

Mark my words

Mark Arthur has been chief executive since 2000, during which time he has been the public face of Nigel Doughty's Forest. In January of this year, he agreed to a request from LTLF to answer questions put forward by fans...

What role do you have in buying and selling players?

The manager will identify the players to buy or sell. The board will discuss the parameters and I will deal with both the club and the agent before returning to the board with a package for ratification. I do not get involved in the selection of players.

What have been your best and worst decisions in your role at the club?

The best decision was to rebuild the supporter base through integration within our local community, which resulted in the award-winning sevens scheme and raising the average attendance from an average of 17,167 in 1999/00 to 24,754 in 2003/04. Even last season, the average crowd was 23,652. During that period of time, income from ticket sales has increased by 60%.

Worst decision was the endorsing the "We're serious about promotion" campaign.

If you could do one thing from the past differently, what would it be?

I believe we should not have sold Marlon Harewood to West Ham.

If you could change one decision that was made last season, what would it be?

Giving Joe Kinnear a permanent contract.

Can you explain the difference in attitudes from the club between the appointment and the dismissal of a manager? Kinnear is the best example

whereby the messages from the club throughout his tenure were positive, but after he left it was a very different story...

A very good question and I must be careful how I answer this.

We have a policy of employing a manager and backing him. Joe was very successful when he came in on a short-term contract and brought in some loan players who were out of contract at the end of the season.

The players turned things round, but once some were

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offered new deals, it became evident that they were going through the motions. We tried to rectify this by bringing in Mick Harford to support Joe, but in fairness to Mick who worked very hard to change things around, the dye was already cast.

Last year was very traumatic for everyone involved with the club. What are your hopes and aspirations for 2006?

We want promotion this year, but it maybe that the transition in the dressing room takes longer than we had hoped. If it does take another season then we will be better placed to cope with the requirements of League One.

Do you think that this football club will be in the Premiership in five years?

I had hoped to be there by now and I still hope to be there in five years' time. But there are many hurdles to overcome, not least the right combination of players at the club in terms of ability, character, age and desire. This is what we are trying to remedy at the moment and the bottoming out has proved to be a very difficult exercise. We will persist.

Our positive outlook for the future is based upon the strength of our supporter base and the fact that our chairman has dealt with the dreadful financial position that the club had been in for a number of years. We also remain a high profile brand that continues to attract support from the business sector.

What would you deem an acceptable finish this season? Play-offs, but I want promotion. In what period of time did you originally expect Megson to improve the situation? And would you change that opinion now?

Gary came to the board after about a month and identified the problems. We are trying to resolve the problems and are frustrated by how long the turn-around is taking. There is no timescale.

Do you think the recent

criticism aimed at Gary Megson is fair?

Gary will be the first to tell you that he will always accept his fair share of criticism. I find the criticism of the manager to have a negative impact on the team and club. He has had to make massive changes this season and not once has he been able to name his first choice team or indeed been able to select the same team week in and week out. He is a hard working, experienced manager who remains enthusiastic about the long term prospects of the club.

Will the club listen to the fans' wishes about the current managerial state? Megson has the poorest record of all our previous managers and fans who have been watching the club for over 25 years can note the six of the poorest performances all under his stewardship...

We are looking to have continuity of manager. That is a vital ingredient of all long-term successful clubs. Gary was selected for, amongst many things, his managerial pedigree and his fierce determination to be successful.

We are all acutely aware of the current situation and are backing him to do the job that we all desire.

We have heard rumours from various sources that players are unhappy at the club. There is allegedly unrest in the dressing room because of the manager and his attitude towards the players. If the manager has lost the dressing room, would you agree that a change is needed?

Rumours normally stem from those players who believe that a change of manager will result in them getting another contract or pension at the club.