

5 QUESTIONS WITH...

Jasmine Leigh, 15 – Blackpool Tower Circus' official superfan!

Watching Blackpool Tower Circus no fewer than 100 times, equating to more than six times every year since she was born, Jasmine loves the circus – and she was lucky enough to appear as one of the stars, too!

● To buy tickets, visit: theblackpooltower.com



My circus family

1. What's your favourite thing about the circus and why do you love to visit so often?

Mooky & Mr Boo – they are the main entertainers in the show. Mooky is the BEST clown and is very talented. Whether he is doing his comedy acts or circus tricks, it is very amusing to me. Both of them make me laugh!

2. Tell us more about your appearance in the Summer Special Show this year...

It was unreal and was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I got to juggle in the opening of the show which was AMAZING! I couldn't believe that I got the chance to show off a trick or two and be on the stage. I also got to ride a dragon in the finale – I felt like a queen!

3. What circus item would you like to add to your collection next?

As a superfan, I have a lot of merchandise...but I would love to own a piece of costume that Mooky & Mr Boo wear in the show. That really would be the icing on the cake!

4. If you could be a ringmaster in the circus, what would be your go-to trick?

My talent would definitely have to be juggling and comedy. I love to make people laugh and I think to be at the centre of the show would be thrilling. I love seeing the audience react to the ringmaster and if that was me, it would be the happiest feeling ever.

5. We see that your bedroom is circus themed – which items are your favourite?

My favourite items are my Mooky & Mr Boo teddies. They're my prized possessions and I have had them for a couple of years now. Whenever I go to the circus, they always get an outstanding reaction from Mooky & Mr Boo. They make me feel at home.

Bringing the circus home!



Looking the part



SCORE! REAL LIFE

GOAL-DEN OLDIE

Jan Marriott, 76, from Portishead, comes second to her husband's hobby...



Football runs in our family!

Me and Steve

Sitting in my local park, I spread out on the grass, sunbathing. I was 16 years old and relishing time off school with my friends.

Then a football came rolling towards me.

I grabbed it as I saw one of the players running for it.

'Hey, give that back!' he said. But I made off with it, forcing him to chase after me.

Steve, then 22, was a local lad, playing in multiple football clubs in the area including London Schoolboys FC.

I'd seen him around town but kept my distance – he had a bad reputation with the ladies!

Nevertheless, I always thought he was good-looking. But a few weeks later, he finally asked me on a date.

And the rest was history. When we first started dating, I tagged along to some of Steve's football games.

He always played football on Saturday afternoons, so I knew not to expect to see him then!

And while I knew he was football mad, he never bored me by talking about it too much – he didn't want to scare me off!

So, I didn't realise he was such a competitive player.

'Janice, your Steve is kicking off again!' the players would

yell at me as I sat lounging on the sidelines.

'Nothing to do with me!' I'd call back.

He was doing stepovers before Ronaldo became famous for them, swigging whisky and smoking a cigarette during half-time.

Football meant a lot to him, but I didn't realise how much.

Not until he opened up about one upsetting memory.

When Steve was 14, he was invited to try out for Arsenal.

Growing up a huge footie fan and playing in amateur teams around Hackney, it was a dream come true.

But coming from a working-class family, he couldn't afford a pair of modern boots.

And so he never went.

Even two children and 58 years of marriage later, Steve still didn't like to talk about it.

While he played for many local teams over the years, he mourned the opportunity.

But he always found a way to keep football in our lives, a third wheel in our marriage!

Lounging in the garden during summer, I watched as Steve kicked the ball around with our two sons, Justin, now 54, and Christian, now 51, and then our grandchildren –



Playing for England was Steve's childhood dream

Michael, 16, Brandon, 14, Sophie, 14, and Eva, 12.

While he's never been a season ticket holder, he's always glued to the TV whenever his favourite team, Manchester United, is on!

Mind you, I don't watch them – I'll watch the big matches like the World Cup, but the penalties are too tense!

Seeing our granddaughter Eva grow up to play for North Somerset FC was one of Steve's proudest moments.

But reality kicked in when he spotted an abnormality in a mole on his back in 2018.

'Just to be safe,' Steve told me, booking a GP check-up.

Back in the 60s, Steve slathered his skin in olive oil.

'So I'd go browner for the girls!' he always liked to remind me.

So it didn't come as a surprise that he'd seen changes in his skin.

While the initial mole was fine, tests ran on another one revealed it was cancerous.

Steve was diagnosed with stage three skin cancer – they were scared it would spread.

After undergoing eight operations, including removing the cancerous mole and a few lymph nodes, Steve had to hang up his football boots.

But this never dampened Steve's spirits – he wanted to

get back on the pitch as soon as he could.

'I just want to get on with it!' he always said.

And one of his friends had a grand suggestion.

'Why don't you join walking football?' he asked.

Steve had never heard of it before, but he agreed to go along to the Clevedon Town Walking Football Club after we made the move to Portishead in December 2018.

Walking football was much more accessible for him by reducing the strain of running.

After befriending a player who stopped his game to come chat, John Walters, Steve was quickly snapped up by the club

and back on the ball as a midfielder.

Donning his Adidas football boots, I was reminded of when we first met.

After all these years, nothing much has changed, has it? I thought, smiling to myself.

But Steve's world changed forever when he was invited to play for England's over-75s walking football team.

Having been recommended by his Clevedon team for a trial at the Southwest regional side, Steve went along and quickly made a good impression.

Catching the eye of Danny Ward, the manager of the over-75s England team, he was



CALM BEFORE THE SCORE

offered another trial.

This time for the national team to represent England!

Although Steve was surprised, I knew he'd succeed.

Now having been selected to play at a national level, Steve's football career has gone from strength to strength.

While most footballers are retired by 30 years old, Steve's career started at 78!

And while he doesn't get paid millions like players do today, he's happy playing football for free!

Playing in the Anglo Welsh Cup against Wales in September last year, Steve was presented with his first international cap!

Now cancer-free and 82 years old, Steve is the oldest international football player and is showing no signs of slowing down.

He's always off to away games every three months, even travelling as far as Ireland for a match.

Even in the week, he plays up to three times.

So it's safe to say I get a lot of peace and quiet!

In August this year, he even competed in the Walking Football World Cup in Derbyshire against

Nigeria, Spain and Italy.

Walking football truly has given him a new lease of life.

'It would be a nice way to go, on the football pitch!' Steve always tells me.

I know he won't hang up his football boots anytime soon.



Back on the ball

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