

'I hope it isn't true about Stan and dogging... I let him borrow my car the other day!'

After years of haplessness from the likes of Alan Rogers and Gregor Robertson, the recent 'Evening with Stuart Pearce' at Nottingham nightclub Cabaret was a welcome reminder of an era when the Reds had a left-back who actually struck fear into the hearts of opposing wingers. RICH FISHER was there – and found Forest fans' love of Psycho still knows no bounds...

For a good eight or nine years, one of the highlights of any Forest game – home or away – was always the pre-match 'Psycho Salute'.

It'd start as soon as the players emerged from the tunnel, with thousands of fans immediately launching into a mantra of "Psycho! Psycho! Psycho!", simultaneously thrusting their fists in time with the chant in the direction of the man wearing the number three shirt.

There was a mutual show of appreciation too. Whether you were standing in the Trent End at a home game or the visitors' enclosure at an away ground, Pearce's response was always to run straight over, fists clenched, to scream his impassioned battle-cry of "Come onnnnnnnnnnn!"

Even after having witnessed it on hundreds of occasions, the Psycho Salute never failed to make the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. And following Pearce's departure to Newcastle in 1997, it seemed like there was suddenly a huge void in the matchday experience. A half-hearted attempt was made to continue

the ritual with Colin Cooper – but with all due respect to Coops, it just wasn't quite the same.

Happily though, Cabaret's 'Evening with Stuart Pearce' provided an opportunity to go back in time and partake in the Psycho Salute once more. Not that it was a planned part of the night – but, if you introduce Stuart Pearce on-stage at a club that happens to be rammed with 500 or so tanked-up Forest fans, there's only ever going to be one reaction really!

Clad in a sharp suit befitting his status as one of the game's most promising young managers, Pearce seemed almost sheepish at the rousing reception he received on making his entrance. But he gave the clenched-fist salute anyway – and so began a highly entertaining evening.

The format of the event was similar to a chat show, with Pearce answering a series of questions put to him by compere John Gwynne, who is best known for his work as a darts commentator for Sky Sports.

Naturally, one of the first topics that came up was how

Pearce became a Forest player in the first place. "It all began one day when my previous club, Coventry, were playing Liverpool," he recalled. "I was strolling up to the ground, and the Forest assistant manager at the time, Alan Hill, just came up to me and asked if I'd be interested in playing for Forest. He said 'Let us have your number and I'll give you a ring' – and naively, I gave it to him.

"Suddenly, it dawned on me that I'd given a complete stranger my number! But a few days later, the phone did ring: 'Hello, this is Alan Hill – I've got Brian Clough on the line for you.' I was like 'Fuck me!' It felt like having a job interview over the phone! But it must have gone well, because about a month later he signed both me and my Coventry

Peter Beardsley saying to me when I was with the England squad, 'I wish I worked for your manager.' And I tell you what, I'm really pleased that I worked with him, because he made me the player I turned out to be."

He continued: "I like to think Clough helped to shape my personality, too. In modern football, you've got sports psychologists and people like that coming into the game. But I think the likes of Clough and Shankley were the first sports psychologists.

"Whenever you were at a low point he'd always put his arm round you and give you a lift. And he had a great instinct for knowing when you were at a high point and maybe starting to get ideas above your station. When I got picked for England for the first time, for instance,

'With Cloughie, every day was different. He made you run through horse shit, he made you run through stinging nettles – I don't know why!'

team-mate Ian Butterworth. Of course, I ended up staying for 12 years... although I think Ian only lasted 12 days!"

Unsurprisingly, Pearce had some interesting tales to tell about his former manager. "With Cloughie, every day was different," he said. "He made you run through horse shit, he made you run through stinging nettles – don't know why! And whenever we were going on a club trip down to London and we were heading for the M1, he used to get the coach to stop at East Midlands Airport and then insist we all got off to wave at the airport!

"Some of the more articulate players were like 'What's this all about? It's a fucking airport!' But I remember once

he called me into his office and said, 'Pearcey, I see you've been picked for England. Do you think you're good enough?' I was like, 'I'm not sure, boss.' And he said, 'Nor am I – now fuck off out of here!'

"Having been a young player then, I thought 'You bastard!' But when you're a little bit older and wiser, you realise that it's his way of saying 'Okay, well done, but keep your feet on the ground.' Unless he actually did think I was shit!"

To say Pearce's first game for England was a baptism of fire would be something of an understatement. "It was in 1987 when I got my first opportunity – Kenny Sansom

