

RACING THE COLOURS



There's a special link between Villa and the world of horseracing, as Nigel Shaw explains...

We may not be in the same league as Jim Lewis and Best Mate, but my company are also flying the Villa colours in the equestrian world.

Having supported the club for more years than I care to remember – I was a shareholder at just one day old – it seemed appropriate that my horse racing colours should be claret and blue.

Unfortunately the team's exact design of claret with blue chevrons, and blue sleeves with claret stars, was not available from Weatherby's who control racing from their Northampton headquarters, a certain Peter Saville having already registered them.

So the best that could be designed was claret with a blue chevron, and blue sleeves with claret stars.

Based in West Somerset with our own all-weather manege and the use of a six-furlong all-weather gallop, I currently run NSS Racing, which enables people to realise an affordable dream. We put together syndicates of 10 people to take on a horse to run either on the Flat or over the Jumps.

The horses all run in Villa colours. Not only do the jockey's silks portray our famous colours, the horses also sport claret and blue brow bands when racing, and claret and blue rugs while they are travelling and being led up prior to the jockeys being legged-up.

We also have a very nice dressage prospect who also carries the Villa colours when she is competing. We take it a stage further, too – our horse-box is claret with blue logo and lettering.

So how did this life-time of claret and blue start? Well my great-uncle was Jack Jones, who was a member of the Villa board way

back in 1905 and subsequently became chairman in 1925, replacing Frederick Rinder. Jack was chairman until 1936, when Rinder turned the tables and took his board place.

My father, Alf Shaw, had also been a Villa man all his life. He was a great friend of another Villa chairman Fred Normansell in the forties, and fulfilled a lifetime ambition of becoming a vice-President of the club in the late sixties. He was also chairman of the Lions Club at one stage.

In 1957 Dad "borrowed", much to the dismay of all at Villa Park, the FA Cup and brought it to our home in Handsworth Wood. I was extremely young then, but I remember him bringing in a dark battered box and wondering what was inside.

When he opened it up, it was one of those WOW moments in your life. Many photographs were taken and when word got out, almost everyone in the street congregated at our front door to see the famous trophy.

As a family we were all season ticket holders and my sister also married a Villa man. My niece, Louise Williams proudly continues the tradition as she has been a season ticket holder in the Holte End for a number of years.

Unfortunately I don't get to see many games these days, as the horses are a 24/7 operation and West Country teams seem to have an aversion to playing in the Premier League.

I just have to hope Bristol City gain promotion or we are drawn away to Exeter City in the Cup...



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SOUL OF VILLA

Things that make
this club so great

