

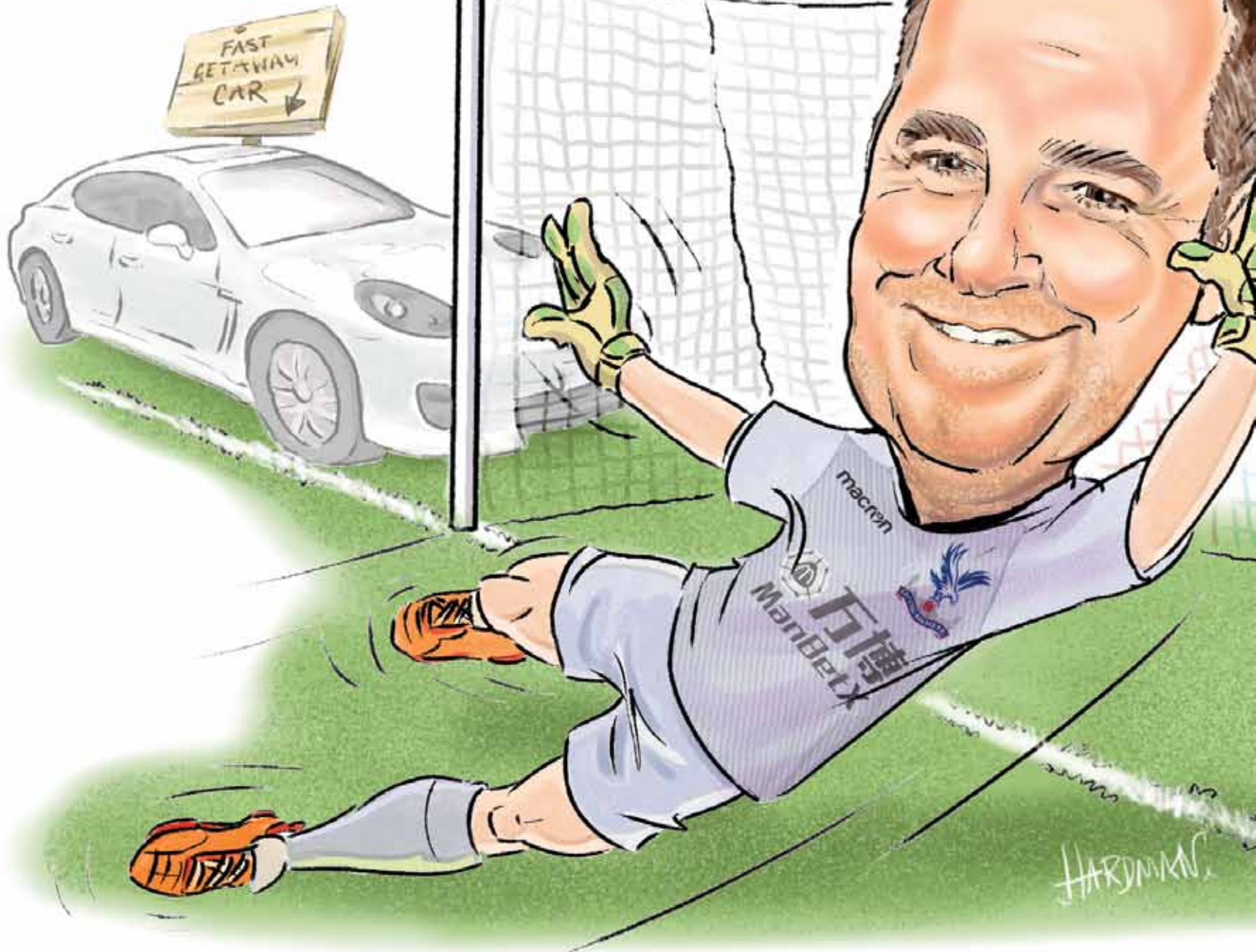
5 TO 9

WHEN I'M NOT I'M AT MY DESK, I'M...



HOME & AWAY

Whether running a busy electrical wholesaling business or travelling to far-flung exotic destinations, footballing form is seldom far from Dan Poole's thoughts, Greg Rhodes hears



Dan Poole anxiously eyes the football boots hanging up in his garage. They've been there some years now but the way things are shaping up, he's wondering if he should dust them off and make himself available for selection.

An original director of electrical wholesaler Phase Electrical spends most of his waking hours managing growth of his business, based in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, but weekends see him make the pilgrimage to watch his team battle in vain for Premier League points.

Usually he returns home in a waking nightmare wondering where it went wrong as he ponders the already frightening goal difference that's rising faster than Marcus Rashford's acceleration on a Manchester United counter attack.



"We deserved that win," he proclaims triumphantly, referring to Crystal Palace's 2-1 odds-defying victory over Premiership Champions Chelsea at Selhurst Park in October.

And the 4-1 submission to Bristol City in the Carabao Cup? "We could have been a couple in front," he responds resignedly.

Rarely missing a Palace home game, Dan and son William, 13, are just two of thousands of die-hard Eagles fans persisting in paying for the privilege of the roller-coaster ride watching their side bomb more often than not.

Their position propping up the other 19 Premiership teams is not a pretty sight. What's gone wrong? "It's frustrating. Sam Allardyce [Palace's previous manager before Roy Hodgson and Frank de Boer] steadied the ship, then retired. He did a lot for Palace.

"Appointing de Boer was a refreshing change but maybe it was too much too soon. He should have realised we cannot play three at the back. The Dutch former international footballing hero was sacked after only four games in charge.

Now Croydon boy Hodgson is seeking to turn the tide. "He's had success at smaller clubs and really needs to hold on to the players but it's all about player power now. Football's become a bit silly.

"We need at least 12 to 14 points from the next seven games to stand a chance of staying up and our fixtures coming up give us some hope of doing that."

Dan, 43, has been a fan for nearly 40 years and no doubt has relived some of Palace's finest hours – valiant loses in the 1990 and 2016 FA Cup finals surely – when playing "a decent level of football" in local leagues.

At 6ft 4in, he was built for a footballing life between the posts but that wasn't quite how Dan planned it. "Growing up, we were out there playing every day and my older brother always shoved me in goal, so it stuck."

He moved up the ranks, playing for Sussex U18s, before reaching top county level then filling regular first slot at semi-professionals Sidley United, in the Sussex County Football League, and Bexhill Town.

"It's always your dream to play at the top. I didn't do too badly but stopped playing 10 years ago after operations on both knees. My most memorable sporting moment is probably playing Brighton in the cup in front of 700 or 800 spectators. Nine of

their side were first team players. We lost 2-0 but what an experience."

Then there was his part in Sidley United's County League 1 and County League Cup double triumph in the 2000/01 season. "Never before achieved and never since."

William keeps Dan involved in the grassroots game during the week at school matches, and at Palace games but his active sporting focus has returned to squash.

I'm back into it, and have rejoined a gym, attending three or four times a week to get fit. Every game of squash is highly competitive and for 45 minutes I put my all into it." His solo running must prove a soul-searching venture, striving for a clue to a Palace revival plan.

Boys toys? Cars. "I never used to be but got bitten. Really like BMWs – the X5 and M4 – and my white four-door Porsche Panamera. A beautiful drive.

Cars are so comfortable now. You could easily break the speed limit without batting an eyelid." But he's getting itchy feet about the Porsche. "I'm thinking of changing it. You can't cruise at 150 can you." Well, not without the law taking an interest.

Remarried this year, Dan and wife Hayley, who cares for elderly people during the day, love walking their chocolate Labrador and French bulldog near their home in High Beech, St Leonards-on-Sea (Born and bred in Walthamstow, he moved to the south coast in 1980).

Dan's away from home a fair bit, either on EDA work or with Phase Electrical's buying group Fegime UK. "We've visited Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Toronto, Venice and Salzburg. Great places. I'm extremely fortunate but do enjoy it."

When he returns, home comforts prevail. "Because of the travelling, I don't have that much time for home cooking. Hayley really looks after me well. Relaxing at home with a glass of wine is great but so too is a night out in London for drinks and a good meal. "I have no real favourite food, possibly Italian I suppose, and like to experiment with different cuisines. Sushi is definitely off the menu."

The competitive spirit that fired Dan's sporting years fuels his passion for developing Phase Electrical with Dave, Simon and Mark, his three equal partners he grew up with. "We all want to improve ourselves and our staff for their and our future. [Continued on page XX](#)

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