

4 – Sports Commentary – Rebecca Cockcroft

A bar. Sitting on a bar stool is Graham. To his left are Jeff and Kevin sitting behind a commentary desk – there's a frame of a television to one side of them for interviews to take place in.

Jeff: You join us live, here, in The Wig and Pen, for what has been hyped as the big one.

Kevin: That's right Jeff, tonight should really prove to be something memorable for all involved.

Jeff: Give us the breakdown, Kevin.

Kevin: Right you are, Jeff. Tonight sees the youngster, Graham McDowell, tackling his first ever solo night on the pull. His track record has not been great, let's face it, and he's still very much in the early stages of his pulling career.

Jeff: But he's a promising prospect?

Kevin: That is the word on the street, yes Jeff, but so far we've not seen any clear examples of this in practice.

Jeff: Earlier this week, we chatted with his ex-wing man, Chris Keegan, ahead of this momentous event.

<In the tv screen – Jeff gets up and interviews Chris>

Jeff: So what do you think Graham's chances are this weekend, Chris?

Chris: Honestly, mate, I don't know. I think, you know, it's great that he's gone solo now, he's been a long time as a supporting player in this group, and I think we can confidently say now that he's learned all he's going to at this stage.

Jeff: Are you missing him on the team?

Chris: We are. Without a doubt. He's got a lot of talent, he just really needs to prove that to himself now.

Jeff retakes his seat.

Kevin: We've got about 15 minutes until kick off, and I think – yes, yes, we can, we can speak to Graham now.

A barman hands Graham a headset. And a cocktail.

Kevin: Hi there Graham

Graham: Hi Kevin.

Kevin: We won't keep you Graham, we know this is an important night for you, can you tell us a bit about how you're feeling right now?

Graham: Cheers Kev, yeah, I'm feeling good, I'm feeling light, you know, I'm really up for this tonight, and I'm certain that whatever the outcome, I'm going to go home with a lot of pride in myself for pushing myself out there, you know, and getting out of that comfort zone, and I'm going to put in 100%.

Kevin: Do you have any particular tactic you're looking to use tonight.

Graham: I mean, I'm not going to go into too much detail on air Kev! *(laughs)* But yeah, there's a few things I've been working on, couple of things I want to try out. Should be a good one.

Jeff: Jeff Baker here, Graham, that's an interesting beverage you've got there.

Graham: Hi Jeff, yes, this is a pina colada. Not the standard drink, but I thought, you know, it's a special occasion, let's try something new.

Jeff: I like your style, Graham. I like your style.

Kevin: Ok Graham, we'll leave you to it mate.

Graham: Cheers guys!

Graham removes his headset and takes a sip of his drink.

Jeff: He's a real class act, Graham, I think he's got it in him to go far tonight, Kev.

Kevin: I think he's a real star for the future.

Jeff: But let's talk stats, Kevin, like you said, he's a promising prospect, but the stats don't show that just yet.

Kevin: No, but this is the thing Jeff, he's not really had a chance to shine. All season he's been in the shadow of the likes of Chris Keegan, Hugh George, and of course, Lee Macintosh, who has been in outstanding form since he moved to Northampton.

Jeff: Absolutely the best move of his career there, for Macintosh, he's just gone from strength to strength under Owen Firth's guidance.

Kevin: Now, Firth's a real loss to the actual game itself though, Jeff.

Jeff: But he's doing so well on the other side now, with his coaching, he's a real asset to the future stars.

Kevin: His partnership with Colin King came out of nowhere.

Jeff: It did. One of the real wins from last season is their outstanding partnership.

Kevin: Oh, here we go then, Jeff, Graham is getting himself warmed up now before the doors open and we begin. I can't wait to see what he's got for us tonight, Jeff.

Enter Joe. Graham looks shocked to see him.

Jeff: Kevin, this might all be over before it starts, look who's heading up to the plate.

Kevin: Is that Joe Thomas?

Jeff: It is. That's really unexpected, let's see how McDowell handles this.

Kevin: Of course, these two have met before, many times now, and their history is a complicated one.

Joe and Graham stare at each other.

Jeff: Complicated doesn't even cover it there, Kevin. I mean, if we just look back to May last year, we thought that we were going to end up losing them both, but they danced around it for so long.

Kevin: And Joe of course ended up taking some time away thanks to Marcus Hereford.

Jeff: They're just staring each other down now.

Kevin: McDowell is just contemplating his first move. It's critical.

Jeff: And he's sitting down! Joe Thomas is sitting down. I did not see that coming.

Kevin: No, this is unheard of Jeff!

Jeff: I don't want to jinx it Kevin, but could we be seeing the end of two brilliant players here?

Kevin: It could just be a one-off Jeff, let's not write this off straight away, we've been here before.

Joe: How're you?

Graham: Yeah, I'm good. Thank you. You?

Joe nods and smiles. He orders a drink.

Jeff: This is all super civil, Kevin, it's a bit disappointing after the fireworks of their last meeting.

Kevin: Joe has been saying that he's been working on his growth this year – this isn't quite the growth that we thought he was talking about,, Jeff!

Jeff: He has bulked up, you can see that training has been working.

Kevin: Emotional and physical growth, that's a really excellent use of his time there.

Joe: Can I get you a drink?

Graham: Ok, thanks. Can I get another pina colada?

Jeff: This is it, surely, Kevin?

Kevin: It's looking promising, Jeff, it's looking promising.

Graham: You're looking well.

Joe: So are you.

Kevin: I mean, it's flirting central here, Jeff. I can't lie, I'm a bit disappointed, I was really hoping to see this young man properly in action here tonight.

Joe and Graham sip their drinks, not breaking eye contact.

Jeff: You can't deny the chemistry though, Kevin, these two – we've seen them before, they've come so close but never managed to seal the deal.

Graham: How's Marcus?

Kevin: Ooh, low blow there, from Graham.

Jeff: Joe seems to have rebounded it was ease, and he's using that drink very cleverly there, just biding his time to find the right words.

Joe: I've no idea. Not spoken to him in weeks.

Kevin: Absolute classic rebound there, watching Joe is like watching a masterclass.

Jeff: Perfection, Kevin.

Graham: Oh I didn't know you'd split up?

Kevin: Graham playing the Faux Innocence card there.

Joe: We just didn't click.

Jeff; I think he's going for it Kevin...

Kevin: It's early doors for that, surely?

Joe: Like you and me.

Jeff: Nailed it.

Kevin: Stuck it perfectly there.

Graham: Joe, I...

Kevin: Is he going to bottle it, Jeff. Has he learned enough from his group work to handle this?

Joe: Chris told me you'd be here tonight.

Jeff: What an interception!

Kevin: Class work there from Joe Thomas.

Graham: Did he?

Joe: Yeah. I hate that we've barely spoken. I really miss you.

Kevin: Going in hard now, that's some interesting play there.

Jeff: He's quick off the mark tonight, he's not giving Graham much room here.

Joe: Why didn't we work out?

Graham: I don't think we ever tried. Not properly.

Jeff: Graham's going for the hand...

Graham gently takes Joe's hand on the bar.

Kevin: And he's down! That was perfectly executed!

Jeff: This is it Kevin – but is he going to land this or force Joe to make this final move?

Graham: Shall we get out of here, get some dinner?

Joe: I'd really like that.

They finish their drinks. Stand and hug. For a moment it looks as if they might kiss.

Kevin: That was... oh Jeff that was beautiful.

Jeff: I agree. Not the game we expected to see tonight, but something truly beautiful. If you're just joining us now for the Pulling Game, you have missed the beginning of something I think we'll all be talking about for years to come.

Kevin: (crying) I can't...

Joe and Graham walk out hand in hand.

Jeff: Join us after the break when we'll be picking up with Lorna Howard and Melanie Owen who are getting ready to take on a pre-drink at Wetherspoons in Chester, ahead of a full night on the lash.

Kevin: (sobs)

Lights are going down

Jeff: I know mate, it's a beautiful thing...

-Ends-