Crawley Town

You never know what’s coming do you. I think I am knowledgeable about football. I thought we’d do well against Colchester. Wrong. After that I worried that Tranmere and Lincoln could bring us a low points haul. Wrong again. I don’t know many people who would have been too disappointed with four points from those three games. Perhaps being greedy we’d aim for five or six. But after Colchester, a win at Tranmere and a draw at Lincoln, albeit playing against ten men for a large part of the game, feels like a great return. Things can turn so quickly. If we follow it up with a win and a good performance today, that’ll be another good step in the right direction.

So this week I’ve learnt a few things. One is, I know less about football than I thought. I should have known that as my wife, who claims not to be too bothered with football, is once again streets ahead of me in Fantasy Football, but it’s still news to me. Another is not to underestimate what is possible. You can always be surprised if you keep on hoping. And still another is that integrity and hard work, two things this squad has in spades regardless of the criticism they have received at times over the last couple of years, can take you a long way.

But still, you never know what’s coming round the corner. It can seem like darkness is your only friend, things are going wrong all around you, you keep on failing, everything you trusted isn’t worthy of your trust and devotion, but then something happens and the whole picture seems different. I wasn’t at Tranmere, but I know that any joy we all felt at Sam Hoskins’s top quality goals was nothing compared to how he would have felt at getting a just reward for a season of performances which have frightened opposing defences. I really hope he and the team can have an enjoyable last third of the season now.

So this is my question: do you ever feel let down? Probably the answer is yes. So do I. So does everyone. Another question: do you like to admit that you’ve let someone else down? Probably not. I don’t either, but it’s important that we have the character to do so when it’s needed. It’s easier to blame others when things go wrong, to close up shop and not admit our need for help, than it is to be open and honest, admit we are all flawed, we are all looking around for hope, purpose and for joy and peace. Football can provide some of that, but often things don’t go our way. And what do we do then? At the moment I’m on a train from Huddersfield. When I left, there were some very disappointed Terriers fans bemoaning their plight. Trouble is, not everyone can stay up. Only so many teams can succeed every season. If all our joy is tied to football, whoever we support it will end up letting us down eventually.

The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Whatever you think about this statement, if you choose to live by it, it does not mean that you suddenly have to become some kind of crazy religious type. No, quite the opposite. My strength comes from a deep sense that God actually likes me, he actually rejoices over me. That sounds arrogant, but each human being is important to God, worth living with, worth dying for, to save and give freedom to. The kind that gives you inner strength enough to get stuck in and try and make a difference in the world, to show that an unbreakable hope is possible.

Let’s get behind the lads today. You never know what’s around the corner. Hopefully it’s three points.

Up the Cobblers!