

## Frank Barlow Interview

**Given that you have the players available, do you have a favourite formation and why?**

*"I mean I would say probably 4-4-2, but everybody says 4-4-2, and I think that at times it fluctuates because we've had spells at other clubs where we've played 3-5-2 and done well and you think that's good, but I suppose if everything was equal you'd play some sort of 4-4-2, but 4-4-2 doesn't necessarily have to be interpreted as two banks of four and two at the front, you can move your front two about and you can move your middle four about but I suppose the overall basis is 4-4-2.*

**Why, would you prefer that?**

*"Why would I prefer that, I think its probably easier – I'm a defender so I think the four across the back give you a more solid base, the argument is, is that when your playing 3 and 5 there's more flexibility, so you've got more flexibility to move people about. I think things go in trends, and I think we've had a lot of European teams who play 3-5-2 and they get greater flexibility. The one that causes you concern when you're playing a back four, is the one that floats in, the loose player that floats in behind the two strikers and I think that's why I'm saying 4-4-2 doesn't have to be rigid, there's got to be a fluency to it, and a fluidity that gives you chance to change but I think if you look across the main teams in Europe, we'll talk about a club side, I think 90% of them now play with a back 4, you look at AC Milan – they've got a back 4, look at the top four in the Europeans Champions League as of now, they've all got a back four and it will be interesting to see with a World Cup coming up, how many play with a four and how many play with a three. I think that the trend is not to necessarily go away from a 4 but to play 4-5-1, or if you want to be positive you say 4-3-3 which is basically 4-5-1, I think the modern trend, certainly at the higher reaches of the game, I mean you've seen it in our Premiership, is to play 4-5-1, 4-3-3, as opposed to a 4-4-1 to give you a more solid again? when you haven't got the ball, and hopefully to give you the flexibility when you break forward. I mean the two big exponents are I think, if you look at it, I mean there's loads of - Arsenal have done it in Europe which I think has served them well but Chelsea, obviously while Jose has been in charge have played that with the two wide ones and obviously Bolton Wanderers with Sam, but there's more and more of the teams, if their not playing it 100% of the time have got the facility to be able to play 4-5-1 or 4-3-3.*

**Do you have a favourite resource (book etc)?**

*"A book? I think books are great, and I think that's first of all how Charlie and I probably built up a relationship, because I think all coaches search for information and knowledge, so you all want to know what you don't think you do know and I think that its that sharing of knowledge that's important rather than being prepared to keep it within yourself, I think most coaches are prepared to let it go and let other people get the benefit of it. So in relation to*

*the question I would say not one particular sort, but certainly books and videos, and just any knowledge at all, what you can gain, from courses, from – I mean you go on courses and at times you go and you think I've not got anything – you always learn, you will learn by interaction – with interaction with other coaches and other players, they might just say one little word to you and its been worth going. You might take one little thing from a course and add it to a session- add it to what you do in your session and it gives it a totally different slant. Louis Van Gaul says when he was at – when people wanted his –when he was working in Holland then in Spain, he says you can have the practice because you won't do it the way I do it and there's always an individual touch to it, but like books do I'm trying to think... The one that I always liked, and I had to get it when it was out of print, and it's not really a coaching book, Malcolm Allison said way back, called 'Soccer for Thinkers', I mean I'm not recommending it as a coaching book, I'm recommending it as a read, I think he was way ahead of his time, but on the coaching? Just read, anything you read is just useful, there's very little that'll be a waste of time. I read the FA because I've done the FA courses so obviously I've done that but not particularly one, no, but I would think everything... now its DVD's and videos its changed to a new era you see, I'm still on books!"*

### **Is there a particular coach that you admire and why?**

*"Yeah, loads, again not just one I just think loads, again Malcolm Allison and Dave Sexton when I was coming up sort of because, they again they always wanted to stretch boundaries, people say they are over-coached, no, no, its not over coaching, its bad coaching if you want to be cruel, you're not over coached because you tend to want to stretch things, whether you want to stretch the players, whether you want to stretch yourself, whether you want to stretch yourself on the boundaries of your knowledge, its always wanting to go outwards, so....right....this is a tough question, so I've said Malcolm Allison and Dave Sexton, but I would think there are loads who have influenced me as a person, I mean there was a gentleman called Harold Roberts who was at Chesterfield when I was a player, and there was a coaching job available in the reserves and he was taking first team, and I was coming to the end of my career – I was injured at the time – and they offered me the job and he said to me, if you take the job I'll go back and take the reserves which gave me a chance to work with the first team, I mean that's a massive sacrifice on his part, I know he's now 83-84 and he's still a friend obviously, so I obviously admire him – and the first person who took me on a coaching badge was a gentlemen called Norman Rimmington who worked at all levels at Barnsley – our people in Nottingham might not know him, but if you spoke about him in Barnsley then they would all know him, he kept goal for them, he coached them, he managed them, he was physio for them, he's a kit man for them, he's been a grounds man for them – name a job he can do it – he took me on my first coach badge and I think that, when he took me it stimulated me, and I'm always grateful for that, I wasn't all that interested when I first started and after I'd been with Norman I wanted more – but overall I'd say Malcolm Allison and Dave Sexton from an early age."*

## **Are you a real 'hands on' coach then, who likes to get down onto the training ground taking the sessions or do you prefer to oversee?**

*"I think you have to change, I would basically say I'm hands on. I like to coach – I want to coach. Charlie's the same, so at the moment we have to give and take and I think any coach wants to be there whether... the fact that there's two of us does help because you can split things so you can tend to do twice as much and not necessarily want to be the one person – but I do like to work... - I don't think there's any better feeling and I think going out on the training pitch with the players is probably the best part of the job and it's certainly one of the most enjoyable parts. If you don't enjoy it then it's time to pack in - but you can get tested sometimes when it's bouncing down with rain! Well, rains not so bad if it's warm it's when it's freezing, but the work with the players in that environment is good."*

## **What match analysis do you use?**

*"Well I think that if we had a choice we do pro-zone, but pro-zone's expensive, so we have got a match analysis that we use on the computer, that's different to what you're talking about isn't it? Most pro teams now would have some computer match analysis available to them so that they can go to it at the touch of a button whereas when we had the video you had to search through for 35 minutes for one incident! You get it and then it's over in a flash, and people say is that all you've done this afternoon, its probably taken you about two hours to put this little clip together! So, that's invaluable to us, to be able to go to it and – I saw John Terry had done an interview in the Times last week, and he was saying he'd been asked to take a training session by Jose Mourinho, he said take the session tomorrow – fairly light one coming into the semi-final – you might say it was unsuccessful with the result. So he just said he'd kept it fairly simple in this competition, he'd put the staff in charge of each team so each staff was a manager, he said that he'd enjoyed it but we do prepare properly we each have an individual dossier, and if I'm marking up here, then he says, I can track his last ten runs that he's made off each corner and I can take his last fifty I want, that's on Prozone so if you want to be that detailed, then you can be, but on a more general basis then I think that - just while we're on the side, I always do a shot count. Get distracted at times, if it's not 100% accurate – but it just gives you a basis – sometimes you think you've been playing really well and you have not had an effort at goal. You can be 30 minutes into the game, you can be convinced that you're playing well, they've probably had 3 shots at goal, and you haven't had any. It just brings it into perspective as to what the nuts and bolts of the game are. I do corner count as well, and do a cross count, but again that fluctuates between how distracted I am, usually with the referee and the fourth official, but I would think that 90% of the time now you go back to the computer to check anything. The big clubs now have it into the dressing room at half time - we haven't got that facility, you're talking big money – so that if they want to check something at half time – if they want to check the marking at a corner or what's happened, then they would have instant access to that. This not only demands the technology, it demands an operator, Sam Alladyce is quite big on this, they're all linked in, so someone is taking the analysis as it goes, plus*

*the fact he's linked to the downstairs but they have it so that at half time if there's a problem they can get it into the dressing room, sit down and have a look at it and most players will just look at it and accept... they know before, you don't have to say anything because they... sometimes what you envisage you're doing in your mind's eye is totally different to what actually happens. You can think you're really close to players, but really you're a couple of yards of them, you're only talking about detailed little things but it makes massive difference in games as to how tight you are to players and whether you had him or whether you didn't have him, or whether you were concentrating and focused and looking at the ball or not. Things have advanced massively and technology has helped an awful lot."*

### **Is that something you would have in an ideal world?**

*"Yes, because it saves all arguments, there are arguments in dressing rooms because you tend to find that a), people are emotionally charged up at the time, and secondly **we** don't always get it right. You look at it from the side, it's not always right. I mean, you look at things from the side, and then you can watch it on the video and you get a totally different view of it so once you've got the evidence like that then you've got no arguments. So, in an ideal world I think every coach would like it.*

### **Just talking about half time, at some of the courses I have been on, they tell you to not say more than three things at half time because of players retention and things like that – are you a believer of that?**

*"Yes, I got told that – Ron Atkinson told me that that was good enough for me! Again, the three things are really to the team, so you're trying to impact on the team, so you're saying, that's one! that's two!, that's three! That doesn't stop you from going and talking to that individual on a one to one basis though and saying I think you should do this or maybe on a unit within the team. So, you might take the back four -have a word with them, or you might take the middle four or you might have a word with the middle two, it could be anybody, it doesn't stop you doing that, but to the team, if you do more than three then..... it..... I tell you what, if you can influence one for the second half you think great! Three's about the most you can get, if you do three you've done the world!"*

### **Do you have any tips on how to motivate players?**

*"The short answer to that is probably no! I mean, I think that 99.9% of pro's don't really need motivating, because they've got a general love for the game – if you haven't got that love for the game, then you're battling against I was once told that in pro's, one of two things motivates them, either furthering their career to play at the highest possible level or money. People would say that pro's move for money, that's what being a professional footballer is about – put professional in front of anybody it means they want to earn money, if someone is prepared to give someone £10 more to do the same job then you shouldn't really be disappointed that they want to move – I mean you are disappointed because you've got a loyalty within yourself, but it is a money*

*business and it does generate it. Money does not come into it when they're out there, I'll tell you that now, when they're playing on a Saturday afternoon between the 90 minutes, they will not think about money, I don't think anybody, at any level... you play for personal pride and you play for team pride and you play for your individual esteem. I think that's the biggest thing – pride. I think that's what motivates the really big players. Its certainly not money because they've got all they want, it's pride – you want to perform you want to play, you want to show that you can perform whatever your skills is better than that team over there.”*

### **Do you have a particular favourite practice or drill?**

*“That changes as well. I think that any coach – I was told that depending on what level you're working at, you should have one session that you can flick to to give you thinking time because sometimes you plan a session, you go to it and you know it's not going well. I think you've got to have the honesty to come out of it, but in coming out of it, in order to give yourself time to reorganise you should have a favourite little practice you can flick to that gives you thinking time. Professionally you can always go to other people, because we tend to have other people around, tends to be a luxury a lot of people don't have.*

*I always used to have one little session when I used to work in a gym; I used to have one little session, a “keepie uppie” thing that I used to flick to that to give me time. I wouldn't flick to it now, but I find the most useful thing recently has been 4 v 4's. You can vary the size of the pitch to whatever you want to do; you can tighten it down or really open it up if you want to work cardiovascular. There's a lot of modern research for it at the moment that says that 4 minute blocks of 4 by 4's are as good a training as any from a fitness point of view, but also you're getting a football input as well.”*

### **4 minute blocks?**

*“4 minute blocks, 4 minute games of 4 v 4, any area you want dependent on what you want to get out of it, varying from 36 long – that's two penalty areas – up to 40 by 40 if you want – that's a big area. If you've got the facility, the other exercise that comes off it – because you tend to have a block of 16 – is to let your other 4 of that team keep the ball in the attacking half, so the other 8 are round the outside – 4 players from each team in their teams attacking half so they can play off them, it keeps the ball alive that's all.”*

### **What do you think you need to do to be a good coach? Attribute wise.**

*“I think you've got to love the game. I think if you enjoy the game – early on when I used to do the FA courses I used to say that if you are a coach and you're not enjoying it, then they've got no chance. If you're enjoying it, they've got a chance. I think that is often more important than actual – certainly at grassroots level – than actual information. Whenever I took an FA course, I always used to ask the question, would I leave my son with them? I think you want them to feel that they're being encouraged to play so if you've got younger players I think the test is, do I want to come back next week and play*

*again? They want to come with you and they want to train again, if you've got that then you're half way there and the actual knowledge, they'll pick up stuff on their own because they will stretch themselves. You can often just open avenues up for them and just let them, in lots of ways, discover for themselves, but with your little coaching drills you're just trying to slot them in so that it intensifies that process."*

### **What do you consider to be your greatest quality as a coach?**

*"I wouldn't like to answer that. The players would probably give you some right answers to that, they could probably give you some abusive ones as well!! I would like to see them – absolutely none!!" (Lots of laughing!)*

### **Do you have a message to anyone just starting out in coaching?**

*"I would say like I said before, I think if you're going to coach, first of all enjoy it make sure that you enjoy it, and be simple. Don't get overcomplicated, if you do that then whatever you're doing, people will respond to you."*

### **What do you think is the most difficult things about coaching?**

*"I think that from a football angle, that at times your coaching drops into two things; you can coach to develop or you can coach to try and get results. They are two different things. I think coaching to try and get results is difficult and at times you working with good quality but you won't get the end result on Saturday, for whatever reason. There may be an element of fortune in it or you can have just one little chink in the armour and it lets you down. I think the biggest enjoyment comes from development, because as a coach you're really a teacher anyway and as a teacher you can see that. The hardest part without question, for me is coaching for results."*

### **What drives you as a coach? I think you've answered that really in terms of enjoyment of the sport didn't you?**

*"Yes, I do like it. I like the actual environment, I like being on the training ground. I like the interaction with the players, I like their verbal interaction as well, which is not always complimentary! I think you've got to have a basic love for the thing you do. I do like football; I have said this quite often, if I wasn't in employment I would still go and watch the game. I'm not one of them that would say they are not a good watcher I would still go and pay my money and go and watch and enjoy it as well."*

### **What ambitions do you have as a coach?**

*"You've always got ambitions haven't you, what you're saying is at **my** age have I still got ambitions!! Yes of course I have, yes. I would say right at this moment in time, both me and Charlie have had a lot of pride in being asked to do the job and we've been, for want of a better word, really chuffed. At that point you think does it get any better, but at the same time you want to learn. Your intake of knowledge still wants to be there so*

*you want to know what do they do, I mean I was interested in what Terry said about them. Everybody at the moment wants to know what Chelsea do and then what Arsenal do... you always want that knowledge, because if you ever think you're there and that's it then you go backwards. You've always got to be searching to go forwards and I think that it's that constant search for knowledge that I would like, and obviously it would be nice to work at the really top level, either with Forest or anybody. You just want to work at the highest possible level you can, sometimes you need a bit of luck, in football you've got to enjoy what you do and I do enjoy what I do here.*

**Well, that's about it really, it's been really nice to talk to you.....**

*"It's been a pleasure to do it for you, thanks for your support.*

**Can I just ask do you look at other sports at all?**

*"Yes, I think the biggest thing that football has looked at in recent years is at what rugby did with Clive Woodward, and that is why people were quite curious to see how he went on when he came out. His profile is very high so he doesn't get a chance really to reflect. He's sort of had everything but he managed, which is what you were talking about, managing a situation rather than coaching a situation. Where in the England set up – I'm talking not second hand here, I'm talking 22<sup>nd</sup> hand! – where he had everything set up and within that framework he covered all the squares. On that basis they've taken a lot of what he did and transferred it into the football coaching and so therefore on that basis if we were transferring into the football coaching, it would be interesting to see if he could transfer himself on, but I think to do it you've got to be a top club because you need the resources. It would be interesting to see, I still think it's an ongoing thing.*

**Do you see a time where you might work more closely with the Cricket Club and other professional clubs in the County?**

*"I think you're always looking to work with them. I think that things have opened up to an extent – sports science and nutrition – that every sport tends to tap into something that they can gain help from another sport. What might be a little part of our physical input might be a big part of something in cricket, rowing or athletics. You can take a little bit across there and bring it into and... I think the big thing that's happened in football whilst I've been in is that the fitness whip if you like that football has had when I first started, was quite narrow has now opened up, whereby the fitness takes in a wider circle of things and certainly I'm not saying the players were.... The great players from yesterday would be great players today but what they've done is opened the fitness aspect up, it's a totally new ball game. I think that the next biggest input will be psychology – I think it's there already but I think that it's no where near as heavy as it is in America – I think the psychological side will come into the game heavier.*