



Mark Robbinson

There won't be many members of the Chelsea coaching staff who get an ovation from Wimbledon fans inside Stamford Bridge followed by another one on the District Line heading back to SW19 post-game after the Dons have lost, but then Mark Robbinson has never been your average member of staff. When the Carabao Cup draw pitted his then employers against his previous ones, 'Robbo' took the trouble to say plenty of respectful words, typical of the man.

Robbinson's family have been Chelsea fans since the 1940s and Robbo attended games with his parents and brother from the age of five. A very promising youth

player, he captained Wandsworth schools before getting scouted by Fulham at an early age whilst playing in a London Cup Final at Plough Lane. He went on to skipper Fulham at several age group and youth levels until a ruptured quad muscle and three years of injuries derailed any chance of a professional career.

Mark began working for the Performing Rights Society, progressing into a managerial role, keeping his football hand in by coaching with Crystal Palace and managing his work side. After he discovered AFC Wimbledon needed help he took the plunge, started his own award-winning business and coached in his spare time, even returning to Stamford Bridge to do stadium tours

guiding twice a week to improve his public speaking skills. "That was really high pressure as they were ridiculously good. One was an Elvis impersonator, one was a part-time actor, one was a radio DJ and I was thinking, where do I fit into this?"

Robbo excelled within all aspects of the Dons Academy, in various coaching roles, taking the Under-18's on memorable FA Youth Cup runs with one including wins at Newcastle United and Watford, before a 3,500 crowd at Kingsmeadow saw their run ended ironically by a Chelsea team containing the likes of Mason Mount and Tammy Abraham. On 30 January 2021, following the departure of Glyn Hodges, he was named interim first-



team manager, landing the role permanently just 18 days later. In the last 21 games he steered the side away from League One relegation danger. 2021/22 was bittersweet. Promoting several of his former youth teamers and innovatively revamping the coaching set-up, he assembled the youngest squad in the EFL and, after eight games, were the highest scorers, together with reaching a prestige Carabao Cup tie at Arsenal. But injuries bit, key forward Ollie Palmer moved to Wrexham and a painful 20 game run without a win followed. Robbo left the Club on 28 March 2022.

He was announced as the new Head Coach of Chelsea's development squad and several of his charges broke into their first-team. It looked like a good fit between coach and club but Burton Albion's new owners headhunted him and in June 2024 he was unveiled as the new Brewers Head Coach. His tenure would end after just one win in 14

games however. But as a true football man, he will no doubt return to the game he loves in some capacity.

To close, here is the heartfelt response by Robbo to that evening at Stamford Bridge last season:

"Wimbledon fans thank you from the bottom of my heart for the warm reception in the ground and the wonderful journey home on the tube. Remarkable people, remarkable club."

We hope you get another warm reception today Mark, thank you (and to Rob Tuvey) for sponsoring one of the new museum cabinets here and welcome back to Plough Lane.

