



LIFE MAGAZINES

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OPINION - Sven's Men

The die hard remnants of Nottingham's local football fans will have noticed some dramatic changes at Notts County over the past few months. In fact, anyone who watches the local news with any regularity will know about the goings on at County. The club has been bought by a Middle East Financial Consortium and one of the new owners' first acts was to hire Sven Goran Eriksson as Director of Football. Sven claims that he intends to take County from the depths of the Second Division to the Premiership within five years.

For those of you who take no interest in Football and don't watch the news I should explain about Sven. He leapt to prominence in 2001 when he took over as England Manager and managed to get our underperforming national team to the 2002 world cup and on to the quarter finals. He stuck around for the next five years and took England through to the final eight in both Euro 2004 and the 2006 World Cup, a seriously impressive record. Sven has an eye for the ladies too; as well as his main squeeze, a stunning Italian lady called Nancy, he has been linked with Ulrika Jonsson and some woman called Fire Alarm; a rap singer perhaps? For all these reasons it is obviously a major coup to lure him to struggling Notts County, not just for the club but for the city as well.

The question on everyone's lips is not whether he will succeed in helping the club climb three divisions in five years, I've every hope that he will, but where Sven and the procession of highly paid topflight footballers that will no doubt follow him are going to live. Now, I know that footballers sometimes get a bad press with reports of roasting (whatever that might be) groupies and using their Range Rovers as weapons of mass destruction not to mention brawling in night clubs. It's even been suggested that some of them are not all that bright

and that because of all the above you might not want a footballer as a neighbour.

This strikes me as rather unfair. It's a bit like saying that all lorry drivers are serial killers because of Peter Sutcliffe and Steve Wright (not the radio 2 DJ obviously.) Footballers bring money and glamour to an area and have the same effect on house prices as a school at the top of the league table. So, if having a few premiership footballers living down the road is a good thing, what is going to attract footballers to your town?

This is easy; footballers like plenty of pretty girls and a plethora of clubs and bars to meet them in, big houses with large drives to park their Aston Martins on and, ideally, other footballers nearby to hang about with. When I look at all the nice places we distribute magazines to, straight away it's obvious that the big houses are in plentiful supply. Admittedly, the clubs and bars might be thin on the ground but what's wrong with our delightful local pubs or, failing that, I'm sure they can afford the taxi fare to Hockley. Nor is there any shortage of lovely ladies, in my experience anyway. As for the proximity of fellow footballers, well, where one goes others will follow. Just look what happened when the Beckhams moved to Alderley Edge.

Before you get too excited though, there are a few problems: Sven managed to lure former England player Sol Campbell to County but he left after one match. After a scant three months in the job Sven has already been linked to roles managing the North Korean and Swedish national teams through the World Cup. County are currently fifth in the Second Division, have just fired their manager and the new owners are under investigation by the FA, who want to know where all the money is coming from. Is it all just a dream? I really hope not.

Howard Clemmow