

GSOH required

BY RICH FISHER

So, we're already two months into our exciting League One adventure – and it hasn't been the greatest of starts by Forest, to put it politely. Indeed, you know things are pretty bad for Reds when you have a spare ticket for a game and can't even give it away!

That was the exact position I found myself in for the recent home fixture against Brentford – due to the fact that one of the guys who sits on my row had decided to clear off on holiday, and duly left me in charge of his season ticket for the day.

"Great," I decided, "I can take a friend and introduce them the wonders of the mighty Reds!"

Or so I thought!

Despite rattling off text messages to at least a dozen friends and relatives offering the ticket, NO ONE was prepared to take me up on it! And a variety of spectacular excuses were offered too – my personal

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favourite being the rather blunt "I'm afraid I'm busy this afternoon removing clagnuts from my anus with a blowtorch – an activity I expect to find a tad more enjoyable than watching Forest!"

So in the end, despite my best efforts, my friend's seat remained empty – a situation that simply would not have happened in happier times.

But in hindsight, could anyone really blame those folk who turned down the opportunity? After all, the 2-1 defeat they missed out on was frankly dismal, with the Reds' defence looking an absolute shambles and the attack looking about as deadly as a sword made out of butter.

Quite what has caused the slow start is hard to pinpoint – some fans have blamed Gary Megson, some have blamed the players. Me, I can agree with each viewpoint to some extent.

But more than anything, I think the problem is one that simply needs patience – a

case of the new faces needing time to gel.

In fact, many parallels can be drawn with Frank Clark's first season as Forest manager back in 1992-93, when he pretty much had to build an entire new team following the Reds' relegation from the Premiership. That campaign got off to a similarly sluggish start, with Forest languishing in the bottom half of the table by early November.

But around that point, everything suddenly seemed to click. Stan Collymore started banging in goals like they were going out of fashion and come April 2004, automatic promotion was sealed.

Now, at the risk of tempting fate, I can't help but wonder if a similar turning point may have just taken place this season – seemingly inspired this time by the welcome return of Jack Lester. For as I write these words, the Reds have just chalked up two league wins in the space of four days, against Rotherham and Bristol City.

What's more, throughout the second of the two games in particular, the players appeared to have regained enough confidence to actually start playing football again, as opposed increasingly familiar sight of aimless hoofing.

Of course, football is full of false dawns, but I've got a good feeling about this one. And Forest returning to winning ways is certainly no more than us fans deserve – not only for our undoubted loyalty, but also for our unrelenting good humour in the face of all the trials and tribulations the last few years have thrown at us.

Take, for example, Forest's final home game of last season against Gillingham. With the Reds having had their relegation to League One confirmed the previous week, the likelihood of the game being a barrel of laughs seemed pretty remote. Yet on the day, the atmosphere was very much a case of 'party on down' with songs of defiance echoing around the City Ground throughout the game.

"The Championship... is upside down! The Championship is upside down! We're going up with the Millers... the Championship is upside down"

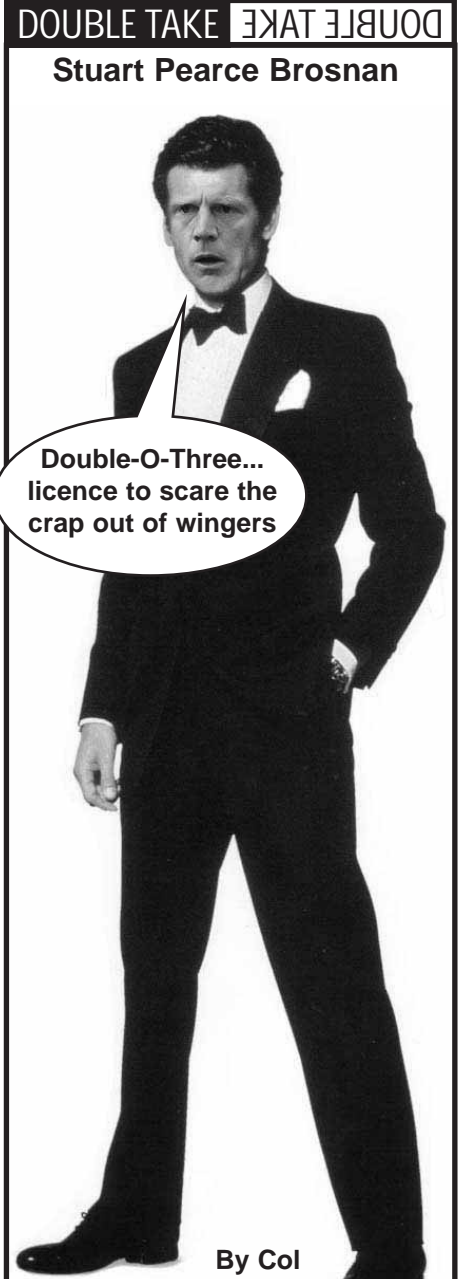
"Show me the way to Chesterfield, we got Platt instead of O'Neill..."

The icing on the cake came of course in the second half, when it became apparent

that Forest would be dragging Gillingham down to League One with them! It says a lot about how crap last season was that the only thing we could salvage from it was the perverse sense of satisfaction in relegating Andy Hessenthaler and his cronies – but nevertheless the taunts directed at the travelling Gills fans of "You're going down with the Forest!" were absolutely priceless.

It's no wonder really that we came third in a 'Best fans of the season' poll conducted by Radio Five Live – behind only Plymouth and Norwich. Let's just hope though that we can simply start sitting back and enjoying watching Forest again over the coming weeks, rather than having to keep making our own entertainment!

What are your favourite memories of Forest fans' enduring sense of humour? Write to rich@ltdf.co.uk



By Col