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How does this work?

Danny Smith: Blues and me

11 January 2010 By Danny Smith

Birmingham: It's Not Shit loves Birmingham and has loads of news and features. If you're new here, you may want to subscribe to our RSS feed, follow us on Twitter or get updates on bloody Facebook.

I was watching and saying manly things when Birmingham City almost beat Man Utd on Saturday, but first, a story;

When I was younger I was deemed shy and somewhat bookish, if you would have asked me at the time I probably would have more described myself as "mysterious" or "a lone wolf" proving not only was I a bit socially awkward, but also a bit of a tool. The cure for this, my matriarchal Nan decided, was to get a job in a pub as soon as I was old enough. The pub was, and by all accounts still is, quite rough. When I arrived for my first shift the manager, a lurching ex-police officer, took me to one side and explained that the pub was mainly a Zulu* pub and if there was any trouble I should just go get him, referring to a group of blokes in the corner he said:

'See the big one?'
'Can't miss him' I said
'He's one of the Lieutenants give him whatever he wants and I'll square it with him later'
'OK' I said
'See him' pointing a particularly violent looking one with a fist full sovereign rings 'he's a nice bloke but can get a bit nasty when he's had a drink' I didn't want to point out to my new manager the table of empties in front of this guy so I just nodded my head.
'And that guy over there' he started
'Is Uncle ***, my, you know, uncle' I interrupted
'You'll be fine' he said as he walked away leaving me to figure out the pumps and glasses myself.

I have a complicated relationship with football, and more specifically the Blues, that goes beyond me being the sort of fat kid they stuck in goal when I was a child and never developing the sort of zeal that most other men seem to have. For a start I grew up in a family that fervently supported Birmingham City and developed an interest in the results if only so I knew what mood all the adults would be in for the rest of the weekend. But I never really enjoyed it that much, not actually disliking it, but never really seeing the point, I never developed the appreciation of the sport just a passing interest in the results.

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Birmingham City v Tampa Bay Rowdies (USA) 1980, originally uploaded by footysphere.

Not loving football is a uniquely alienating experience for a man. For a start it seems to be the default conversation starter for men, who are, and lets be honest here, on the whole emotionally crippled and socially backwards at best. A common ground that allows us to interact according to shared experience and familiar rules. Lack of this knowledge will make most men seem untrustworthy and somehow feminine. So a learnt to bluff a good football conversation, and learnt quick.

There was an entire season that I went to nearly every Blues game, I was working as a security guard and got to see the inner workings. Behind the scenes it was surprisingly run-down, the player's tunnel being a concrete corridor connected with rotting wooden gates. It was littered with the corpses of Saint John Ambulance volunteers that had dared to make jokes about Steve Bruce's nose 'Leave them as a warning to others' he would growl when asked about clearing them up.

I soon became friends with the security boss and got the cushy job on the 'Snatch Team', we sat in the observational office and were sent to eject any trouble makers or known hooligans banned from the ground, the paid security were not the people you had to watch, it was the unpaid stewards that would take people to blind spots in the security cameras.

Since then, mainly because many of my friends are massive Blues fans, I still occasionally watch some matches in pubs but I'm strictly there for the company and bonding that football provides not the games themselves.

Unless it's against the Villa, I hate the Villa.

*As we all know the Zulus being the name for the hooligan gang that associated themselves with Birmingham City Football Club so called because of the amount of black people that made up part of the gang, which was unusual at the time.**

**does anyone else feel a weird sort of pride in that?

The opinions of Danny Smith do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers of this blog, its affiliates, or any sane adult human beings. He currently lives in your cupboard, watching, always watching.

Tags: Birmingham, danny smith, football

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What a wonderful article - I can't say much more than that. Thanks.

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Two memories from the east side of the train traveling into town along the Bordesley Viaduct in the 1950s - the Singer Car factory and St. Andrews. The former is long gone, the latter is why I am a Bluenose to this day and for ever. Yes, a great posting!

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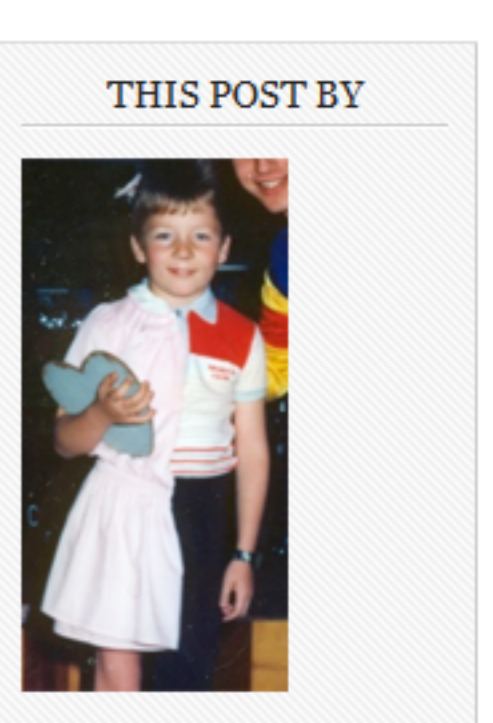
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BiNS is mostly by Jon Bounds, a Birmingham based social web consultant, producer and writer. You can hire him to work on your stuff, or follow him on twitter. There's also the odd bit of stuff from Danny Smith.

Feel free to send us anything you're interested in - or think we might be. If you've got gigs to promote, best to chuck them on the talk board.