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DISABILITY NEWS

NEWSLETTER FOR NEWCASTLE UNITED'S
DISABLED SUPPORTERS AROUND THE WORLD



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1. INTRODUCTION

The new season is upon us and although we have faced the expected difficult start, we're all behind the team and believe in them wholeheartedly.



The sensory room is now fully up and running, and is proving very popular. The wheelchair spaces have been increased, so we now have 234 slots available. There is more accessible seating in the Gallowgate. Change is always ongoing.

I was at a meeting with the disabled supporters association (NUDSA) and they are this month celebrating 20 years in business. They are a quite remarkable group of individuals, who never fail to inspire me. The main protagonists are Gareth Beard, who you may remember had an article in last month's newsletter and has been the Chair of NUDSA for years, Stephen Miller who is a highly decorated Paralympian, and writes in this newsletter, Ros Miller (Stephens mum / coach / boss) and the Leazes ender Joe Ayton who has been there since the start.

They have produced a magnificent magazine which celebrates their 20 years and looks back at the journey. It is well worth a read if you can get a copy. NUDSA have been instrumental in working with NUFC to invoke a better deal for disabled supporters, and I hope they are even stronger in 2028 when they celebrate their 30th.

Dave Balmer

Lead Safeguarding, Welfare & Equality Officer



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2. NEWCASTLE UNITED AND STEPHEN

Newcastle United Disabled Supporters Association (NUDSA), of which I'm Secretary, is about to turn 20 years old at the time of writing. To mark the milestone, we have produced a commemorative magazine working with Crosby Associates called '20 Years of NUDSA' – original title I know. I've had the pleasure of compiling all the memories, stories and photographs from the past 20 years to send to the publishers, so my mind is awash with nostalgia of all the history and events that have made NUDSA what it is today. We are very proud of the outcome and if you would like a copy of the magazine please get in touch.

My connection with NUFC started pretty much as soon as I could walk and talk, I was born within walking distance of St. James' Park at the Fleming Memorial Hospital, I was always going to be a Toon fan. My first game was Kevin Keegan's testimonial, I was just 5 at the time and the only thing I remember about the game is the helicopter that took Kevin away at the end – I remember thinking that all games must end like that.

My parents would regularly take me to the training ground at Benwell to meet the players – back then pretty much anyone could go in and watch the players train. The first time I went I was just around three years old – I met players like Peter Beardsley and Paul Gascoigne, but the player I probably made the greatest connection with was Kevin Keegan.

Me and Kevin would go on to have a good relationship over the years and he took an interest in my career in athletics – before my first Paralympics in 1996 I spoke to him at the training ground at Maiden Castle and he gave me the advice to 'just throw it further than everyone else', great advice Kev! When I returned from the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics with a Gold medal, Kevin invited me to go onto the pitch before a match and have my photo taken, he assumed I'd want the then new world record fee signing Alan Shearer on the photo, so Alan came along, but when Kevin asked me who my favourite player was, I said Pavel Srnicek, so he went into the dressing room and got Pav. I then joked to them that I was glad I missed the Charity Shield while I was away at the Paralympics – we got beat 4-0 by Man United in case you forgot. I went on to have great relationships with both Pav and Alan. The 90s are still where my fondest memories of football and NUFC lie, the football was exciting and real and honest, as were the players. There seemed a genuine connection with the fans, the likes of which I don't think we'll see again – it was just before the mega silly money from TV and sponsorship started pouring in to take the game away from its grass roots foundations.

When Kevin returned as manager in 2007, it was clear it wasn't the same. Kevin agreed to write the foreword to my autobiography at that time and speaking with him I could tell he wasn't enjoying it second time round, maybe the game and the players had just changed too much for Kevin's management style.



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2. NEWCASTLE UNITED AND STEPHEN CONTINUED.

In my view he's still the best manager I've seen at NUFC, closely followed by Sir Bobby Robson of course. Bobby came very close to recreating the love affair between the club and the fans that Kevin had, they were both similar personalities and had the same great man-management approach. I met Bobby lots of times and he was a great supporter of mine. We were once both invited to the opening of Bede's World and had our photo taken with the Queen, Bobby's wife Elsie told me recently that the photo from that day was on the wall at the top of their stairs in their house, it's quite surreal to think Bobby would see my face every time he went up the stairs.

I've supported NUFC pretty much all my life and it's pretty clear that this club is about the fans and the City. A one city club and the most Northern club in the top tier of English football, I may be an idealistic fool but for me success at NUFC isn't about winning trophies or spending ridiculous amounts of money in the transfer market, it's about feeling that you are part of something and that the people at the club really care about the fans and the city, when that happens, St. James' Park can be a wonderful place.

I'm pretty realistic and accept that we can't compete financially with the bigger clubs in the Premier League, NUFC's strength has always been the passion of the fans, that passion can sometimes be a negative but when it's positive and everyone buys into it – it's a force to be reckoned with. Current manager Rafa Benitez is certainly trying to harness that passion.

It's great to see the work NUFC are doing in the community and we really appreciate the support NUDSA receive – together we are making great strides in disability provisions at the club. We may not have control of events on the pitch, but we can improve things off the pitch and through working with the community NUFC are trying to do that.

Stephen Miller

MBE, BSc Hons, HON DCL

Paralympian | Speaker | Writer



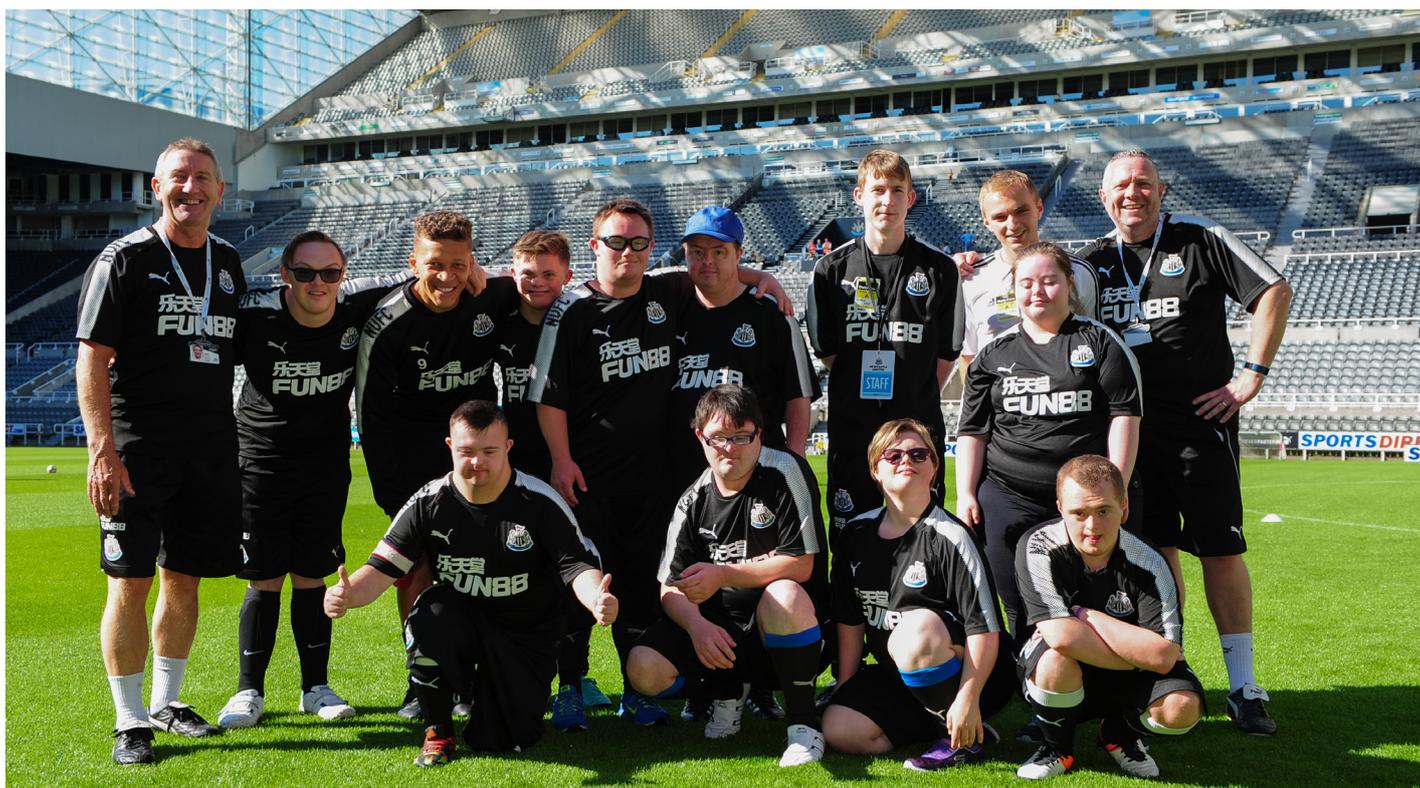


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3. FOUNDATION NEWS

Adults Disability Football



Since 2009, Newcastle United Foundation has been providing professional disability football coaching to adults and children with a range of disabilities. Taking an inclusive approach to football, they ensure everyone can enjoy the beautiful game.

The Foundation disability football programme now works with over 1,300 people with a range of disabilities. They have an FA licence for two regional talent centres, one for blind players and one for deaf and partially sighted. Newcastle United foundation disability football clubs include: Downs syndrome, power chair, cerebral palsy, frame, deaf, blind, partially sighted and amputee.

Disability football is supported by BT Sport and the Premier League, the FA and the Newcastle United first team, and there are a number of venues across the North East where you could take part, please check out the link to find out where.

nufoundation.org.uk/projects/adults-disability-football-coaching



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4. BOX OFFICE NEWS

We have listed below the away fixtures leading up-to Christmas and the links from the respective websites that provide our disabled fans with information about accessibility.

6th October – Man United

manutd.com/en/tickets-and-hospitality/accessibility

27th October – Southampton

southamptonfc.com/supporter-services/disabled-supporters

26th November – Burnley

burnleyfootballclub.com/fans/disabled-supporters

5th December – Everton

evertonfc.com/content/fans/disabled-supporters

15th December – Huddersfield Town

htaafc.com/fans/disabled-supporters

Don't forget Jan is here to assist with ticketing enquiries and has been for 24 years. She can be contacted on disabilitysupport@nufc.co.uk and indeed here is Jan (She is the one on the left) and a profile so that those of you who have spoken to the wonderful Jan but haven't been able to put a face to the voice now know her.

Q - How long have you worked at Newcastle United?

A - Started here May 9th 1994 so it's my silver wedding next year!!

Q - Have you always worked in the box office?

A - Yes, I also worked for the Rugby and Ice Hockey back when Sir John was here.

Q - What is your favourite part of your job?

A - My role within the box office is varied, I enjoy all of it but get great satisfaction from being able to help people.





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4. BOX OFFICE NEWS CONTINUED.

Q - In the 22 years you have worked at Newcastle united what has been your highlight?

A - Many highlights going to Barcelona in the champions league – going to Wembley 3 times even though we got beat – seeing the growth of the stadium having to go to our office with a hard hat on!! Working with a lot of special people many of who are now friends for life. I have also met some amazing supporters and have a great relationship with them.

Q - It is NUDSA's 20 year celebrations this year, what is your memories of NUDSA?

A - When I started NUDSA hadn't formed and I wasn't initially involved with them until some years later. I then got introduced to Ros and Stephen as I was given the opportunity to work with our disabled supporters and I am very proud to have been involved with Nudsa for many years now and know many of its members personally. I have seen how much work they do for disabled supporters and very much admire how much hard work goes in to running it.

Q - What do you enjoy doing when not at work?

A - Outside of work I enjoy walking, socialising and going on holiday - I also love football.

5. SENSORY ROOM UPDATED

The sensory room is now up and running. We have two stewards who ordinarily work every day in the field of autism and hidden disabilities who are now working match-days. The room has been proving very popular and has been booked every match so far. We hope as the message spreads we can give as many people as possible the chance to experience the room and viewing area.

Please contact dave.balmer@nufc.co.uk if you require further information on the room and how to make use of it.