

# Man of the match!

**MARTIN McCONACHIE SPEAKS TO THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE SHOW PRESENTER MANISH BHASIN**

**W**hen Yeovil Town reached the Championship after beating Brentford in the League One play-off final at Wembley, it brought many perks for Glovers fans. There was a new and exciting fixture list to look forward to, a multitude of top players arriving at Huish Park and even exemption to the FA Cup third round. But best of all, it meant that Yeovil would be shown earlier on the BBC's *The Football League Show!*

The main presenter of the popular highlights show since 2009 has been Manish Bhasin. The 37-year-old, along with ex-professionals Steve Claridge and Leroy Rosenior, bring together all the main talking points from all the Football League games every Saturday. Logistically, it's a tricky job as Manish explains.

"It comes down to this. There could be 36 Football League games kicking off at 3.00pm on a Saturday. That is 36 cameramen producing 36 recorded matches that 36 couriers will then feed into a hub and sent to London. Then all the games will have voiceovers added to them from the seven or eight voiceover people that work for us and it's all ready to go out on the night."

When you actually sit down and listen to what goes into producing the show, little wonder that its start time is a little late for children, as Manish understands. "I really do have sympathy with younger fans," he says. "That's why we are keen to get across that the show is available on a loop on the red button and also on the iPlayer so they can watch it at a more convenient time."



**WORK:** Manish on *The Football League Show* with Steve Claridge

Manish himself is (whisper it quietly today) a Leicester City fan and his schedule makes it difficult to follow his beloved Foxes. Not that this exempts him from criticism from all quarters. "Leicester fans grumble that there isn't much on them and say it's me trying to balance things out. Yet other club's supporters tell me there's too much Leicester on there."

Manish is also quick to clear up another misunderstanding about the show. "We decide who the main feature will be on the show three or four weeks in advance. We have to talk to the clubs, rig up the venue with the cables and six cameras; it's a long job. And sometimes, a game that looks like an important one when its selected might not be so by the date of transmission. That's why you might get the odd game where its short of action, the decision is taken well before then."

Manish's working day begins at 2.45pm when he rolls into the studios in Chiswick, West London. "We have all the channels on feed, our own vide printer and watch the games before then seeing what has caught our eye. Then from around 5pm, myself and the editor and the stats guys will sit down and pick out

**"THE FINAL VOICEOVER SEGMENTS GET ADDED LITERALLY A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE SHOW IS COMPLETED"**

the main stories; there are too many games to do each one justice so the analysis has to be selective and brief. The final voiceover segments get added literally a few minutes before the show is completed. It is recorded about 90 minutes before it goes out on air so it's almost live but the day is still a long one."

Despite needing to swot up on 72 different Football League clubs, the cricket-loving presenter is acutely aware of Yeovil's difficult start to the season. "Clearly they're in a division they've never been in before and it's taking some acclimatising to. I've spoken to Gary Johnson a few times and it's obviously a big jump for some players. I can't stress enough though that you have to have someone to score goals in this division. I know there have been some hard luck stories in games this season but no one wants Yeovil to be the whipping boys. They are clearly the underdogs and, in no way patronisingly, we love a story like Yeovil where their very place in the Championship is a minor miracle."

For Manish, the future looks bright. Having previously worked on the 2006 World Cup, he's in the running for a top BBC job at next year's World Cup in Brazil. *The Football League Show* has one more year to run on its present deal after this season so he'll be kept busy.

And finally, something not known about the programme for Yeovil fans? "Okay," he thinks for a minute. "The mugs on our desk are full; either tea, coffee or water, whatever our tippie is. We don't usually drink from them while on screen but if Yeovil Town give us something to talk about today, I'll take a sip from my mug tonight for them. How's that?"

Well, not sure about you but I'll drink to that! ■

