

Football's been my life ... now I need a break

Football
Jack Butler
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Almost 25 years after his debut, Horsham FC stalwart Gary Charman has announced his retirement.

The winger-turned-defender will play his final match on March 12 when the Hornets host Brightonsea.

That day, Charman will walk away as a club legend, having racked up 615 appearances across four spells with Horsham FC, passing Mark Stepney as the club's most capped player.

It is a difficult moment for any footballer, but the decision to retire is Charman's, and make no mistake he is proud to say that.

"That's the nice thing about it," the 41-year-old says, speaking on his decision to retire. "It's not been taken away from me.

"Even now ten per cent of me is thinking 'You've got another year in you'. But I just think it was my time to call it a day.

"Football has been my life for 25 years - I need some time away from it."

It is clear this is important to Charman, who has dealt with plenty of setbacks throughout his career. One injury smashed his shoulder socket. One tackle broke his leg. Another left him with 14 breaks in his cheekbone - and extensive damage to his eye socket.

Despite this, after a year of rehabilitation, Charman made a return to football, playing the rest of his career



Gary Charman has been reflecting on his long career after announcing his retirement Picture: John Lines

with one side of his face full of metal plates.

"I couldn't do anything," he said of the injury that left him out of the game for over a year. "Not playing is obvious, but behind the scenes, that's the hardest bit.

"People don't see that you can't work. Or put your socks on. I couldn't even shower on my own.

"For the first six months, I wasn't allowed to run. It took a lot to play again.

"You need the right attitude and dedication.

"When I was back, I was training for six or eight weeks, before I even thought about heading the ball. Then someone crossed a ball in and I just headed it without thinking. All my teammates start shouting: 'He's back!'"

What has followed from his return has been extraordinary. Charman has netted 169 times for Horsham and is the leading FA Cup goals-

corer of all-time at a club he also managed between 2013 and 2015.

Add numerous matches for Bognor Regis Town, Eastbourne Borough and Burgess Hill Town and it takes Charman to more than 800 appearances since his debut in 1998.

It's some achievement. Charman though is quick to credit the support he received from inside and outside of the game as he made

his way back to playing for his boyhood club.

"It has been my team since I was four or five years old," he added.

"I've lived in Horsham and had an unbelievable relationship with the club. I went and watched them most Saturdays.

"We've had to battle for sure, but it was always in my mind that I wanted to end my career where it started.

Charman admits that he now needs time away from football, and is unsure when and even if he will make a return in some capacity.

"There are other things outside of football that mean a lot to me," he explains.

"I've had to weigh that up as well.

"The demands of non-league football mean it's 24/7. It's a lot more than the days you're training and playing.

"I don't know what sort of role I'll go on to next, but I hope to stay as part of the club.

"I will be there as a fan as much as I can.

"It's hard to talk about, and to put into words. The club means a huge amount to me."

Horsham FC have arranged a testimonial for Charman, which will be played on Saturday, June 25 versus one of his former sides, Bognor Regis Town, with a 3pm kick-off.

Rocks fans hold Charman in the same sort of esteem as Hornets supporters so there is a sure to be a good turnout for him.

And no-one can say he does not deserve it.

Horsham awesome foursome in action

Horsham Bowling Club members Martin Jolliffe, Irene Gettins and Sally and Martin Gardner took part in a Mixed Pairs event at Westergate.

The event comprised of teams from Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey.

The format was that each team played eight matches of eight ends.

Martin and Irene were narrowly beaten by the eventual winners, one of whom bowls for England.

At the end of the day, Martin and Irene finished a very creditable 10th out of 28 teams with 10 points, closely followed by Sally and Martin who finished 14th with eight points.

It was a great effort from both pairs.

On Sunday, Horsham played host to Ewhurst in a friendly which Horsham won on all three mats.

Toprink was led by Wendy Smith supported by Alison Hilton-Childs, Dennis Masini and Chris Hilton-Childs.

After trailing they staged a dramatic recovery, going on to win 28-13. Horsham won 67-38 overall.

Next up is a local match at Broadbridge Heath closely followed by an important league match against Ashington.

Have you checked out our new Sussex World website's sports section yet?

There's the latest from Horsham FC, Horsham RFC, Horsham CC, Roffey CC, local athletics clubs, plus news from the wider Sussex sporting scene that may be of interest

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Faygate are champs – and back in the top division

Faygate under-14 Falcons made an immediate return to the HDYFL Division A by sealing the championship in the second tier with a typically gritty, hard-fought win over Forest Row.

This epitomised so much of their season.

Falcons had the majority of possession but went in at half-time having failed to take any one of a number of

good chances.

Forest Row's spirited second half effort belied their current league position.

They were kept to long-range efforts by the excellent defensive efforts of Faygate and in particular captain Jack Labelle-Hughes, who turned in a man of the match performance. In his first full season of competitive football, he has formed a formidable

centre back pairing with Matt Grady.

Well screened by the midfield duo of Ollie Bowden and Joe Bovan, the Falcons showed why they have been so hard to score against this season.

The Falcons frontline, ably led by Torrin Ross, continued to work hard but lacked a finish.

The introduction of Jude

Morris added a little touch of class in midfield and sparked the front line.

Striker Thomas King won the ball near the edge of the box and neatly finished over the Forest Row keeper.

The Falcons run open training sessions on Wednesday nights for any local kids who would like a new footballing challenge or think they might have what it takes for a shot at Division A.

Anyone interested in joining can email Faygate.youthfc@gmail.com sussexworld.co.uk/sport



Faygate under-14s have won their league title