

25<sup>th</sup> April  
2024

# PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

All the news from Roundwood ahead of Saturday's trip to Bristol City...



Steve Evans

## On the a whirlwind start to life back with Rotherham United and his reflections on the draw with Birmingham...

"Of course the performance had lots of plusses to it, didn't it?"

"It still had lots that we need to get on the training ground and work with the boys as to how we want to play, but certainly in respect of the players producing a performance full of grit, determination and effort - which is the minimum for any side I've managed - I think the boys did that.

"Some big players and some big characters stood up.

"They had probably advised and thought they might not play again this season and then you get them in the office and you have a chat and persuade them that it's worth pulling on that Rotherham United shirt and they've done us proud with their performances.

"The training ground has been upbeat, we've been working incredibly hard and we've got our last away game of the season and we're going to a brilliant stadium to face a real good opponent coached by a good manager."



Steve Evans

## On putting his arm around a player to make them feel loved and whether he enjoys that aspect of management...

"I think it is the people outside of the clubs who don't see it and don't want to see it because we produce individual performances that make it good collectively.

"Myself and Paul [Raynor] have tried to do it all of our careers and it is quite rightfully why I am still in touch with most of the players that we set on a wonderful journey, the likes of; Ivan Toney, Siriki Dembele, Charlie Taylor and Chris Wood. Lads that perhaps needed to be loved at certain stages in their career.

"My job is to come in, assess, analyse and make sure that those players feel a warmth from their manager because they have to want to play for themselves and the supporters, but they also have to want to play for the manager.

"Perhaps a little bit of it has worked with some of the players coming back because they feel loved and they feel they want to play and if I was a player, I'm sure I'd want that."

## On whether he already has a list of targets in place ahead of the summer recruitment drive...

"Of course we have ideas on players that we've come across who we've been made aware, certainly since I've come to Rotherham United, that they've been made available because your phone rings a lot more when you come to a club with this stature.

"The most important thing for me is to assess fully what we've got and not let any players slip through the net.

"It's the first thing that happened when I went into Stevenage. I had to have a good assessment of the playing squad with 10 games to go and fighting to stay up.

"We have some names, Rob Scott has some names and we've sat down as two people that are really determined to get this football club on the right track.

"We start ahead of the game in our knowledge of players."

### Last Meeting

Rotherham United 1 v 2 Bristol City  
Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

A late flurry of goals at AESSEAL New York Stadium made for an entertaining encounter for the neutrals watching live on Sky. Tommy Conway poked the visitors in front before Tyler Blackett restored parity, only for Conway to strike again in the 95<sup>th</sup> minute.

### Recent form

Bristol City

W D W D D

### Stopping shots to the Max

Robins 'keeper Max O'Leary has the third best save percentage in the Sky Bet Championship this season, trailing only Bradley Collins and Max Hermansen. The Irish shot-stopper's save percentage currently sits at 74%!

Steve Evans

## **On Ollie Rathbone and Hakeem Odoffin having their options activated and whether further talks around new deals for the pair will take place...**

"As you can imagine I've spoken to most, if not all the staff and players, and obviously the boys with the options we have a fixed amount of time really to speak to them.

"I've seen Haks and Ollie many times and I didn't like them when they played against my teams! I thought both of them were really good on Saturday and gave us everything that we asked. We need more and we've spoken about that, but I've spoken to the players and also Rob Scott and Paul Douglas.

"I told both players we'd be taking up the options but with a view that when we come back in the summer we will have a look at doing something more longer-term that makes them feel more loved if you like.

"Both have got big parts to play and we want our good players here."

## **On whether he has also felt a 'lift' around the place since his return...**

"Very much so.

"In and around the town and even further wide it has been incredible.

"The response is that they want their team to play 'like' the Rotherham United that they've become famous for - not over my time or as far as Paul Warne's time or well before that in the times at Millmoor. It was always known as a team that had industry all over it and maybe we've gone away a little bit from the true DNA of this football club which is of good players, who have lots of quality but work incredibly hard to make the differentials up when we're at the level such as the Championship."



Jordan Hugill

## **On trying to end a tough season on a positive note...**

"I know what I can bring to a team, but unfortunately this year that's not been good enough - both individually and as a collective.

"It's always nice to hear a bit of praise, though.

"I was delighted with how I played at the weekend, although a goal would've been nice.

"As I said, we've not been good enough this year and, for me and my professionalism, I want to finish as positively as we possibly can - I'm sure everybody in that changing room is just the same.

"Hopefully I can carry on with performances like that through the summer and into the new season.

"I'd like to think everyone wants to finish the season on a high, regardless of where we find ourselves."

Steve Evans

## **On how much it would mean to get the club that elusive away win...**

"It probably feels that it was so long ago that Tommy Docherty was the manager to some Millers fans!

"We pride ourselves on being able to get points on the road because your home form is absolutely massive in whatever you will achieve in a season but you need to be capable of going away and getting a win.

"How you get that win could be subjective to playing really well, to having a structure and a defensive performance to get the result.

"It is far too long for any club not to have won an away game and it's a frightening stat, but it is one that I'm sure that it is one that players, coaching staff and myself will be doing our best to put right."

## **On Cafu and Peter Kioso's injury situations having been forced to withdraw them against Birmingham City...**

"Both won't be available for us on Saturday, there's no point me dressing that up.

"It's nothing major with either and it is probably the best part of two weeks but when it happens with two weeks to go, it is never ideal.

"I thought Cafu was having a real influence on the game and statistically he got on the ball in more areas that you want him to.

"Peter Kioso is a really good player. My mind boggles as to why he was in League One when he's a Rotherham United player because he was excellent and stunning at times for Peterborough United."

"I've had a chat with PK and told him that he's very much in the plans and we lose those two but not for the longer term."