



## The Voice's Thoughts

### The self-styled 'Voice of Football' speaks out again!!

Background information: The Voice is a Hartlepool fan and was exiled in Cairo and in the season 1999/2000 Hartlepool, Cheltenham and Torquay all went to the very last game of the season with a chance of reaching the play-offs at Wembley.

Before the solicitors of the PFA get involved, can I just state for the legal record what an athletic, talented, modest, intelligent, person Wayne Thomas is. Can I also state, for my own personal safety, what a marvellous bloke his Uncle Rob is. They just keep butting in when they are not wanted

Matson, Gloucester, May 1990

Travel back in time to Moat School, Matson. The young Voice is down from Hartlepool looking for his very first teaching job. Moat have just slaughtered bitter rivals Robinswood 3-2 in the Cup Final. The place is buzzing and everywhere I go the name of Wayne Thomas is on everyone's lips. In the Final apparently Wayne had chipped the keeper from twenty yards with consummate ease. Seconds later I spy the young Wayne deftly skipping round the whole of Year 6 before stroking a beautifully angled shot into the corner. An hour or so later, I am in the interview with all the school hierarchy. In the middle of it all there is a loud scream, the door bursts open and the school dinner lady, in tears, wails,

Sorry to interrupt, but (sobbing uncontrollably now) Wayne Thomas has broken his arm.

The room empties in seconds as everybody races out to see poor Wayne. Later on we all reconvene. Most of the Governors are red-eyed and snuffle occasionally. Mr. Brown, Chair of Governors speaks.

The other candidate has had a better offer so we have decided, with great reluctance, to offer you the job. Now, Mrs. Hey, where are the black armbands... .

Moat School, Matson, September 1990

The Voice assumes control of the Moat team. In our first game we lose 7-0 to Harewood. Martyn Ellis is finding it hard not to smile.

Unlucky there young, Alan. You need a bit more in the middle of the park. Somebody like Wayne Thomas.....

April 1991

A nice man called Mr. Owen phones up. Would we like a Friendly next week ?

I agree. Naturally enough the game is not as friendly as I had thought. Robinswood slaughter us. A few of the parents are muttering on the sidelines and the name Wayne Thomas is mentioned about fifteen thousand times.

Fieldings Club 1992

For many years Mr. Rob Thomas had generously sponsored the penalty competition for the GPSFA. As John McClelland of the B team won I somehow managed to get into Tony Hickey's official pictures. The Voice has NEVER pretended he is fashionable and the word dishevelled has been used on more than one occasion. Whatever. Suffice to say that the lean, mean and handsome Mr. Thomas was dressed immaculately in a beautiful made-to-measure three piece suit. By contrast, The Voice had suffered a torrid few hours in

Saintbridge Former Pupils Clubhouse celebrating the thrashing of the mighty Old Colstonians; ½ 4th XV and had then splashed most of a kebab down his front. His cheap BHS jumper had seen better days. As we all know, the camera rarely lies and so it was that the Voice was made to suffer as his portrait was exhibited alongside the formidable Rob Thomas. With no thanks to Mr. Hickey not only did all the parents have a good laugh, Ken was heard to make some cruel remarks and somehow the Citizen got hold of a copy. Thanks, Rob.

Stonehouse, Glos. June 1993

The fine men of Scratchers Cricket Club, Old Lanes End, Stonehouse, Glos. never pretended they were wonderful cricketers, but nobody really likes a cocky pair of thirteen year olds to ram home the message. We were short of a few players so I asked Wayne and Alan Duggan (Jnr.) to play for us. I was almost banned by the team and almost physically assaulted by Mr. Eddie Glew of the infamous Glew family, Westonbirt. Basically there is an unwritten gentlemen's rule that you don't play people on your team who are too good. This is Sunday Village Cricket, after all. Alan ran in to bowl and Mr. Glew pushed a comfortable single to mid-wicket. Alas, Mr. Glew hadn't realised who was fielding. Wayne sprinted at incredible speed, picked the ball up and returned a perfect throw to Alan who whipped the bails off, with Mr. Glew barely half way down the wicket. Glowering mightily he stormed off, swearing audibly. Our captain didn't dare bowl Wayne, but had to let him bat and, predictably, the poor men of Westonbirt suffered as the ball was clipped effortlessly to all parts of the ground. We won of course but at what cost? In the return fixture Martin, our wicket keeper, paid the penalty - when taking a call of nature on the boundary Mr. Glew accidentally switched on the electric fence. Cheers, Wayne.

Hartlepool, April 1997

The joy of living back in Hartlepool. Freezing winds and an agonisingly disappointing team. We are comfortably lashing Torquay United 2-0. I am behind the opposition dug-out. The manager tells one of the subs to warm up. The track-suited figure leaps into action. It is clear from his warm up exercises that this youth is far too quick for the Third Division. He looks vaguely familiar. On he trots. He immediately picks up the ball in the centre of the park, cruises past the heart of the Hartlepool midfield and weights a perfect ball into the path of the centre forward. 2-1. Minutes later he jinks past the whole of our back four and slides the ball just inside the far post. Sickeningly, I realise it is Wayne. 2-2. Is there no escape from this man? I lean over to shout some abuse, but looking at Wayne's strapping physique, I think better of it and wish I'd hit him when he wasn't bigger than me.

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt 2000.

You might have thought I was safe over here. The results come in over the World Service. Hartlepool, Cheltenham and Torquay are pushing for the last play-off spot. Cheltenham win, Rotherham beat Hartlepool at home and Torquay's results is obscured by interference. Later that night, safely in Cairo, I watch the Sky Sports News highlights show that we get when there is absolutely no sport anywhere on the planet worth covering. I drift into a light sleep but am disturbed by a roar from the telly.

That's an incredible piece of skill by Wayne Thomas. Torquay lead 2-0. They look as though they're heading for the play-offs now. What a player Wayne Thomas is.....  
AAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHHH. I have a pleasant dream that Spartak Siberia sign Wayne for their Arctic Cup campaign with his uncle as physio.

Saturday 6th May 2000

The omens are not good. Torquay are at home and Cheltenham and Hartlepool are away at Hull. Hartlepool have not won away from home all season. Incredibly we win and Torquay and Cheltenham lose. We are in the play-offs ! The chance to play at Wembley before the Twin Towers are demolished. I book a flight from Cairo just in case ! I dream about Hartlepool signing Wayne Thomas, but then I feel guilty. I might hate Wayne Thomas, but not that much .....

January 25th 2001

I am on a dive boat in the Red Sea. I have just been down to 20 metres and seen an incredible variety of colourful fish. We have just had breakfast. Surely, God is in Heaven and all is write with the world. I pick up my book, Left foot in the Grave, i;½ by Garry Nelson. It is a marvellous read about the inside of a football club. In the middle of all this The Voice feels a ghostly presence. The Voice reads on in trepidation. It cani;½t possibly be true, but it is.