

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH – November 2024. Edition No. 119.



Hello. How are you? I hope you are well and appreciate being in a relatively peaceful place.

This year has been a difficult one for a lot of people, and I hope things improve for everyone in the near future.

On a personal note, this year has not been a good one for me. I have suffered from pneumonia, a heart attack, a week of diarrhoea, an ulcer in my eye and a couple of months of OCD. However, I am now feeling better, and I am busy knitting Christmas jumpers for my 17 children.

You are most welcome to get involved with us in a non-racist, non-sexist and non-homophobic way by contacting us at: dean@fthm.org.uk You can view our website at: www.fromthehorsesmouth.org.uk Best wishes, Dean Charlton.

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MY NOT VERY SERIOUS STARS



Scorpio 24 Oct – 22 Nov

Someone you used to be friends with will bad-mouth you behind your back, but don't worry as it will just make you seem more interesting to people who don't know you. It is time to invest in

some new shoes if you want to climb the corporate ladder. A young boy on a red bicycle will nearly knock you down on the pavement, but be gentle with him. Have a haircut.

Sagittarius 23 Nov – 21 Dec

A woman claiming to be your long-lost daughter will turn up and want to walk straight into your life. Make sure she is who she says she is as this could be an expensive experience. You may be going through a very promiscuous phase in your life, so take care unless you don't care about the possible consequences. A telephone call will rock your world in a bad way.

Capricorn 22 Dec – 20 Jan

A woman with a nice figure will catch your eye, but bear in mind that her boyfriend is 6'7" and short-tempered. A man with a walking stick will prove to be a real bore, but listen politely as this may be the only conversation he has today. This month you may find yourself in a world of violence, so keep your mouth shut and just do what you have to do.

Aquarius 21 Jan – 19 Feb

Your children have been extremely good, so why not reward them with an educational toy? A horoscope you read may predict gloomy times ahead, but take it with a pinch of salt and act accordingly. It is a good time to be kind to your lungs and stop inhaling rubbish, but it will be harder than you think. Someone you fancied for a long time will prove a disappointment.

Pisces 20 Feb – 20 Mar

You may be dumped in the near future, but don't get too upset as this experience will turn out to be a stepping stone to something great. An ex-friend will start to cause problems for you, but remember that it is only water off your back. It is now time to make some new friends as you are socially impoverished – remember we are not islands, and we need each other.

Aries 21 Mar – 20 Apr

A health scare may leave you shaken, but don't worry as life is a cocktail of mixed experiences; good times will follow. Clean your home well as an important visitor, who will change your life, is about to call. This week, buy a date some flowers to cement a blossoming romance and show that you want to build a solid relationship. Buy yourself some new braces.

Taurus 21 Apr – 21 May

You may become interested in reincarnation this month and realise that you are still the slug you've always been. Someone will tell you that you look good for your age, but this is just a sprat to catch a mackerel, so don't be fooled. A young woman will astound you with her grasp of quantum physics but lack of basic common sense. Start playing bridge.

Gemini 22 May – 21 Jun

Try to be diplomatic when faced with a possible confrontation, otherwise there might be fireworks that you leave you scarred for life. You may be conned by a glib salesperson and end up buying something expensive that you don't really need, but just put it down to experience. It's time you found a partner and stopped living such a solitary life. Spend.

Cancer 22 Jun – 23 Jul

Someone who has had a lot of ECT may surprise you with their lack of short-term memory and abundant creativity. A beggar will annoy you with their constant request for money and threaten to ruin your generous side. You are quite a negative person on the whole, but now is the time to change and embrace life like you have never done before. Have a cold drink.

Leo 24 Jul – 23 Aug

You always act like a prima donna, but now you should accept that you're ordinary like the rest of us – get rid of your airs and graces, and get down dirty! Money seems to be your unhealthy obsession, and you fail to realise that it is just a key that opens many doors, but not the ones that really count like love and friendship. Love will enter your life in the near future.

Virgo 24 Aug – 23 Sep

Someone who has just had a heart attack will help you at a vital time when you need to defend yourself. Tiredness may pervade your whole being at the moment, but just accept it and rest accordingly until you feel re-energised. Great times lie ahead for you, though. A friend is wearing white for her wedding, but don't judge her for her past. Wish her well.

Libra 24 Sep – 23 Oct

Sometimes existentialist thoughts will come into your head, but don't get downhearted as you will realise that you are free to create your own meanings for your life. This week, you will discover something new about someone you don't like that will completely change the way you see them. Buy a friend a nice gift with no strings attached. Post second-class.

JUNE'S WORLD



On my first visit to York, I went with my school. You had to put your name down if you wanted to go. My mother never had much money bringing up five girls, so I went round to my grandmas' and told her about the trip and that I wanted to go. My grandma responded by telling me to take a bet to the bookies, and if it won, then she would give me a bit of money. That is how

I started taking bets for her and my granddad, as they both enjoyed a flutter on the horses. Happily, my grandma's bet won, but I was too young to pick up her winnings. As promised, she gave me the money to go on the York trip.

I thought York was a lovely city with the Minster and other impressive buildings. I had a lovely time with my school mates and visited many shops. We visited museums and art galleries and toy shops. However, as I didn't have much money, I only bought a comb for my mother, which she gratefully appreciated. I also enjoyed viewing some pictures in shops that people had painted to try and sell. The teachers made a big effort to make our day as interesting and enjoyable as possible and even bought us some fish and chips that had been financed through some kind of fund – when you're young, you don't worry where the money

comes from! We sat around the river and had a lovely time eating our fish and chips. There were lots of boats going up the river taking people for rides. It was a lovely scene.

Soon, it was time to get on the coach to go home. Everybody said that they had enjoyed themselves. They were all saying that they couldn't wait for the next school trip.

Well until next time. June. X.

AN UPDATED INTERVIEW WITH GRAHAM TOWNSEND



Hi, Graham please can you tell us how your life has changed since the last time we spoke? Firstly, I don't think I had started my last job as a tutor with Explore Learning when we spoke previously. Although, I have recently left that role.

What did that entail? It involved tutoring children between the ages of 7 and 14/15 in Maths and English. Some of those were for the 11+ course. I had a mix of 1 to 1 and 1 to 3 sessions that all lasted for an hour. Everything was done online using a system similar to Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Did you find it difficult? It was at first, but I got used to it after a few weeks. I had good training from the managers at the centre I worked alongside. It was very interesting but fairly easy to do after a while. I started taking the 11+ sessions after a few months – once the managers felt I had progressed well enough to be able to handle them efficiently as well as the standard lessons. I worked there for approximately 16 months and would recommend the role to

anyone who is interested in becoming involved in education on a part-time basis, especially if they have no previous experience of working in that sector and don't have a degree.

Did you feel qualified to do the role? I wasn't sure what to expect in the beginning. I needed to have GCSE passes in English and Maths to be suitable for the position and I have those along with an A Level pass in Maths with Statistics.

Do you think the pay rates adequately reflected what was being asked of you? It was a little bit above minimum wage, and after my first twelve months, I did get a wage rise. This reflected that I had improved in the role and shown loyalty to the company as many tutors do the job alongside university or college and perhaps use Explore Learning as a stop gap for earning money at a young age.

What was the best thing about the job? The satisfaction of seeing the kids being happy when they had done well was probably the best thing. Also, when I left, a couple of my students were a little bit upset that I was leaving because I had built up such a good rapport with them. I've actually asked the girls at the centre to let me know how the students have done in their 11+ exams when they discover their results. One of the reasons why I chose to leave when I did, at the end of August, was to ensure that I had taken my 11+ students to the

end of their course. Hopefully, all three of my students who were taking the test will be successful.

Do you miss the children? It has only been just over a month since I left, but yes. I think I do because of the relationships that I created with pretty much all of them. It's nice to make other people feel happy and comfortable, and I guess I got used to speaking to them each and every week.

In our previous conversation we talked about your Matched Betting, do you still do that? Yes, I do. Maybe not on as great a scale as before but yes, I still do it.

Can you just remind us of what it involves? It revolves around taking advantage of bonus offers from the bookmakers and laying them off at the exchanges. Sometimes, it involves a new sign-up offer from a bookmaker, and other times, when you already have an account with a bookmaker, it revolves around reload offers, where they try to entice you back to betting with them by offering you a follow-up bonus or free bet. Sometimes they might offer an alternative sweetener such as free spins or a casino bonus. If there are no wagering requirements on those latter offers, then you can sometimes make free profit off them easily.

Is it easy to do? Can anyone do it? I think you need to have a degree of maths skill when you are doing it. I don't think just anyone can do it.

Can you be any age? You need to be 18 or over to do it.

Do the bookies restrict you sometimes? Yes, they do. Bookmakers don't like the fact that you are taking value all the time.

Can you explain what you mean by value? If you take a bet that has odds that are in line with the price at the exchange, then that implies that you are taking value. A bookmaker builds in what is known as an over round when they form the odds on a market for a sporting event. This means that the prices they are offering are usually lower than what the true odds should be. The exchange prices normally reflect the realistic odds for an event or of something happening. When the prices are similar between the two, it means the bookmaker is likely to be offering good odds. The bookmaker will look at the time when you placed your bet and, they track the exchange price so will know whether it was close to their price when you took your bet. They just want customers who will take a price at any time and simply hope for a win. They call those people mug punters.

Moving on, are you still passionately interested in football? Yes. I still have my season ticket with Halifax Town. I still follow Aston Villa as well.

How are both teams doing? They're doing pretty well really. Aston Villa are in the Champions League now, for the first time, and they finished fourth in the Premier League last season. Halifax are in the top half of the table at the moment, in the National League. Halifax are at a lot lower level in terms of income and support, but they are doing well considering the relative budget they have to work with.

Has anything else radically changed in your life? I've retired from work now, so I have more free time to do the things I enjoy most. I have taken my private pension, so it means I have a little bit more money available to allow me to attend more sporting events. It means I can go to more speedway meetings. I can also go to more stock car meetings, and I can go on the days I couldn't previously attend because I was restricted by the hours I was working.

Do you think you now have enough money to pursue all your interests? I think I have because I don't have particularly high expectations in terms of the types of events I want to attend. It might change, but I'd like to think I will be comfortable enough to pay all my bills and then attend all the events that I would like to attend. This includes music concerts as well.

What concerts have you been to see recently? I've seen Depeche Mode, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Sheryl Crow, Crowded House, The Killers, Rick Astley and Jungle already this year. I'm seeing Squeeze in November and then Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band on my birthday in May next year.

What kind of venues have you been going to? Most of the gigs have been at the Piece Hall here in Halifax. It's an absolutely brilliant outdoor venue, and it has fantastic acoustics. I've also been to the new Co-op Live as well as the AO Arena, both in Manchester, and the First Direct Arena in Leeds. The Squeeze gig is at the Victoria Theatre back here in Halifax.

Do you think these gigs are value for money? Probably not as much as they used to be. I think sometimes the bands take advantage of dynamic-pricing; you might have heard of the recent situation with the Oasis gigs next year.

What is dynamic pricing? It's where the price moves from the originally advertised price for the tickets based on fan demand. Using the Oasis example again, the price of a standing ticket was originally around £150, but some friends of mine queued for hours, due to the demand, and when they got through to buy tickets, they were seeing prices around the £350-£400 mark!

Do you agree with dynamic pricing? No, I don't! I've seen an article this week from Iron Maiden saying they will not be employing this model when tickets for their 2025 tour go on sale. It's very unfair and just seems like greed to me.

Have you any other interests that we haven't talked about? Not that I can think of at the moment.

Do you regret retiring early? Well, not at this stage no! I'm still getting used to it really. It still feels like a little bit of a holiday at the moment. Certain days I still think that I need to get home for a particular time when, actually, I don't anymore. I think I should be okay with the money I have available to me, as long as I am sensible. I need to do some work on my house. That is the next thing I have in mind, but I have kind of planned for that anyway.

Have you had any work done on your house recently? I had a new central heating system installed in June. I had my guttering, fasciae and soffits done last year, and I bought a new fridge-freezer last week. I probably need to do some re-decorating as well but, I'll wait until I've done all the other things in the house first before getting on to that.

Well thanks very much for updating us, Graham! No problem, Dean. It has been a pleasure.

BRENDA'S WILDLIFE CORNER



Golden Eagle

The golden eagle is a majestic bird of prey which tends to mate for life, unless one of the partners is killed. Physically, the golden eagle is a very impressive raptor; it is 20 to 40 inches in length and has a wingspan of 5 ft 11 to 7 ft 8 inches, which is the 5th largest among living eagle species. It is important to

note that the female of the species is largest. As you would imagine, golden eagles are great flyers and can glide at about 120 mph over their territories which can be as large as 77 square miles. Today, it is mostly found in the mountainous terrain of the Northern Hemisphere, where it nests.

It hunts in open or semi-open areas, avoiding developed places. Normally, the diet of a golden eagle is composed of hares, ground squirrels, rabbits, prairie dogs, marmots, seals, ungulates, coyote, badgers, other birds and even reptiles and fish. Additionally, they are frequent visitors to road kills. Most hunting occurs during daylight hours, with a success rate of around 20%. They are sometimes killed by the very prey that they attack.

Interestingly, these birds are not very vocal and don't usually make a sound, even when breeding. The female lays up to 4 eggs, though only 1 or 2 survive to fledge in about three months. It takes between 4 and 5 years for a juvenile bird to establish its own territory. Many former habitats have disappeared due to human expansion, but golden eagles are still present in North America, Eurasia and parts of North Africa.

It's accurate to claim that humans have long been fascinated by the golden eagle, and this explains the reverence in which the bird is held. It even features on the Mexican flag!

* Ref Wikipedia

LETTERS PAGE



Dear Editor

I hope you don't mind, but I am taking this opportunity to have a rant!

I am fed up of people blowing vape in my direction. I don't want to breath in their horrible fumes. Please consider other people!

Like a lot of people, I am appalled at the amount of money that flows at the top level of

English football. This money should be spread more evenly so that no one has to experience poverty in this day and age. Obviously, the rich and the powerful will do anything to stop the fairer distribution of wealth; it would undermine their position in society.

I also think there are too many foreign managers and players, who are attracted solely by money. It is true that they have improved the English game, but at what cost with young English players and managers being denied the opportunity to progress in the game?

Too many drivers seem to disrespect pedestrians as if they never walk anywhere themselves!

Politicians of all parties have acted in a dishonest way and now we have a Labour Prime Minister accepting gifts from a rich businessman. Who can you really trust in modern British politics?

People, in general, should arguably concentrate on the wellbeing of others and on relationships, instead of acquiring more and more possessions. Surely love is more important than any material possession?

Unfettered capitalism is not healthy for anyone and is ethically incorrect – why should a minority have all the wealth and power while others have next to nothing?

The public school system should be abolished as it is not open to those who cannot afford to go there and buy all the applicable privileges. You only have to look at many privately educated people to realise how dysfunctional they really are.

That's the end of my rant. I hope some of it makes sense to you.

Amy Stalker, Wolverhampton

GRAHAM TOWNSEND'S MONTHLY QUIZ

Questions:



- (1) Which colours did Boy George say yours would be if they were like his dreams in the song "Karma Chameleon"?
- (2) Alexandria is a city in which North African country?
- (3) In which year was the first London Marathon held?
- (4) Whose 2006 autobiography was called "The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid"?
- (5) Sir William Lyons was the co-founder of which car company?
- (6) As of October 2024, Ron De Santis is the governor of which US state?
- (7) What is the German word for cauliflower?
- (8) Which group had a UK Top 10 hit with the song "Northern Lights" in 1978?
- (9) Which cocktail comprises of vodka and orange juice? You may also add angostura bitters.
- (10) "The Kiss" was painted in 1908 by which artist?
- (11) Which British dish is made up of cooked potatoes and cabbage, mixed and fried?

- (12) Where did James Wilson Marshall discover gold in January 1848 that led to the Gold Rush?
- (13) What does a Fiddler Crab have one of that is much longer than the other?
- (14) In Babylonian myth, who was Thisbe's lover?
- (15) "Dedans" is a scoring area in which sport?
- (16) Which philosopher wrote "Being and Nothingness" in 1943?
- (17) Astronomical Unit refers to the mean distance between which two objects?
- (18) Vanessa Redgrave won an Academy Award for which 1977 film?
- (19) Which Archbishop of Canterbury stood down in 2012?
- (20) The story of Samson and Delilah is told in which book of the Old Testament?

Answers

(1) Red, Gold & Green (2) Egypt (3) 1981 (4) Bill Bryson (5) Jaguar (6) Florida (7) Blumen kohl (8) Renaissance (9) Screwdriver (10) Gustav Klimt (11) Bubble and Squeak (12) Sutter's Mill (13) Claw (14) Pyramus (15) Real Tennis (16) John-Paul Sartre (17) Earth and The Sun (18) Julia (19) Rowan Williams (20) Judges

ALICE'S THING OF THE MONTH!



Hello, and welcome back to Alice's Thing of The Month!

This month we are going to be talking about online pressure.

I recently took a break from social media as I feel it has been bad for my mental health and that I was spending too much time scrolling on my phone.

I also felt an overwhelming pressure to post daily on my Instagram account and stress about what I was going to put on there and if it would be good enough. This is why I am writing this article this month, and to spread awareness about why social media doesn't really mean anything.

So, how many people are feeling like I did on social media? Statistics say over 50 percent of people feel some form of pressure from their online presence, either it being how they look online, what they are posting or how much attention they get.

Around 30 percent of the population is terrified of failure, which causes anxiety, embarrassment, anger and sadness. These people are more likely to try harder online to build a persona and try to become 'successful' or 'popular'. When that doesn't happen, it leads to feelings of not being good enough, rejection and potentially suicidal thoughts. I think, unfortunately, this percentage will rise in years to come with the rise of 'influencers' on social media.

What is a social media 'influencer'? The answer lies within the name. They are 'popular' people who have a lot of followers, this could be thousands to millions. They influence others online by marketing a product or posting memes/comedy, travelling, fitness and dance. This

is a small number of ideas and things influencers do, but they are vastly becoming one of the most popular things to be in the social media world.

Everyone wants to be an 'influencer' because we all have our own opinion, and we all think we are important and people should see us for who we are. Again, this can cause a lot of mental health issues if this is not achieved, and even if it is achieved that doesn't mean you're instantly living a great life. Around 80 percent of 'influencers' say they get burnout and feel depressed. People then regret becoming an 'influencer' and getting popular online. It isn't as glamorous as it looks from the outside.

This is a reminder that it doesn't matter what others are doing. Don't compare yourself or feel you have to be liked by people online, most of these people are complete strangers. Knowing this fact, it's mind blowing how much of our private lives we share online with people who we will never meet. This is a reminder to myself and others out there, don't pressure yourself to do anything or feel you have to live up to other people's expectations.

If you're worrying about what you post or that you won't be as successful as other people, remember that no one posts their failures online. Everything is tailored to be positive on social media which makes us feel bad about ourselves and makes us question, *why aren't our lives like this?*

No one wants to come across as negative or say, "I'm having a bad day". Instead, they will pretend to be happy by only posting the happy moments of life. I am also guilty of doing this in the past. I think it is nice to share our happy memories with others but pretending every moment is absolute perfection is unrealistic. Remember you don't have to live up to anyone's expectations. If you're happy with yourself, then it doesn't matter what other people think.

On average, we spend around 143 minutes scrolling on our phones per day; this is around 2 and a half hours. Since I came off social media, I have noticed how many people are glued to their phones and it's scary to see. I think we are missing out on what is going on in the real world when we are constantly on our phones.

There is also a saying called FOMO which means Fear of Missing Out. When you come off social media, this anxiety can start because you won't know what is going on in the 'online world'. I think the real world is much more precious.

I'm not saying to get rid of social media completely because I have enjoyed times on there too, but it is definitely good to take breaks and enjoy other things for a while. In the long run, social media will never matter but your real life does. Enjoy your time with whatever makes you happy and do what is best for you.

Thanks for reading.

SO, WHO ARE KHRUANGBIN?



Written by Graham Townsend

This was the question I was asking after the band were announced as one of the headliners for the TK Maxx Live 2025, which is a series of music events taking place next year at my local music venue, the Piece Hall, in Halifax.

Firstly, I was informed that the name comes from the Thai word for airplane. I discovered pretty quickly that they were already popular amongst some of my friends, including Joe and Sarah at the Temperance Movement, so I felt compelled to have a listen to some of their music to see what all the fuss is about! I had actually listened to ten minutes of their material from a previous live show before questioning whether there are there any vocals on their songs, having not heard any at that point.

Sarah told me to listen the song “Texas Sun”. I didn’t have to wait long to hear it as it was part of the playlist that day in the café! I have to say that it was quite a pleasant listen and made me want to do more research.

So, going back to the original question, who are they? Well, they are a trio comprising of Laura Lee, Mark Speer and DJ Johnson. They are based in Houston, Texas and have been on the scene for close to fifteen years. All three members contribute vocals. Laura also plays bass guitar, Mark plays guitar and DJ is a drummer and keyboard player.

What kind of music is it? I saw them described as “like Santana but with more weed!” After listening to that initial ten minutes of their music, I could see where that description came from. However, I have to say, after listening to more of their stuff, there is more to them than that. Their Wikipedia page states that they blend classic soul with dub, rock and psychedelia. From my limited experience of them to date, I would say that is a pretty accurate description.

I must confess that I don’t really find this type of music to my taste. I will give them more chances to impress me, but if you asked me at this stage whether I will be buying a ticket for the forthcoming gig, I would have to say no. Although, there are some good songs in their archive, including the aforementioned “Texas Sun”.

Hopefully, my friends will enjoy their performance, even though I probably won’t be there to experience it with them.

SOME MORE GREAT RECIPES FROM JUNE CHARLTON



Caramel Rice

Ingredients:

Rice Filling – 2 oz of pudding rice
½ pint of milk
½ oz of sugar

½ oz of butter

1 egg

Caramel – 3 oz of granulated sugar
¼ pint of water

Method:

Put sugar and water into a saucepan and heat slowly until the sugar is dissolved. Bring to the boil and boil until golden brown. Pour the caramel into a soufflé dish or small cake tin. Protecting hands with a thick cloth, resolve caramel around the sides and base of the mould until coated and set. Put washed rice and milk into pan and cook over a low heat, stirring frequently, until the rice is soft and mixture thickens. Stir in the butter, sugar and egg and pour into caramel-lined dish. Cover with greaseproof paper or foil. Stand in roasting tin containing hot water and bake at 325 F/gas mark 3 for approximately 45 mins or until set. Serve hot or cold.



Mushroom and Egg

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons of frying fat
4 oz of chopped onions
8 oz sliced mushrooms
1 ½ lb boiled potatoes (mashed)
4 oz of grated cheese
4 eggs

Salt and pepper

Method:

Heat half of the fat and gently fry the mushrooms and onions, without browning, until cooked (about 8 minutes). Remove the onions and mushrooms from the pan and add to the mashed potatoes and cheese. Beat well and add salt and pepper. Heat the remaining fat and spread the potato mixture over the base of the pan. Make four hollows and brush one egg into each one. Fry gently until cooked.

Pot Pie (Beef Steak Pudding)

Ingredients:

8 oz of self-raising flour
3 oz of shredded suet or margarine
½ teaspoon of salt
1 ½ lb of beef steak (or steak and kidney)

Method:

Mix the flour, salt and suet, and make a stiff dough with cold water. Cut off half, roll it out and line a well-greased pint basin. Cut the meat into pieces and roll it into flour which has

been added a teacupful of cold water. Moisten the edge, roll out the remaining dough and place it on top, joining it securely by nipping. PRICK THE TOP. Put the pudding into a steamer over boiling water and steam for three hours. Keep the water boiling continuously.



Sauté Spring Potatoes

Ingredients:

1 ½ lb tiny new potatoes, cooked or cut into slices ½ inch thick.
1 bunch of spring onions, chopped
1 oz of butter
2 teaspoons of mustard powder
Salt and pepper

Method:

Melt the butter in a pan, add the potatoes and onions, then sprinkle with mustard powder.

Sauté till the potatoes are golden, turning frequently.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE NEW FORMAT



Written by Graham Townsend

Let's talk about the new Champions League format, shall we? Do you like the expansion to include more teams? Do you like that there are now more group games to be played? Do you like the way we now have one big league table? There are plenty of aspects to discuss so, without further ado, let's get into the detail.

I have to declare that I have more of an interest in the competition this season as the team I follow in the Premier League, Aston Villa, have qualified for the first time since the competition changed from the European Cup to the Champions League. They have made a great start as well, winning their opening two group games, including a fantastic victory over Bayern Munich. There is the first positive for me, the fact that the way the draw was made allows for teams like Villa to face multiple top-level opponents at the group as well as a greater array of opposition in general.

Another positive for me is the fact that after each team has completed their group matches the bottom twelve teams, out of the thirty-six involved, automatically leave the competition and they do not get a second chance in either the Europa League or the Conference League. This is good news for the teams in those competitions, which are being run to a similar format may I add, as they don't face what I feel is an uneven playing field by allowing the weaker teams

from the Champions League to drop down and potentially harm their chances of success at the level they have rightfully earned an opportunity to win a trophy in.

I also like the decision to seed the top eight teams in the league table straight through to the Round of 16, whilst the teams who finish ninth to sixteenth have a two-legged playoff to decide who joins them there.

Here comes the first negative, from my perspective: the extra matches for those teams when they have already played two more qualifying games than they would have had to in previous seasons. This also means for teams in England that the winter break is lost. This is seen as vital time off for some of the players who already face an arduous schedule. This is becoming more of a factor as the football calendar becomes more and more stacked as time passes.

The prospect of players breaking down with long term injuries is one of the main concerns that have been raised, by both people inside and outside the game may I add, and is something I feel needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

There are also the financial benefits of the expanded competition that need to be taken into account. The prospect of seeing the big teams such as Man City, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Liverpool etcetera face each more than once is mouth-watering thought for the fans but also for the club owners who will be rubbing their hands together at the thought of a bumper payday. There is also the argument that the changes to the competition have only been made to stave off the threat of another attempt to start up the mooted European Super League that several of Europe's top teams tried to introduce a couple of years ago.

Overall, I think the overhauling of the Champions League is a good thing for the game however, there are clearly issues that do need ironing out so that it benefits everyone involved.

ADVENTURES OF A MAN SITTING DOWN 23



Written by Krishna Francis

One of the great things about this column is the loose parameters placed on me by the editor. One of the terrible things about this column is the loose parameters placed on me by the editor. I've been absent for the last couple of months for this very reason. Personal reasons collided with a lack of boundaries, resulting in an unofficial holiday from writing this thing.

Now, I have to think of something to write that lends my thoughts some vague air of continuity. I've just re-read the last episode. Yikes! Much has happened. I told you about the operation I had. After the stitches came out, all seemed fine. Then, the bed sores came. You see, the operation was to install a pump that stopped my legs from spasming. Unfortunately, once the spasming had stopped, my legs just lay still as I slept. This resulted in blisters. These grew and then burst. To look after myself, I spent a lot of time in bed to stop the pressure created by sitting up in my chair. Unfortunately, this was in

June. Though it wasn't a clement June, it was a hot one. Lying in bed makes you sweat. Sweat deteriorates skin quality. Poor quality skin is vulnerable to bed sores. Eventually, I had many more sores resulting in a care regime that left me little to do other than play Yahtzee and watch Star Trek. That brought me down. I was listless for a long while, until the sores closed up and I could get about. Now that I've been up and about for a while, I'm back with news. That is the subject, I guess.

That, alongside missing a deadline due to being preoccupied with being in hospital, is the reason this is a bit of a return from the darkness. What now? I've said all the important stuff. Or have I...

Currently, I'm working on a couple of children's books and a memoir. It's all a bit up in the air. It's not like I've got a background in authorship or publishing. I do have keenness on my side and at least a passing amount of ability. The thing is that I have to find some sort of coup de grace. An act of God. Perhaps this act of God is as simple as keeping writing letters to people in the hope that someone might find one of my books interesting. Perhaps it will be reaching out to an author who sees value in what I write. Whatever it is, that is what I'm on with at the moment.

The success of the radio play I staged in April has been a spur. Hearing people laugh at things they were intended to laugh was really great. It gave me a sense that I know what it is that I'm doing. Now, I just have to do it again with more gusto.

Presto. A whole article for you to read. See you next month

ANOTHER FUN QUIZ FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Questions:

- (1) When is the next leap year?
- (2) What is the capital of the Cook Islands?
- (3) Who headlined the half-time show at the 2024 Super Bowl?
- (4) What are sprockets?
- (5) What is 6 minutes past 2 on the 24-hour clock?
- (6) Which company brought out the video game "Sonic the Hedgehog"?
- (7) What is the currency of Bulgaria?
- (8) What does avaricious mean?
- (9) Who won the 800m Olympic women's final this year?
- (10) What is a geyser?
- (11) Who wrote the book "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"?
- (12) Who did footballer Malcolm McDonald mainly play for?
- (13) When did Michael Jackson die?
- (14) What is the tibia?
- (15) What is the word in French for baptism?

- (16) What is the national flower of Japan?
(17) Who played the male lead role in the film “Bodyguard”?
(18) What nationality was Baden Powell?
(19) Who invented the alarm clock?
(20) What is a garter?

Answers:

(1) 2028 (2) Avarua (3) Usher (4) Each of several projections on the rim of a wheel that engage with the links of a chain or with holes in film, tape or paper (5) 14:06 (6) Sega (7) Bulgarian lev (8) Having or showing an extreme greed for wealth or material gain (9) Keely Hodgkinson (10) A hot spring that erupts periodically and forcefully (11) Ken Kesey (12) Newcastle United (13) 25 June 2009 (14) The shinbone, the larger of the two bones in the lower leg (15) Bapteme (16) Cherry Blossom/Sakura (17) Kevin Costner (18) English/British (19) Levi Hutchins in 1787 (20) A band of fabric that goes around the leg to keep stockings or socks up

Editor’s Final Word: Thank you so much for picking up on this e-magazine which has been going for almost ten years. If you want to contact us, you can do so through: dean@fthm.org.uk Best wishes, Dean, Brenda, Robert, Graham and Willow.