



THE CHAIRMAN

# DANNY HUNTER

**Tonight, we welcome The Directors, Management, players and supporters of Altrincham FC to the LV Bet Stadium, Meadow Park. We hope they enjoy their stay with us and have a safe journey home later.**

Well, what can I say about this incredible moment in our club's history, what can I say about my incredible manager, about my hard-working staff, about our magnificent dressing room, and about you my vociferous, mad, crazy, funny and completely partisan set of Wood Army and old school supporters.

You not only travelled to AFC Bournemouth in your numbers with hope in your hearts, but you turned an away Championship Club's Stadium into a mini-Meadow Park and a home game atmosphere. Only because you did that, only because you brought

our town's underdog mentality, its underdog love and passion for our club, did you drag our Manager and our players over the finishing line in those torturous dying injury time minutes.



I often warn you all, haha, that "God does love a trier" and so it turned out, as our football clubs' brief FA

Cup history, has now been aired and shared by millions on TV. I had hoped and dreamt that our FA Cup game against AFC Bournemouth last Sunday would be written in the stars by my Father and the footballing gods. I wanted to believe it could end up with a victory at the Vitality Stadium, Bournemouth, and it did on a never to be forgotten FA Cup Sunday, that entertained a nation that always loves an underdog.

Those of you amongst our 1,500 travelling Boreham Wood fans...oh my God, you sang your hearts out from the moment you got onto the official club coaches, from the moment you hit the Bournemouth hotels, their restaurants, their pubs, arrived on the stadium concourse and from the time you took your seats.....in fact from the very first minute to the last whistle, which signalled footballing party scenes that have never been seen by our club or our small working class town.



Like me, I'm sure you will never forget Ricko's 38th minute strike, as the ball in slow motion firstly hit the post before rolling gloriously over the white line and goooooaaaaaallllllll.....as we all arched ourselves up to follow the balls' path, we gasped as we waited in anticipation on the players, referees

and linesman's reactions before realising we were having a moment and had somehow gone in front.... scenes, scenes and more scenes.



I know that moment and goal will forever and a day be re-lived by the Wood Army and that incredulous feeling we all felt at half time, though not quite believing or admitting to ourselves that a giant killing involving the Wood was on, and Goodison Park and Everton was coming into touching distance.

If, before the game and up until we went 1 up, you really did have true belief, then you're a star and God bless you, because I wouldn't or couldn't let myself believe that the impossible was ever going to become possible - especially not with 45 minutes plus injury time to suffer my way through.

In truth those final 15 minutes were the longest 15 minutes of my life and, like you, no doubt, I kicked every ball, challenged or questioned every decision and cheered every Wood throw in or any stoppage in play, as we tried to kill a game without the ball as AFC Bournemouth laid siege to our goal.

Substitutes by the opposition were made and Billing going clear and putting the ball onto the top of our net in the 75th minute was a huge let off. Then there was Taye's double save and the Bournemouth disallowed goal in the 77th minute - oh my God - could it happen?

By now I couldn't breathe, and with heart pumping I watched the Cherries star man Dominic Solanke dragging his shot wide in the 92nd minute - incredibly we still led but with jelly legs everywhere and only hope left in our hearts, we were digging deep again and somehow we hung on through the rest of five minutes of mentally torturous injury time - oh my God, we'd done it, we'd actually done it - Luke and the lads had against the odds achieved the impossible, and history and immortality was being rewritten for them.



I watched my underdog town go crazy, I watched our club, my family, my friends, my staff, my manager, and our team become an unbowed band of brothers and sisters, where everyone of us who'd arrived and taken over the South Coast on that blustery night in February looked on in disbelief.

We were sharing and loving every second of the victory, because we

knew we were sharing a special moment in our club and town's history, and so we enjoyed each other's company to the max as we witnessed the most historic and iconic moment in our club's existence and, oh dear, those very special scenes, we wanted them to last forever.....

Those incredible scenes I'm told were also being shared by everyone from our town and wider community in their living rooms, kitchens and in our local pubs, as grown men and women were jumping around and hugging each other with impromptu tears and an outpouring of pure joy, love and emotion. All these scenes were unscripted in truth and no doubt had to be seen to be believed - but the moment was enjoyed by everyone because everyone instinctively knew that these special moments were a historic moment in our lifetime and we were all sharing it together as it would, firstly, never be forgotten but secondly, more probably, it would never happen again.

Those scenes were in truth 74 years in the making, they had begun with Bill O'Neil and our founders back in 1948 just after the war and they have taken 23 years of my life to help create. History that night truly showed me what a small club, with a big heart and a town's unity can actually achieve, and it simply felt wonderful.

I've always been a realist and often cite that football always does what you least expect it to.....the unexpected though would certainly need to be the order of the day, in the case of the mountain to climb that was AFC Bournemouth. I honestly thought that the unexpected this time, was possibly one big step too

far for us, as we were playing a top, top Championship club in their own back yard and for me that was simply mission impossible....but we replaced Tom Cruise with a Wood Army and 'mission impossible' was incredibly then accomplished by Mr Luke Garrard, his management team and his players and we will always say the same words when describing our night of nights....words like, "unbelievable, insurmountable, dreamland, incredible, amazing, mission impossible" and in truth I could go on and on....

On the coach journey home, I had the privilege and honour of having my manager, members of my inner circle and my players all to myself and as I sat there and remembered the night and those no longer with us, I shed a tear but was in truth the happiest man in the world and I hoped that 2-hour journey would never end.

The coach was simply for me a reward for a lifetimes' work, as it was joyous, it felt like my footballing family had come of age and then there was the songs, the jokes, the beers, the tears, plus the laughter and togetherness that will long live in my memory. I simply had this overriding feeling of thanks to my Town, a feeling of pride, of gratitude and in all honesty when I looked at my phone, over three hundred emails, texts and messages to answer on the journey, as my phone and my iPad had gone nuclear.

So, for those of you who travelled to the South Coast on that history making night and weekend....well, we were there together and are, I feel, now bound by an unbreakable spirit of togetherness and camaraderie. I also know most of you who are here tonight will be here to secure your

Everton FA Cup tickets and your seats up to Goodison Park on our official travel club coaches - so can I thank you all for your incredible support from the bottom of my heart.

Anyway, back to tonight's National League game against a very good Altrincham team, who have already taken a deserved point of us up at their place. They appear to be coming out of their own sticky patch form wise but we simply have to find a way this evening to take maximum points if we want to achieve what we quietly aspire to and that's a shot of getting into the English Football League.

Tonight, because of our FA Cup run, this is another catch up game but it has possibly become one of the biggest league games in our history, as a win will give us a real chance of further cementing ourselves within the Play-offs and it would keep us bang on course to finish in the top 5 or better.... we already know any complacency tonight will have Altrincham jumping all over us and we also know that just one bad week in football at our level can derail all our good work in just eight short days.

**Let's not allow that to happen, let's do what's needed tonight and let's move on to Maidenhead United on Saturday united as a club and with optimism and belief in our hearts.**

**Take care stay safe**

*Danny*