We'll Always Be Blue: AFC Wimbly Womblys #77

AFC Wimbly Womblys
https://youtube.com/watch?v=UCH3lrwGi3g
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/UCH3lrwGi3g

Hello, and welcome to the FA Cup. My name is John Green, I'm the manager of the AFC Wimbledon Wimbly Womblys. Today we're taking on Cardiff City, and out of a show of respect to Cardiff City and their supporters, we put Cardiff City in blue and the AFC Wimbledon Wimbly Womblys will be wearing their away yellow. That's actually what today's video is about. Seb Brown also wearing yellow, so we all match today, that's nice.

I wanna talk about football, professional football in England, the differences between that and the American franchised sports system and talk about what owners can and cannot do, or should and should not do with the clubs that they buy whether a football club ultimately belongs to its owner or ultimately belongs to its community, which of course the central question--

Is this guy's name really Ashley Boroughbridge? I mean has there ever been a more, more English name than Boroughbridge?

It's an important question obviously from the perspective of AFC Wimbledon supporters because, you know, Wimbledon FC was taken away by, you know, bad owners, in combination with, in my opinion, bad decisions by the England, uh, English Football Association.

Cardiff City are a club with a long and storied history. They have always worn blue. In fact, if you watch Cardiff City games these days, it's completely surreal because everyone, almost every single person in the stands is wearing blue, and throughout the game, they sing, "We'll always be blue, we'll always be bluuuuue, we're Cardiff City, we'll always be blue." And yet, the players are playing in red. This is because their owner, Vincent Tan, who really is, for better or worse, a bit Bond villain-y, their owner, Vincent Tan, has chosen to rebrand the club to try to make them appeal more to a global audience, especially an Asian audience, and he feels that red is a better color for doing that and they should, you know...rebranded the everything about--oh god--everything about the club.

But this idea of having your club's colors taken away from you or, you know, big swaths of your club's identity taken away from you, its very problematic. Now, you know from an owner's perspective I guess you could say I own the club and I can pretty much do whatever I want, which is basically what--ohh offside--which is basically what Vincent Tan has said, he said like, well it's my decision and there was even a Cardiff City supporter saying that to him, that we'll always be blue to him, and he responded by laughing and saying always be red.

And I know that it's just--oh oh ooooooooooohhhhhh! He scores in the loo, he scores with a shoooeee, green eggs and Sheringham, he just scored on you. Probably could have taken that one down an octave in retrospect. I was just so excited. This is world class skill level ladies and gentlemen, we're playing Cardiff City, they're no joke but we're no joke either. We're still resting bald John Green and other John Green. They may come in for the second half, in fact I think they likely will. But, um, that's a good strong goal from green eggs and Sheringham. Nice, nice opening moment for the Wimbly Womblys and then look, look suddenly more space. Why did you run past the ball? Who did you think it was for?

Anyway. This has been a real, like, I think it's a lot of the reason, now I ---uh, oh, oof Seb had it covered-- obviously this has been a big issue in football with Hull, the owners want to change the name of the team from Hull City AFC to Hull Tigers, it's gonna become a bigger issue. And the reason it's different than it is American sports is that in a lot of ways the team, in European football the teams really belongs to their communities because you aren't guaranteed like you are in the franchise system we have in the US to stay in the same league that you've always been in. If you're a Chicago Cubs fan, you know that the Cubs are going to be in Major League Baseball regardless.

With the football team, the football team is made of its supporters in the sense that if its supporters abandoned the club or even like lessened their support for the club, the club itself suffers. And that's not as true, that direct relationship isn't there. There's also the question of connection to community, I mean I think certainly Baltimore Colts fans felt, uh, Cleveland Browns fans, other teams have felt hard done when their clubs have felt in the franchise system, I don't want to dismiss those fans experiences. But because there is this great tradition in English football especially, or and Welsh as well, of a team being truly, whether it's owned by it's fans or not, truly being a product of its community--that was a foul, you fouled me, you were naughty and you should get a yellow card, you pushed me down from behind it hurt my feelings and I fell on the ball and that made me uncomfortable. That, see that hurts, that hurts my solar plexus is aching now.

Um, and I think owners, it's hard, I know that it's hard because owners feel like, oh I have bought a thing. But you haven't bought a thing, you bought the right to be the caretaker for a thing for a while. And if you don't, if you're not, if that's not the role that you want, then you shouldn't buy a football club, you should buy a proper company. You know, you can rebrand Circuit City if you want, you can rebrand Noodles & Company, but you can't rebrand a football team because the brand doesn't belong to the owners, I would argue. Like, the brand, the colors of the club, the idea of the club, the identity of the club belongs to its supporters and no person, owner, player, manager, no person is bigger than that club, because the club is made out of its community of supporters.

That for me is the central idea of football and I know that's asking a lot of owners to respect it, but there are lots and lots and lots of owners who do, in fact I think the majority--oh god, *intake of breath* everything worked out better than expected.

I think the majority of owners in English football have a basic respect for that. But the only way that you can ensure it is by doing what AFC Wimbledon has done, the real life AFC Wimbledon, but also we in the Wimbly Wombly community. We own the team, I am owner of AFC Wimbledon, my children are owners of AFC Wimbledon, and the men and women who started the club more than a decade ago started it with the idea that forever after--why are you guys complaining you should happy with each other you played great you're up one nil against Cardiff City in the FA cup on world class skill level calm down, let's enjoy ourselves for a second. Good lord.

You know, sometimes Meredith I feel like there's not enough love. Particularly when it comes to Sheringham and Strutton. They don't have enough love for their midfield. We don't score that goal without the support of our midfield. Alright we're bringing on John Green and John Green. Arguably should've made more substitutions before the start of this game. Also going to bring on Les Moore, scored a goal last game. This is going to be a real tough game for the Gaulden Child. Gonna be a long, long hard Gaulden Child slog, no two ways about it but he's gonna do it Meredith, he's gonna pull through. He's only nine years old he can run for ninety minutes.

So I think, the reason I wanted to play Cardiff City in blue today, even though we almost always play in Wimbly Wombly blue and it's a weird thing for us to play in our away kit, is because I don't think, I just don't think it's a legitimate choice, I don't think the owners should get to decide that stuff. And I think it's really bad for the club when they do it. I think Cardiff, a lot, not all of the reasons certainly, but a lot of the reason that Cardiff had such a difficult season this year, in the Premier league, is that there was a lot of friction between the club and its owners. We had this in Liverpool when the

Americans Hicks and Gillett were the owners of the Liverpool football club because they didn't understand the club, they didn't have, you know, they didn't know who it mattered to and why. And if you don't understand that, it's like if you own a business and you have a deep failure to understand your customers.

Ultimately the people who make Cardiff's football club the, you know, the community institution and the sporting institution are not the people who are going to support the club because you changed the colors to red, they're the people who supported the club in blue and that's going to continue to be the case. I think ultimately this strategy will fail just as I think it will fail to call the Hull tigers. That stuff has to happen authentically and it has to happen from inside the fan community or in my experience it doesn't work.

There's an analogy here in the world of online communities, I think, which is that--oh god, oh no, oh no, Seb! Oh, thank you Seb, thank you Seb, thank you Seb. Let's take a look at it again. Seb Brown, that boy knows how to get down, get it, good job Sebby. Alright, we got to defend a corner kick here in the 64th minute, this is nervous stuff. Nice job, good good good job.

In online communities I think you also have to, I think you have to hold up, lift up the best of what is made, good job Seb, but you have to let people make stuff, you have to kind of give people control over the community. That's scary to do because you're like, these are my viewers, like this is my community, but like, you know Wimbly Wombly players are always best when they're named by you, the songs are always best when you come up with them. The jokes are always best when they emerge in comments. That's true in Nerdfighteria as well, I think. Like Nerdfighteria only works because the word nerdfighters was coined by nerdfighters, the phrase don't forget to be awesome was popularized by nerdfighters, French the llama, the evil baby orphanage, so many other things in Nerdfighteria like came from, they came from the community they didn't come from directives on high that Hank and I as the leaders of the community had announced that we would now say don't forget to be awesome all the time. You know, it was one among a million things that I said and it was one that the community responded to and I think like that's the only way, in my experience at least, that these communities can really grow and thrive is when they're empowered to.

The great thing about Wimbledon as a football club is that there's no intermediary between the fans and the ownership because the fans are the ownership. Now I'm sure that can be challenging too it's challenging to have a lot of people collectively run a football club, but I think that it leads to the most, maybe it doesn't lead to the best results on the field every year, but I think it leads to the most cohesive community, the community that's the strongest, that like means something to people, that they find useful and meaningful in their lives and that's really really I think that's ultimately by far the coolest thing that any community thing can do is create meaning, create connections. In the case of Wimbledon, I mean, AFC Wimbledon raises lots of money for charity and does lots of community service work and relies a lot on volunteer help to, oh god, to make its things, oh boy we gave up a corner.

I just said to make its things because I was so nervous, you know what I mean.

Okay, *whispered* we can do this we can do this *normal voice* defend defend defend defend yes good job go go-go-go-go go-go-go-go run it out run it out, don't give up don't give up. *intake of breath* Oh, it's a little nervous here at the end friends, it's a little nervous. Ohhh, did I give up a corner kick for real or did he take it out of bounds, no, shmerg.

90th minute. So that's what I think, that's why I think Cardiff City should always be blue and that's why I'm so proud to play as AFC Wimbledon. Victors! Victors on green eggs and Sheringham 14th minute goal. Wow. Wow. Really great game from Seb Brown, vintage Seb Brown performance but all the Wimbly Womblys playing in yellow showed today that we have courage and we make our opponents squat in shame. But that said, Cardiff City you'll always be blue.

Thanks for watching. Best wishes.