Katy, she was born in 2000, er she's just finished her GCSE's this week. Erm last week. She's quite intelligent, I'd say very academic, er and then Lucy who's 12, and she's also just, just about to finish her first year at secondary school. Again she's pretty bright, probably not quite as bright as my oldest, my oldest is very, very bright indeed.

Right

We're you know, looking at Oxford and stuff for her.

Ok. What's she gonna read then?

Biochemistry.

Wow.

She's pretty directed at what she wants to do yeah. Gotta do her A Levels first obviously, but they are the sciences.

Right. And do they go to local schools?

Yeap, down the road. Yeah. It's great. That's why we live here. I wouldn't move from here if I won the lottery cos they walk to school, so touch wood they've never been late. Erm, I mean yeah, its local school. Probably the obvious question to ask is why didn't I send them to a public school, especially considering the job I'm in now, erm, but, the, I would've done if I felt the school wasn't good enough, but my daughter started at this school- primary we had a very good primary round the corner, erm, which we were really pleased with. They both really grew. Erm and then my eldest went off to the local secondary, and, it was, it was really good. So, erm, I just made the decision that if she really struggled, or we didn't think she was getting a good education then we'd pull her out. It helped being married to a teacher, so I know what to look for, er, but actually she really got a good set of friends, fell into the right crowd and has really blossomed through er her

Great, greta

I think hopefully

Great, great

So we'll see, er, in August. But yeah. Given that it made sense to send Lucy as well to the same school. But we gave both of them a choice. So, we, we went to look at all the schools round the area, they're all Ofsted grade 1 schools, and we let them choose, you know. We might have stepped in had they chosen one particular one which was difficult to get to

Right

But, erm, it was their choice. And even the younger one, we let her look as well. But she always wann'ed- She looks up to her sister, so it was never gonna be an issue.

Right, great. So what brought you here then? What is your job now?

Well, that's not what bough me here

Stupid question. Yeah. Let's do the first one. What brought you here?

What brought me here? Got married- When I got married, erm I moved over to this side of London because my wife was from Harrow. Erm, because I, at the time I was working in the city, er for Northdoor, it didn't really matter where I lived round London, as long as, cos I could commute in anyway. Right, it's gonna be hideous wherever you live, right, so, because I was going into London, it made sense for me to move here. She was teaching locally. Erm, she was teaching at the time in Cannon Lane which was XXX (20.51) so er, I moved, I were the one who moved rather than her. That's simple as that. Erm when we moved to, er, we initially rented a flat in er Northwood Hills, er for a year and a half, 2 years, and then we bought our first place which was local, which is not far from here, lived there for, how long were we there? We were there a few years, erm, an then we moved here. So, we were there about- We moved here when my youngest daughter was about to be born. Literally 2 months before she was born cos we needed space co we were having a second child. And we've been here ever since.

Right, right, right, ok.

So 12 years.

Right, ok. So erm, and what's your work now?

So I work for a company called SAP, actually I moved from Northdoor to a company called Business Objects, they offered me a- doubled my salary, erm and they off- basically what happened was when I was at Northdoor, I mentioned I felt I was the best in the country at what I was doing, an' I was, erm so I wanted to join the company that I was doing he consulting for, but that caused a bit of a problem in the relationship between the two companies, in that if I moved to them, they would lose their best partner, and it didn't really work, so I went to their competitor instead. Which was, well it was business is business, right. Erm an, my boss at the time wasn't happy, but the owner of the company I used to work with at Northdoor, he and me are still friends, so we have lunch every so often. They doubled my salary, it was a great job, it covered the whole of Europe, erm, and I travelled extensively during the first couple of years, er actually subsequently as well. Then we were acquired as a company, for about 1 an a half billion by a company called SAP, who were one of the biggest software companies in the world. They have 78 thousand people. So, by acquisition I'm now a SAP employee. And I've had a number of roles in that. Carried on doing what I was doing

before which was pre-sales where I was travelling all over Europe, Middle East and Africa, 'specially the Nordics, Benelux, South Africa and Israel, I've spent a lot of time travelling. Erm, an then I got promoted a couple of times, and it meant I could tone down the travelling which was good, and then because the kids were getting older, er, I made a conscious effort to try and get a role which was less, and I was just weary of travelling as well. I had some health issues as well, but we can come to that. And so, erm, now I'm I have a more senior role, I work at home, I don't even have to go to the office

Wow

I might go in once a year if I have a new phone to pick up or something.

And put simply what is-

What I do?

Yeah [laughs]

I'm a commercial director for a software company. One of the channels [*cough*] we sell our software through is called OEM, so where a software company will embed our software, and then they'll pay royalties based on- So for instance your mobile phones got loads of different software products on it and your mobile phone provider would give that company, every time they sell a, a mobile phone, they'll give money to the company that

Right

So I own the portfolio, I do the pricing, I'm a commercial director, I used to be much more technical, but I moved into more business.

Right interesting, interes- So erm, you've touched on the health issues, do you-

I had a- In 2008 on Christmas day I had a, what turned out to be a stroke. Erm, I just lost a bit of vision in peripheral, but I was cooking lunch for my in laws, erm, and my family obviously, and so it was hot and I just thought- And I lost a bit, it just went a bit fuzzy and then I, I couldn't see anything, hear, it was just, not black, but it just, invisible. So I thought it's a bit odd but it'll sort itself out, went to the football the next day, er, nothing, it was outside so it was cool. Erm so I went got it checked out. Had loads of tests over the whole of next month. I had only had 6 days off work sick in 18 years before that, but then I had like loads and loads of tests, was in and out of hospital, and they found I had a hole in my heart. So what, that's quite common actually, more common than it sounds. Everyone has actually a hole in their hart but normally it shuts when they're born, cos it's the blood flow goes through when you're in the womb, and mine didn't shut, and the consequence of that is- 1 in 7 peoples doesn't but not that many people have symptoms but we all have blood clots in our heart and that gets pumped out to the lungs, dissipated, a blood clot went through the hole in my heart though and ended up in contact with the body where it shouldn't have been, and ended up in my brain, obviously. So I still don't have full peripheral. It's difficult to know if its healed a bit cos I don't notice it as much, or whether my brain has taken it into account nad made adjustments. But er, the long and short of it was I had to have an operation in February that year 2009, where they put in a device into the middle of my heart, erm, in the middle of the heart wall, erm inside the heart, er it's like an umbrella that they close together so it blocks

the hole. They did it in one day, I was at home- I went from here on the train down to South London to St Georges. Luckily I've got private medical care through my company and they did the operation, I was back at home eating dinner by that evening

Fantastic, fantastic

It was all done, er local

Fantastic, yeah

And then subsequently to that I've had to have 2 other operations to get rid of erm what called Atrial Fibrillations, my heart palpates, those were a general anaesthetic, but I had that done at the Royal Brompton, by like a, we're lucky in this country, that the leading surgeon in the world is here, so, I had it done by her.

Right, fantastic.

So its not-

Great

It's a mechanical failure rather than a sickness so I don't have any symptoms apart from a little bit of a high heartbeat, erm but I go to the gym everyday so I notice that, but other than that I'm fine at the moment.

Right

Hopefully

Good. Ok. Well let's talk about West Ham and see how you feel after that! [laughs]

Well the fact that I support West Ham and I'm still alive shows that my heart is reasonably healthy, which you know, we all, I've had so many people say to me the reason you've got heart problems is because- and I am a pretty dedicated follower, er, so, erm. But yeah, I mean, sorry

Ok, so, tell me how that sort of, I can get the link with like Tottenham, like living in Tottenham

Why did I support West Ham?

Yeah, yeah

So, actually it wasn't living in Tottenham, cos obviously I was only a year and a half old, bit difficult to pick a football team then.

[laughing]

It was really when I was in- Bizarrely it was when I was in Sunnigdale, erm... I was in a primary school. I was, I wasn't really into football, up until I would say the 1978 world cup, showing my age, er, I watched a bit of it on TV when I was in Wales and I thought I quite

enjoyed that, so I kind of got into that a little bit. So I thought you know I probably should watch a bit more football anyway. And bearing in mind I was only 9 years old at the time, so Primary school, there was a guy there who had some playing cards, I remember, with football cards, and he had some West Ham ones and he gave them to me. So I thought oh well I'll watch these players when they next play, and I noticed that West ham played a certain style of football which I thought was quite attractive to watch, so I endeared myself to the team, and never stopped after that.

Can you tell me, what was the style that-

Quick passing the football, attractive to watch attacking, not really, well they weren't very good a defending to be fair, but they scored a lot of goals, er and the goals were decent goals. They weren't a big side. I would never have supported, I never support, I always support the underdogs. So I would never have supported a bigger side anyway. If I was going to support a team in those days it would have been Nottingham Forest anyway, who also weren't that big, erm, but yeah, I chose West Ham, and that was it.

Right, so it was a choice, a choice, a choice

A choice

A choice to choose. So, er are you a season ticket holder?

Yeah I have been for 32 years.

Right, right. So what, do you remember the first that you saw?

Yep, 1979. West Ham v New Castle. I forced my brother in law to take me to, my step brother, my step sister was married to a guy was a Luton fan really, but he came from South London, and he had watched a few West Am games when he was younger. So I managed to force him to take me to Upton Part for a game in 79. It was 1-1. I still remember it. I was sitting in the west stand, erm, West Ham equalised, sorry West Ham scored and then Newcastle equalised, and I was gutted cos when they scored I was completely taken aback, so I was desperate for them to score again so I could jump up and cheer., and they didn't, so it was 1-1. Welcome to our world of disappointment.

[laughs]

Erm, I were right up in the roof basically. I remember Newcastle's was a penalty, so I've got quite a lot of memories of that game. I remember the program being about this big and my older brother in law saying they're getting smaller and smaller for the money, and then the same year, when I was I my primary school, er in Luton, there was a boy there who's dad was a director of Luton Town, erm, and he got us all tickets, a big group of us, as a school outing to go and watch a game where we sat in the stand there, and it happened to be against West Ham as well, so I saw two games in that first year.

Right, so tell me, what age where you when you saw your first game?

10. Right. And then, so following that you just became, you were-

Sooo, well I mean, I was I followed them but being at school, at a private school in Bedford, was, you know, I didn't get to see too many games. You know when I was a bit older and I was allowed to travel to London on my own, so when I was 15, 16 I went to 1 or 2. Er, but it was really, took off the minute I went to college in London, right, I started going to every game. Every game. I mean I've had the season ticket 30 years, but actually in 87 when I went to college I started going to every game. You didn't have to have a season ticket, cos I stood on the terrace. I never had to, I paid to get in obviously, but I never had to have a ticket. Only when we played Millwall when they were in our division, which was rare. Erm, you didn't need a ticket, you could just guarantee turning up, paying your money and walking in through the turnstiles.

Right, so what was, would you say the best game that you've seen West Ham play?

Ever?

Yeah.

Phhh

Is there one that stands out as a-

Er there are a lot for different reasons. Not all of them were wins either. Erm. There are a lot of games for different reasons. Erm, probably, you know, the play off final, like a few years ago, the two playoff finals we played, one in Cardiff, one at Wembley, would be two of them. Erm, probably the, if I were, had to pick one, it would be the West Ham v Everton FA cup semi-final, er quarter final 1990, just because the atmosphere was insane. I rem- that one I did need as ticket for, I had to, I remember having to queue right round the block at Upton Park, all the way round Green Street, up Green Street, all the way round the block to get my ticket.

Right

That would be my-

And the atmosphere, can you describe what that was like?

Yeah, I mean in those days I was standing on the south bank terrace, so you were rammed into a terrace, there was no room whatsoever to move, erm, and actually there was another game, er I think it was the same or the season after where we played Liverpool, and we got relegated that season, but we played Liverpool in the cup, we beat them 4-1, erm and when everybody is jammed in so you cannot move, and when the team scored the place goes insane, it was like the roof nearly lifted, especially that Liverpool game, and that Everton cup game. Those two would be the two best, erm, you don't get that atmosphere in any ground now because nobody stands. Erm, but in those days it was pretty intense. The place was absolutely heaving, there were people locked out, it was, it was cool.

Right, and did you have a favourite, favourite player? Was there somebody-

Er, did I have a favourite player?

Or do you?

Julian Dicks. Yeah, because he was tough tackling, he's now a coach, assistant manager, he was tough tackling, took no prisoners and I thought was a very skilful player, but didn't play for England cos his temperament was a little bit suspect. But when you're 20 and you're watching a game, you know a player that goes straight through another player, is actually, you want players like that. So he'd be my favourite. Obviously I have others as well, but he, he, if I had to pick one, bizarrely it would be him.

Right. And what do you think it is about West Ham that has this real kind of pull on people, that, the fans are like-

I'd be stupid to think that we were the only club that did that though. Erm I think football teams in general have, people have different reasons for supporting them. West Ham is in a working class area so, erm, it's a bit like, you know Newcastle united who have the, you know, probably moist loyal fans of all, or Manchester City, both in very poor area. West Ham was the same. East End of London, erm you would think that because some of these people were working in the factories and they had nothing else to do, it's a big cliché, but West Ham came from an Iron Works team, so erm, this was their one release once a week. You know, from the drudgery of work. I think every football club in every working class area, which is most of them originally has the same kind of pull.

Right, and how did you feel going from like, not that kind of East End background, sort of

Especially with a public school background you mean, right?

Yeah

Yes

Yeah

But I like to think I'm adaptable. I still have that thing now, I'm a, you know, admittedly footballs changed a little bit and there's a lot of professional people now, but erm, I don't see, I don't, I take people as people. I don't really see a difference. So I like to think that as a West Ham fan people treat me as a West Ham fan, not a West Ham fan who happens to have a public school background.

Right.

It's not something I talk about particularly when I'm there either. Or anywhere in fact, cos I just see that as an education that was so far away that I can hardly remember it, hardly. Not strictly true, but er- So for me I know a lot of people through West Ham for two reasons. One because I've been going for so long, and two because I played for a West Ham football team years later, which I you know, I still have a big group of friends from that. But we're all from different walks of life, I don't see a difference.

Right. And what was the West Ham football team?

Erm, when I went to Northdoor and we had internet access for the first time I got onto a mailing list about West Ham where, you know, everybody would send in, er r- it was a pre-runner to a forum, but you would send in er a comment and everybody would get in and then, you know, that kind of thing. An in, one day we decided to start a football team because there was a league of football teams from different clubs where er, they were, also had these kind of mailing lists. so we called ourselves the Internet Irons and for want of a better word, but actually the group of players we had, I wasn't particularly very good, but I played, and I played there for a few years an' I coached them a little bit at the end, but, but group players we had, we had a couple of really good players, so we actually became a good side, and we actually came second in the league to QPR (? 37.02), won a cup. Was the only time I've ever played in any sporting team that I've won something. I played in a final, we won a cup, we did it for charity, I still have a video of that, it was a charity event at Hinckley Athletic, and we used to play in a tournament once a year called Worldmit (? 37.18) which was all the teams in the country plus a couple for Europe like XXX 937.26) in Millan would come over, tournament like, like a world cup type tournament with groups.

Right

So we played, the first time we played in that in reading, it, it moves around the country so South, Midlands, North and then back to the South. The first time we played in there we all went about and got hammered, it was a social thing, so the next day our goalkeeper could hardly move and we didn't do well, but then we drank the hotel dry and became famous with in that group, the groups of teams. Er got friendly with a lot of the teams, and it also meant that when we went to away games, which I do a lot of, we used to play the game and then go and watch the match with them, and it helped foster friendships between fans of opposite clubs, which we were trying to do.

Right.

Erm, but then we played on Hackney Marshes, which is probably underneath the Olympic stadium, erm, and then yeah we won a, we basically won a cup, we won one of these cups, so it became really good. For a while, but then, you can still see the trophy I've got it here look

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

But then obviously, you know, we all had to work and it broke up a little bit after a while cos you know, you can't go on forever. Also I had children, so I had a choice of going to watch the game, er every week, co I used to, I used to watch on Saturday, obviously watch West Ham, and play on Sunday often. And that was the whole weekend gone and it wasn't fare. Once I had children I thought one of them has to go, and given that I was never a great player and my knees were going I think the actual playing was probably the obvious one-

Right, ok

-to die

Great. So what was your, your most memorable match that you've seen West Ham play. I've asked you about memorable match haven't I.

Well you said what was my favourite match

Favourite, yeah, yes

Memorable match, the most memorable match was the last one.

Right, so can you just, yeah about that atmosphere that was

Well it wasn't just the atmosphere, its memorable- There've been a few memorable ones. So my favourite match I mentioned would probably be the Everton cup game or the Liverpool cup game, but, but, memorable, one of them was when we played Blackburn, huuuh, I couldn't tell you what year it was. Might have been 92, 91, they weren't a great side. In fact earlier than that, maybe even 88, 89. Er, what I remember about that was we were 4-0 down, 5-1 down and came back to 5-4, didn't quite win the game but we were really good by the end. We stood down in protest at half time we were so bad, on the terrace, but by the end of the game we gave them a standing ovation. That was weird. That was one, and then the other one I'd say was really memorable, erm, we beat Hull 7-1 at home, kind of that, you know, that speaks for itself I'd say

Yes, yes

And the FA cup semi-final which I'm sure most fans that went to that would say was the best atmosphere ever, but we got hammered 4-nill. We lost 4-nill to Nottingham Forest. We had a player sent off and that was the end of the game really. But it was at Villa Park and I just remember going by train, coming up the escalator at Euston and it was a sea of Claret and blue. Er getting there it's the noisiest I've ever been in, it's the best atmosphere I've ever seen in a stadium, because I couldn't even hear the bloke standing next to me. I was in the XXX (40.40) end at Villa Park and yeah. Was FA cup semi-final 1990. Funnily it was the game after the Everton one.

Right, right, an at West Ham stadium did you have the same seat?

No

Right

No, I started, well I started on the terracing, it was in the south bank, and then they made it all seater. So, oh no, then I moved to the east terrace, then they made it all seater, still got the certificate in there, about being in the ground the last day that we could stand. Then I moved into the Bobby More stand below, behind the goal, which is pretty much the cheapest seat I could find given I didn't have a lot of money, an' I was there for a while, an' actually one year I forgot to renew by the deadline, I just didn't get a chance, I dunno what happened, so I ended up having to do, get a seat somewhere else, so I thought well I'll go in the West Stand, so I went in the upper west, really high up, an' I was there a couple of years but I though mehhh, it's not a great view, and in the end where I really wan'ed to go was the east stand, so I ended up in the east stand upper, and that's where I am, I've been there for like 10 years now.

Right, and are the fans different

Yep

Do you think in each?

Yeah definitely. Bobby More stand working class younger, where I am now, erm, I'd say I lower the average age.

Right

Like there's an old lady in my row that's hit a hundred

[draws breath]

She's, yeah she's amazing, she actually got, like they put her on the screen in the last game

Wow

And yeah, you don't get many of those. She used to take the micky out of us, cos if we wore white trainers, which I don't own but some of my er colleagues on that row do, she used to come in with her walking stick and say I hate it when you wear white trainers cos I stand on your feet and I make a mark. She's lovely. And the bloke sitting next to me is retired, erm the people to my right have changed, but either their retired or they're- the last guy was an Indian guy, who had I think a city job so you know, was different but. I'd say it was defiantly older.

Right.

East stand. A lot of the people in the East stand, you know I talk about I've had a season ticket what 30 odd years now, 36, 7 years, but, you know, some of them, they've been watching West Ham since the 60s.

Right

Since I was born, you know. So they've had season tickets 50 years.

Right. Erm, so I was gonna ask you about the, so I've got the fans, how do you think it's going to, have you got a ticket for the new stadium?

Yeah. I'm in front row of the upper tier, yeah.

Right, and how, how do you feel about that shift, what do you feel about the move?

I think it's a brilliant move. I have no qualms about it. Upton Park has no, nowhere near the atmosphere it had when it was standing anyway, so I think, football today is nothing like it was in the 80s when I was going regularly, when I first went to college, it was, it was rowdier, but it was also, it was a bit more raw, there was a lot more passion on the terraces, it was noisy, it was loud, you don't get that now it's very, it's a bit more sanitised. So given that you've got two choices. You can either go back to the kind of crap facilities, everyone's stranding but it's a great atmosphere, but I'm getting older, that's probably not ideal, and that's not gonna happen. Or you go to the kind of nice seats, got good view, which I had at Upton Park, but the facilities are crap. It's a night mare to get to, you know driving there is like a major- In fact it got so bad at the end of last season that I stopped at started going by

train which I don't particularly like cos its quite a long journey. Erm, down to Upton Park, you know, tiny little station, no facilities, so you think if its gonna go that way we might as move somewhere which has decent facilities. I went to the Olympic games, so I know the Olympic stadium well. I was at ACDC last week as well, or week before last, so I was in the Olympic stadium hen and the place is fantastic. It has loads of room, 10 platforms at Stratford, quick trains, it's much better.

You don't, the, the, the loss of that atmosphere-

That went in the 80s.

Ok yeah

That's my point so, yeah, exactly, I mean people say oh it won't be as good atmosphere, well, who knows? Given that we'll be 650 thousand inside that stadium it might be a better atmosphere. We'll never get the atmosphere we had in the 80s, unless they change it back to standing.

And, and the area of I mean

That's a fact by the way, that it cost £3 to get in when I started going, in fact it was £1.50 on the south bank and 3 quid to sit, so when its £1.50 anyone can get in, and you get a big crowd of working class people, they're more, they're more rowdy by nature. Erm, erm that made a great atmosphere. Now it costs 90 quid for a ticket so there are different poep-, types of people, and it's never gonna be like that again. Which is a shame, but you have to live with it, it's a big business now.

Yeah, no that's an interesting point about the cost of it, isn't it?

Oh yeah

Sort of er

That's changed the demographic of who you see in the stadium. When I first started going there were no, no women hardly. Erm an, defiantly no ethnic minorities. I was sitting next to an Indian guy last year. That would never have happened in the 80s right. It's just a different demographic, I think it's great that we're a bit more inclusive now and it's a bit more family orientated, and, erm and although it's become family orientated but then they priced virtually every family out of it, cos if I take my 2 girls, who, they aren't big football fans, but if I take them I'm gunna end up spending 3 or 4 hundred pounds, so you know, I think they've probably got the whole thing wrong but it's such a big business that you can't argue with their business model from a commercial point of view. But definitely a different demographic, it, it was working class people, if you had quid 50 in your pocket you could go and watch a game just off the cuff. Even the fact that you could go and you didn't have to plan. Now you know you have to buy a ticket in advance, you have to plan all this an' it's difficult to get a ticket even if you're not a season ticket holder.

Right and do- what about the area of like Green Street

I'm not convinced it's ever been a great area. Er, so, I mean I, it doesn't really make any difference to me cos I don't use any of the facilities there at all. I mean I've got a long journey in so I don't have time to go down there. I don't generally drink during er, the last 10 or 12 years I've been driving to the games so I can't drink. Er which is fine, I don't drink a lot anyway full stop, so that, that's not my thing. Plus I don't see the point cos then I can't remember the game. Erm so, it doesn't I don't see a lot of- I don't have any real comment on, on the area, er because I'm, I'm transient. What I would say is I did get in quite a row with a local resident last but one game cos I went down with my camera, took a load of photos of stuff as I'm sure we all did that, er with the idea of making it into a book, right, of, of photos. But I took photos of like where I used to park in the estate round the back of the ground, and I was snapping away and this woman came running out of her house, she goes, I know you, why are you taking photos, so I told her, she goes ok fine, an' I said don't worry, I'm not gonna publish them or anything, but then she got into a real argument with me about the club have done nothing for this area, they've done nothing for us, they never even gave us a shirt. Well I said you'll have to talk to the club then not me, but then she said, and you're just deserting us all. I thought well you can't have it both ways here, there's no transport link, s=nobody can get here, I have to queue to get onto the train, it's a nightmare. And she said well get a bus. I thought yeah 60 thousand people gonna get a bus from Stratford, I don't think that's gonna happen. So erm, I'd say obviously the ar- the area will change but I er, but I'm transient. I'm a transient fan and a lot of us are, so.

And the last match that you saw, subsequently have you bought anything in the auction?

No

Right, right

No, I mean I must be a minority of one, but I have no interest in bringing my seat home either. Erm because what am I gonna actually do with it. I mean when I was in my, when I was 20, I think it was 20, around that, when I was first at university, when I first started going regularly, the end of the season we always used to go onto the pitch, take a bit of pitch and then I'd grow it in a jar. I did that when I was at college in my hall, my hall room, people were going what's that square of grass you've got. But then you think well why did I do that. I used to do it every year but now it's just, I'm a bit too old for that, and where am I gonna put the seat, so, I had no interest.

[laughs] right.

I've got every, I've got one shirt from everyyyy season I think since I started going regularly in 87.

Right do you, when do you wear them? When do you, or do you just-

Well I always, it's always quite exciting when it's sunny and the first game of the season, you kind of put it on cos you've just bought it, but generally I wear 'em either on holiday or in the gym.

Right

Cos er, after about 1 week its freezing cold and raining and therefore I've got a coat on. So, generally I wear 'em in the gym to be honest. But I don't buy 'em to wear 'em. I know this sounds weird for something that now cost 55 quid, I mean again, that's changed, erm, but actually I buy them for souvenir purposes. I'm a big believer in- I've got a program from every game I've attended, I've got like 15 hundred. So er they're all in the garage, what am I gonna do with it, who knows. I'm having my last season's shirt and program, from the last game, and my season ticket card framed. I'll have that done, and er in there, you can't see it now, but I have the FA cup wins. I've got er a framed picture of the team scoring a winning goal in 1980 and Bobby More lifting the trophy in 64. These are two different frames, and then around them are the tickets for all the rounds for that cup. So I keep things like that, so I've kept a shirt from every season

Right

Just in a suitcase in the hope that one day I'll have a house big enough to frame 'em all.

Right, oh right. Yeah.

Probably won't, but I keep 'em anyway, it's a collection.

Right, and those sort of iconic heroes like Bobby More-

I never saw him play cos he was before my time, but obviously he's iconic. Erm, for me Trevor Brooking was the first iconic player I saw and Billy Bonds, er they were playing when I started watching West Ham, er and then you had Julian Dicks, you know Paolo Di Canio, probably now Dimitri Payet.

Right.

So, I mean I keep the shirts, I've got a shirt from each year, er an I'll keep buying those just because I think it's a nice thing to do to keep up the collection. And I have the programs. Never ever buy a program from a game I haven't been to so- and just so you know I go to every away game

[breath intake] right

So that's something that obviously- I'm in a little club there cos there's not so many of us that do that. This year it's been erm, it's been interesting, you know, we've obviously had a bigger following, it's been harder to get tickets although I always get in cos I've got enough points, erm, but I travel all over the country. I've been up to Newcastle, I've been to Italy to see West Ham play, and Germany, erm, but erm. Other than Newcastle and Sunderland where I stay overnight, erm, the night before the game. I drive up late at night on a Friday night, stay overnight, watch the game and drive home cos it's too far. But the rest of the away games I'll do in a day. My company pay for my fuel, even personal fuel, so that makes a decision for me, that makes it easy.

Yes, yes, and which of those sort of cities gives the best reception to sort of

Its more which ones give the worst

Alright, which one gives the worst

Well, I'm pretty anonymous so it's difficult for me to gauge that. In the old days when I used to go by train to away games, cos I always went to away games since the 80s, in those days we were marched of the special train and people were throwing bottles at us and stuff. That's a little bit different to now where I drive. I stop at a mini services, even if I have a shirt on, the unlikely event that we have decent weather, you'll see lots of fans in different shirts in service stations chatting- they'll chat to you, er. But normally I've just got a jumper on so nobody knows I'm a West Ham fan. I drive up, I look for somewhere to park. I know exactly where to park for every single ground that I go to just through experience, an then, you know, I go to the game, get back in the car and drive home, so, no once know how I am anyway. There are some that are a bit fearsome, and some less so. But I have some, I have my favourite. My favourite of all away is Newcastle, just cos I love the fact it's iconic and it's in the middle of the city on a hill and its huge. The view is just terrible for away fans though. It's like you're in orbit virtually. 7 flights of stairs up, its 7 floors up, so, an given that the Newcastle team where black and white stripes you can't tell who's who, so it's a terrible view but a great atmosphere. They are very passionate fans, and I've been going there since, for years, and I like, I like Newcastle. Unfortunately I won't be going there this season cos there not in our division, but erm, but yeah I try and, I've been into, when there's a new team in the division that I've never been to the ground, or if its erm, a team that have changed stadia, which is often happening now, us included, then I will try and definitely make an effort to go to that game. Erm like I say I go to every- I try and go to every game, but obviously to do with work sometimes cos I'm travelling, so I missed actually more home games than away last year, er an I give my ticket to a colleague. Erm but yeah, I'll always try and definitely go to games, I try and collect sort of going to grounds if you see what I mean.

Right, and what, what

By the way I've seen most of the country through football, like I would never have gone, why would I ever have gone to Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Hull. Er I've been to Burnley, Bolton, Blackburn, I would never have gone to any of these places had I not been a football supporter. I really wouldn't.

Right, right. Cos I was gonna say, what, what do you think the teams given to you as a supporter?

Erm, they give you something to follow, they give, I mean it's a real cliché to say they give you a sense of identity, cos I'm not sure that's specifically the case but- For instance a cla- For me it's always been an ice breaker as well, like I remember my first job interview at Minet, I remember the guy, I'd written in my personal interests I'd written football fan, and I play and support a football team. So in my first interview the second question the guy asked me was do you still play football, an' I said yeah I play with a couple of teams locally. Right and you say you watch, do you support a team, and I said yeah, and he was a Liverpool fan, so we ended up chatin' about it, but it broke the ice. I got the job. I've done that twice in interviews, an also I sit in the gym in the morning in the steam room after working out and there's a whole group of use, we're all football fans of different clubs, we chat about football.

Right, right

So I dunno, it gives you that. It's an interest as well for me.

Right an I just wanna ask you, the old supporters that you've mentioned that you sat with like the-

The really old ones yeah

Yeah, are they gonna, are they gonna go to the new stadium? Are they-

Yeah, well the bloke next to me is definitely, I don't know about the hundred and 2 year old, I would imagine she would. Why would she give up now? You know if you've been going 60 years. Erm. I don't, I don't know many people that don't like the idea of moving now. When it first got mooted a lot of people were against it, but I was always a supporter myself, but a lot of people were against it. There's a few now. So now I'm more involved in the club cos I'm a, I'm part of the supporters advisory board at the moment, which I have been for 2 years, I also help found a forum that I'm on as well, and I used to write blogs on that forum of away games, for a load of people, cos a lot of them are living Abroad, so, er I'm on that forum as we'll. Some of them on the forum still aren't happy, but there's very few now I'd say.

Very few.

I'd imagine most people have accepted the fact that it's an obvious thing to do. Specially since we've announced that we've sold 50- all the season ticket holders, season tickets. So we'll have 60 thousand in that stadium, er every week. So I think people have realised that it's actually a step up, and also the team did so well last year, people can see that we came just outside the champions league places, if they step one more up they'll be in line to try and win the league, you know

Right

Which is a great rise.

So just, just, what is your involvement with the club?

Well supporters advisory board is the main one. I er, so I applied to do that, 2 years ago it was now, and I've been to every meeting they've held.

And what do they do?

Erm it's a, it's er, like a focus group that the club use. Mainly it's been around the move, obviously cos that's the main thing the club have been doing, but they've asked us other things as well. Erm there is a couple of dozen maybe 20, 30 people from completely different walks of life, different areas of the country, different demographics. We've got a lesbian, gay er LGBT member as well, so we're all supposed to represent different demographics. I applied, got accepted, I've been doing it then- we've had things like the- like for instance the director presented to us on how the academy's working, what they're doing, which was kinda nice to see how they work with the young players. Er Karan Brady was going to talk to us about, and say thank you for all the work we done with the Olympic stadium, but actually they went to sign a player the day we were doing that, so we didn't do that in the end. Erm we, a lot of the stuff we've done has been about the move and the experience at the stadium. So for instance, you know, one of the things I definitely recommended which we did do in the end was the way that the programs were last year. So I don't know if you know, but, 2

years, ju8st at the end of not last season but the season before, we had one game where we, they, it was a, it was the anniversary of our cup winners cup success, so they had a old, they made the new, the program look like the old one, even though it was still the new one, put it in the same style, the cover and the back, looked exactly like the old 1970 one. So I, I remember, at the supporters advisory board, why don't we do that for every game next year and they did. Erm, another guy erm, was talking about, you know, erm having a fan zone outside the stadium for kids before the game, what do you do. So I was talking to them about Man City and Sunderland, he was going on about another club I think where they had that in the car park, sounds like they're doing that as well. And a lot of its been about transport, can we get transport deals through he club, can the club get that from British rail or whoever they are now. British rail, showing my age now, they're not that but- And things like how can we improve the match day experience what do we think are bad. We've got women here who are on a mini focus group talking about clothing in the shop, so the shop having memorabilia, but having the women's clothing specifically designed for women, rather than women's sizes for men's stuff. Er you've got disabled people there talking about disabled access, how will it be at the Olympic stadium, you know. Things like that.

Right. Right.

If you get that. You know, it's a focus group at the end of the day. We meat when the club wan' us to meat so it's not, there's no set timetable, we meet maybe, we'll meat maybe 3 or 4 times a season.

And do you notice that there are more women involved in football

Oh yeah. Yeah definitely. Well, the fact that Karan Brady runs the club for a start, but re, but certainly not enough in football, but certainly from a fan demographic there are loads. Yeah, I mean, I was telling you about the football team I played for came from a message board effectively. 2 of the people that met on that message board got married in the end. They met through that message board they dated and then they married each other. And they've actually 2 friends of mine. She's actually a bond holder, erm and he's a, you know they've got 5, they've got 4 kids now and they all go to the football s well. So

Right

So there's a lot of women there, er but there's not enough of women in football. Karan Brady's quite a refreshing alternative, but I believe it's not been plain sailing for her. The upper echelons of these clubs a lot of them don't like, you know, having women on the board.

No, I'm sure, yeah er

We're ahead of golf though

Sorry, say that again

We're ahead of golf

Yes, yeah [laughs]

That's for sure. Erm if your round here, we've got a golf club round here which is quite famous, which still won't let women into the boardroom, into the clubhouse. They have their own room which is off to the side

The kitchen!

How its legal is beyond me, I mean it's the most chauvinist thing I've ever heard, but apparently the law doesn't apply to, to golf. But then, you know I've, we've seen 2 women linesmen, or lines wom- assistant referees of whatever I'm supposed to call 'em now, but they're linesmen, so we've seen 2 of those, its good.

Right. Do you think there is still, sort of embedded chauvinism about women

Yep. In the game yeah.

Yeah

It's getting better I mean, the chief executive at Chelsea's a woman, the chief executive at Sunderland was a woman, but she just had, had to resign cos, in disgrace over the Adam Johnson affair. So there's more an' more of 'em at that level. I think some of the older style chairmen can't deal with it, but the premiere league is such a global business now, you know, it's like any other company. I work, my CEO, the chief operating officer is a woman in my company so why shouldn't it be in football. There isn't enough down at the coaching level, that's where it- But women's football itself is getting better. There was a big scandal the women's football team at West Ham last season, where they all ended up getting fired. But they, they have a decent women's team, and Julian Dicks, my favourite player's, now coach for our first team, was the women's manager.

Right, right

Getting better but its, its dragging itself into the 21st century I think.

Right.

Yeah, it's not ideal.

Yeah, no, it's interesting isn't it with football, how it kind of like, who goes, who is the, what they look like

Its definitely more women there now, I'd say, by a mile. Even when I first started going in the 80s there were very few. You talk to the guy next to me he says in the 60s you couldn't count; you wouldn't be able to fill one hand with the amount of women in the stand.

Right, right

[cough] obviously the 1 hundred and 2 year old lady was there. But erm, there can't have been many.

Right, ok. Is there anything else that you'd like to sort of- Any-

I dunno really. Er those are the main involvements. I play football, er under the name of West Ham, our team got given a set of kit from the first team at West Ham, so I wore Rio Ferdinand's shirt when I played cos basically he was the same build as me. Thought I was- well I was skinny at the time. I, you know, I'm on the supporters advisory board, I work, you know, I also write blogs on this forum as well. Er but generally I'm just a season ticket holder like everybody else. I just have a long associating with the club, and it's an unrecognisable entity from what it was before. Some for the good some for the bad. You know ultimately I've got old with the club as well, so do I really wanna be standing on a cold terrace in the middle on January freezing my, you know, proverbials off. And, but, you know getting a great atmosphere, or do I now wanna bit of comfort. Er, you know, as someone who's now 47 I want my comfort, so I guess I'm moving with the club, the club is different.

Right

But no, I'm looking forward to the move, er I look forward to every year. I get the new shirt which arrives tomorrow, erm, we have a new brand this year as well which is kinda weird. I'm, I'm interested to the amount of abuse I'm gonna get this season about how, er, about our stadium deal which everyone still be giving me abuse for years yet. Erm, but most of my friends know I'm pretty dedicated to the team so.

Right, and just to end, pre match rituals?

Not really cos, I mean, obviously I've changed recently in that I've started going by tube again now cos I'm sick and tired of trying to drive to Upton Park. Obviously I don't need to do that anymore, and the Olympic Stadium there is no option to drive, so I have to go- that should be better, but not really- But I've had them, I've had every, this is really lucky I must do this, oh yeah we scored 3 goals when I did that, I'll do that every time, until they lose and then you think it's a load of rubbish. Why, why I ever fell for that kinda stuff.

What was your kinda

Oh I've had loads of them, you know. Do I go in through this specific turnstile, do I, you know, but they, when, the great thing about west Ham is they've never been consistent, so at some point that'll die off pretty quickly so there's no point. But I used to, I used to park up very early. Erm 12 o'clock for a 3 o'clock game, just because I couldn't get there any later, it was too busy. And then, you know I always get a burger or something from the same place, but then later on I started, you know, stopping eating that junk and I used to drive, er sorry get the tube, an' I was getting back quicker. Not really. Erm, its changed over the years. I used to but not anymore. And I don't know, a lot of my family are younger- I've got a lot of nephews and nieces given the number of brothers and sisters I've got, right, so a lot of them support West Ham because of me. And one of them is a season ticket holder with his dad, and hes got 3 kids tickets as well, so that's 5 of them. So the reason I am not in the absolute most expensive seat of the lot, right on the halfway line, is because that's a corporate ticket, which is 11 hundred quid, which is not a lot more than my category A ticket now, but the kids are also full price, you can't get a half-price ticket for them. So erm, I'm actually gonna be sitting with my nephew and his family next year which is great, so there'll be a group of us, plus the two people I said got married that I know, erm they're bond holders, so they managed to get me, I jumped the que a little bit for my seat, I've got one of the best seats in the stadium because of them, erm and we're gonna be sitting with them. They've got 7 tickets. So we'll

have you know, between us we'll have 15 tickets. That's new for me, cos I'm never, I've never ever gone to the game with anyone really.

Right, right, that's interesting

Never ever have done that

Do you think it will sort of cramp your sort of

No. No style. I don't have any style. No not at all, I mean, it's only because my nephew obviously clearly is younger than me, so he's had a season ticket a few years now, but he, when he bought his season ticket he bought it for the West stand so we're actually diagonally opposite each other. Couldn't be any further if you tried. He's in a lower tier I'm in the upper tier, but we're about the same level. But erm I, I'm in the east stand, it took me years to get my seat, I kept moving around until I could get that seat, cos like I say, everyone's old, therefore you tend not to, seats don't become available in my stand. So he's kinda grown up there, and he's been able to expand cos he's had young kids, he's still got, you know, his kids are quite young. Erm, and Martine and Dave they, the two have the bonds, they have 3 kids themselves, but they often don't go because the kids have got hockey and she travels a lot with work as well, so, I've never really- It's not that I don't wanna sit with anyone, I've just never, I've had my seat an then I've said well I'm here, erm, there's no way I'm moving. I won't move to go and sit with someone in more inferior seats. Took me 30 years to get this one.

Right, so tell me, do pick your seat each, you choose which one you wanna sit in? Is it sort of- do you have a?

You, no, I mean, you do, you choose where you wanna sit as a season ticket. But obviously once you've got your seat you can keep it forever. Or keep it every time; you can renew it each year. But I was- for a few years, when I moved up to the top, IO realised that actually, now I can afford to sit anywhere in the ground, if I'm gonna pay for a category A seat, I wanna be in the east stand cos it's at a height that suits- it's the best view, let's be honest.

Right

So, to get in that stand, anywhere near the middle, someone has to die, literally.

Right

It's literally that bad. I mean there's no, there's just no free seats there. So every year, you know, for about 5 years, I had a seat then I'd move, then I'd move, then I'd move until I got the seat I've got now. But then I've been here, I've been in this seat, well in fact 12, 13 years now.

Right

Cos I'm happy with it.

So how's it gonna work in the new stadium? Do you- is it the same?

Yeah I've got a seat. I know exactly what my seat is, so I can tell you the number of it. It's in the front row of the upper tier. But I got that- the way it worked is that they tried to give you an equivalent seat. So if you, obviously, with a really good view in the east stand I would've got a really good view in the east stand thee. However, cos I knew a bond holder, she got asked first, so she said do you wanna come in with us, an' I thought, this gives me the option of having a front row seat in the top tier, which is the best seat in the house, so I just said yeah.

Right

That's why I'm sitting with 'em really, it's not cos I like 'em. I mean I do like 'em, I'm kidding, she knows, but erm, but it made sense you know. Anything, cos, with a season ticket its your seat for life really. You don't wanna have to keep messing about trying to change em. Now its sold out completely anyway, so. There'll be- there's a huge waiting list. So, you know we were keen to get a good view cos you don't really wanna move. You get to know the people round you. So I'm starting ageing now cos all the people that I sat with previously I won't be sitting with now. SO all the guy there I know them only from sitting with t hem in the stand. I only, one guy I only know his name when I asked him to second me for the sports advisory board, but we've been talking to each other for 7 years before that. Didn't even know each other's name. It's bizarre, but you kinda get to know them, you talk about the game, then you leave, then you see em the next week- So that'll all start again, so that's a little bit sad really cos you get to know people round you, but, you know, but you have to move with the times.

Right. So you're sort of completely thumbs up for the move

Yeah, I have no, no reservations. I think it could make the club more attractive er for acquisition. I like the owners at the moment, but this'll make them more attractive for acquisition. Er they'll have a bigger stadium, they can attract better players, can get more money through the turnstiles. What's not to like here? The club can actually be moved forward. I'm no glory hunter, otherwise I would never have supported West Ham in the first place, but it'll be nice for 'em to win something, at some point, right. We have not won anything really, right. Not since 1980. Not anything of note. We got to a cup final in 2005, 2006 sorry, but er, we lost that on penalties. Er but other than that, you know, couple of play off finals, and er an intertoto cup. We haven't, we haven't had much success that you can, anything tangible, so I'm hoping that this might mean that we can actually start winning something.

Right, an do you think the working class roots of West Ham, have been sort of-

They're still there. But erm, you know they're not making it, and it's not West Ham, this is premiere league in general, and football in general, they're not making it easy for 'em. You know I wonder whether I could afford to pay for a ticket every year if I didn't have the type of job I do. You know, like my season ticket was 8 hundred and 50 quid last year, 8 hundred 50- The other day I was clearing out a draw and I found all my- oh this is another thing I keep, I keep everything, so I kept all my old- when they were little books of tickets I kept my whole little season books, an' the first one I could find, I dunno it probably wasn't the first one I had, but the first one I could find the ticket was like £89 or something, and you're thinking how has it gone from 89 to 890 in 20, 30 years. Now I realise inflation has kicked in, but that's not inflation, it can't, can't up 10 times, so, I don't think they're doing themselves

any favours, the premiere league in general, because they're all supported by sky at the end of the day. So sky are pumping billions into the game, they don't need the fans money to run the club. Therefore they don't really need to set the ticket at 90 quid for a top game or 80 for a category 2 game, but they do, because they need, they want as much as possible to buy the best players. And eventually that's gonna implode. It's not a business model that can work.

No-

In my opinion, if sky went bankrupt then the whole thing would be a complete disaster. Erm and I just think the premiere league need to start looking at that. They are capping away tickets next year for the first time. Which is great for me cos I go to away games and no away ticket will ever be more than 30 quid, which is great, but of course all my friends, a lot of them don't go to away games, they're still not happy but I am so. Erm, but you can pay, you know that's the difference, I can pay 20 quid to go to Stoke, or 60 pounds to go to Chelsea.

So what proportion is it of fans who actually do get, get to away matches

Er depends on the game we're at. If it's a league game it can be between 15 hundred and 3 thousand. You don't, I mean the club doesn't, an away club, they don't have to give you, there's not limit on what they have to give, they don't have to give you any if they don't wan'o. But that would be stupid cos they'd retaliate. But Manchester United for instance have a ground that holds 76 thousand, it's the biggest ground in the country, and they give 3 thousand tickets for away fans, so it's not a lot, you know. And I mean, some of the not so successful teams they might, and depending on segregation might give you 5 thousand if you lucky. We won't always take their allocation we won't always have 5 thousand fans who wanna go.

Right

This year it's been better, but the year before, I could get a ticket for anything, and you know, we probably send 2 thousand back. So it's a small proportion of us that go to away games, and regularly even less. I get to see- I can recognise people that I see at every away game.

Right

Last year was bigger, but there's not a lot of us around. But I like away games. In many ways I've liked, I've liked away games more than home games. It's more of an atmosphere. Everyone stands regardless of the fact there's a seat. I haven't sat in an away seat other than half time.

Right

For 3 or 4 years. Everyone just stands up.

Whys that? Is that just-

Better atmosphere

Better atmosphere

We can get away with it there, were as if we did it home we'd be, eventually the club would say if you do it anymore then we'll take your ticket away

Right

I mean also, you're a season ticket holder, you can't stand up cos the bloke behind you is not gonna be happy and you have to see him next week as well. When you're away if everyone stands up anyway, and the stewards might threaten you, but what can they do because, you know, you're not gonna be there next week.

Yeah, yeah

So doesn't matter. And I think it's probably pretty much accepted that away fans gonna stand up. Most clubs don't care to be honest. So we get a better atmosphere there, and you tend to get people that drive 200 miles to see the club are dedicated. Dot get any transient fans, get proper fans, that, you know, I called myself a transient fan earlier, but what I mean by that is I travel, but there's a difference. What we call plastic fans are fans who don't really support the club but come along for a match day experience. That's what the premiere league has bought, cos it's like cool to be a premiere league supporter now, whereas it wasn't in the 80s. So it's expensive, an' they can go oh I went to that game, it was on telly, everyone knows about it, it's really cool to do that, but I'm not really a fan. And you don't get an atmosphere with those sort of people. When you go away you have to have points to get tickets. And you only get those points by getting away tickets, and away travel is expensive. Not everybody has their fuel payed for like me.

And the points are what?

One point for every away ticket you buy. But then what happens is, when you get, when you're playing arsenal for instance, so it's obviously local, and 10,000 pole want to get the 4000 that they give us, obviously some people are gonna miss out and the way they do it is they start with the applications with the people that have the most points and work their way down. SO if you've got 20 points- and it's a rolling 2 years, so in the last 2 years if you've got 10, 15 points you're always gonna get a ticket. If you've only got 1, cos you've only been to one away game suddenly a cup final comes up, you won't get one.

Right, right

I have a lot, I have 24, about the highest you can get really cos it rolls over 2 years. But that's the way they're always gonna do it.

Right, and ydo you, sort of part of you, does part of you miss, if you had a choice between going back to the 80s and moving forward, and someone said you can have that choice, where would you rather be?

Well where I'd rather be is not to have the choice, and actually take the bit of the 80s that was gopod, and put it into, and I think it can be done if someone actually sits down and makes the effort. But yeah, I mean, I'd go back to the 80s.

Um

There are bits of it I didn't like. It was a bit nasty sometimes, you know. It was a lot of violence, er kids, but I was younger anyway so I could get out of that. But erm, for me the atmosphere in the stadium, I was never really a big, I wasn't into any of the violence, I just had to get away from it. But I could do that cos I was qui- young and fit. Erm, but what I did like about the 80s was that erm, you didn't have to plan in advance you could just turn up at an away ground even and just walk in. Pay on the turnstiles, you didn't have to buy a ticket. Cos I bought tickets to games in advance, thanks to sky they've then moved the game so I can't then go cos I've got work or I'm travelling or something. It's been moved to Monday night an' it's in Newcastle, like who goes to Newcastle on Monday night, or hull. Erm none of that used to happen. It was always Saturday. You know one game on a Sunday per week, erm so it was rare. It was always Saturday at 3 o'clock there was no 12- That's the other thing there was no 12 o'clock in the afternoon, and you're playing away at Manchester City, really? Or 5.30pm and you're in, you know, you're at Hull, so therefore you get home at 2 in the morning, you know, they don't think about fans, cos they've got no interest in thinking about us. So the old days it was always 3 o'clock apart from the evening games obviously, and then erm, and then you could just, oh actually now I can't make that cos I've got work, I didn't have a ticket, so I don't lose 60 quid, which is what happens, in my case. You know, unless I can find someone to take the ticket which is rare. So I, I would go back to that. And I'd go back to, the atmosphere was great, and it didn't cost me, you know, a small mortgage to buy a season ticket every year.

Yes. Yeah, yeah

But, having said which, you know, that's not gonna happen, so erm, I'd rather that they moved to a stadia where we all get a bit more comfort erm and eventually I'm sure they will end up with a, say a standing area, which is safe, cos obviously the Hillsborough thing changed that, but I don't know that that's, West Ham never had fences, so it would never have been an issue there. So I would imagine we'd go back to having standing areas at some point. But- But yeah and also I like the fact that no one club was dominated by- At the moment we've got 2 clubs that are owned by, we one particular club that's owned by a multi trillionaire, one that's owned by a billionaire. Er, it sqews the whole thing. In the old days it wasn't like that really, they were all, all owned by English, er owners, therefore they weren't all particularly rich. The money was being made by the fans.

Right

That's kinda nice. It was a proper business model, it works, and we don't rely on you know, TV companies, and yeah- Bu that's not gonna happen so- If I had a choice it would be that.

Right, ok

Where you could equally get a player who was as good as a player Manchester United got if- Funnily enough West Ham have managed to do that this year. But it's the first time that the club has managed to find a player that's become a world superstar, er within 6 months, even though he's at the end of his career. Normally er, nowadays they all go to the biggest clubs, and clubs like us we have to settle for second best. But in the 80s it didn't work like that. You know, you scouted, you found a player, you bought 'em. It wasn't about how much money you had. About your prestige really, that was better.

Right. OK. Right



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Used all you tape up have I?

No well you see it's on a, on the mains

Yeah

Go on forever. As I switch it off, is there anything else that you'd like to add into it,

No

It's terrific, thankyou

Is there anything else you wanna ask me

I don't think so, I think we've covered quite a lot, haven't we?

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