

## THE BIG INTERVIEW - CHRIS COHEN



Ask a hundred Yeovil fans who was the best player ever to play for Yeovil and you'll get a variety of answers back. From prolific strikers to staunch, loyal defenders; from the glorious FA Cup side of 1949 to the crop that won the FA Trophy, Conference and League Two titles; there are a host of suggestions to come from those groups. But I bet today's subject will get a large amount of votes and he wasn't part of any of it!

Chris Cohen arrived at Huish Park as a relatively unknown youngster on loan from West Ham United at the age of eighteen in November 2005. Having made four starts plus multiple appearances from the bench for the Hammers, he came to Yeovil to get regular first team football like so many of the loan options that the Glovers have used in recent seasons. Signing permanently the following summer, when he left just over eighteen months later, he had joined Nottingham Forest on a million pound deal with Arron Davies after a spectacular career in Somerset.

At the moment, those supporters who follow ex-Glovers after they leave our employment will be able to tell you exactly what Chris is doing nowadays. Not much, sadly, as Chris explained when I caught up with him recently. **"I was playing against Derby, our local rivals, and had gone in to tackle someone when I caught my studs in the turf and did my cruciate knee ligament. I was lying there on the turf when Derby went up the other end and scored and to cap it all, when I got back to the dressing room, the drug testers were there waiting for me! They say that bad things come in threes, don't they?"**

Speaking to Chris the day after his operation, these are typically humorous and positive comments from a young man who is determined to enjoy his career. It's an amazing stat but well worth saying; the 24-year-old Norwich born star has already topped 300 first team appearances including 81 games with the Glovers and playing for Forest for the 200<sup>th</sup> time in that fateful clash with Derby County. He's upbeat though! **"I'm very lucky, this is my first bad injury in my career and hopefully it will be a small setback in a long career. The surgeon, Dr Andy Williams, said that there doesn't look to be a problem with the bone or the kneecap and that it's one of the best ones he's done. I may be being over-enthusiastic but I'd love to get back for the last game of the season; maybe come on as a sub."**

It was six years ago last weekend when the teenager made his Yeovil bow in a home defeat to Huddersfield. He went on to play more than thirty times that season (2005/06) but it was the following season where he really blossomed, a sign to the player himself that he had done the right thing leaving the Hammers. **"Joining Yeovil was the best thing that ever happened to me in my career. It gave me a**

**real chance to showcase my talents and obviously I was lucky enough to get a big move to Forest with Arron."**

His season as a full Town signing saw Yeovil reach the pinnacle, so far, of their Football League membership. Making the playoff final at Wembley after THAT night at Forest was as good as it got though Chris failed to finish either game and was 50/50 for the final itself, needing an injection to just get onto the pitch. However Forest were already well aware of his talents having seen them first hand in the City Ground cauldron of May 18<sup>th</sup> 2007 and he and Arron departed with £1.2 million going the other way. So how has he changed since then?

**"At Yeovil, I was mainly the attacking midfielder in a three man midfield but at Forest, I've played a lot at left back and also left wing, right wing, holding midfielder, all of it. I've averaged over 45 games a season since I've been here and things have gone really well with promotion in my first season too. It's the first real setback I've had so hopefully it won't be too long before I'm back."**The injury, in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute of the fierce East Midlands derby, left then-manager Steve MacLaren quoted as "distraught" stressing that the former Yeovil star had been "our top performer this season".

MacLaren's no longer there, of course, but new manager Steve Cotterill wasted no time in welcoming Chris, sending him a text wishing him all the best with his operation and recovery. I'm sure there are several thousand Yeovil Town fans up and down the country who would echo those sentiments. A fit Chris Cohen would be an asset for any side and it can only be a matter of time before we see him regularly on "Match of the Day" rather than "The Football League Show".