



From Philly to Leicester

An American Leicester fan's perspective on supporting the Foxes

For most travelling to the football to watch their favorite football team entails a short train journey, or drive. But for Ben Ferree, he travelled into the future, and across the atlantic to watch his favourite team, Leicester take on Leeds United. *Jayden Whitworth* talks to Ben about what it's like supporting from America and where he sees the game going.

Leicester. The heart of the East Midlands. The creators of the Walkers Crisp. Gary Lineker. Red Leicester. Pork Pies. David Attenborough. Home to the Foxes and the Tigers. Leicester has produced some of England's finest pleasures.

But few Americans would have been able to tell you exactly where Leicester is. They may not have heard of Leicester before.

That changed in 2016.

Eden Hazard's stunner crowned Leicester City Premier League champions.

An achievement that no one thought possible.

More than 3,000 miles away in Philadelphia, Leicester City were about to take on a new fan, among thousands of others, as a love and passion had been sparked for Philadelphian Ben Ferree.

Ben Ferree, 24, who lives in Philadelphia, has been following Leicester City since 2016.

Ben journeyed across the Atlantic and through time zones to watch Leicester take on Leeds United.

Supporting the Foxes from the USA proves to be difficult at times, but Ben loves it.

"It is honestly a great experience supporting Leicester City from the

USA," he says.

"Premier League fanship is very different from here in the UK, in the sense that you're not born into a team, it's not based on where you live, so it's a chance for people to pick teams to try and find a connection. A lot of people end up being 'big six' fans and it's a little solace in that aspect."

"One of the best things about being a Leicester fan, even in the US, it does feel like a tight-knit community it feels like a family as cliché as that is. When you get to the pub at 10.00 AM for a 3.00 PM kick-off, we're all talking to each other we're all discussing how everyone has been over the last week," he says.

In his time supporting the Foxes, he has joined the rollercoaster of emotions that being a Leicester fan entails, with Ben watching Leicester lift the FA Cup for the first time, from the States.

"So, for the FA Cup, I was in my senior year of college, and I decided that I wasn't going to go to the pub I don't want to be around other people I want to watch this alone in my living room," he says.

"I was on the edge of my seat for all 90 minutes, and I will never forget Tielemans' goal, it was incredible, but I'll also never forget seeing Wes Morgan get subbed on and being so excited and



HopePhils: Ben (right) pictured with LCFC fans



PhillyCheesey-Grin: Fans gathered at a watchalong



Rocky Horizons: LCFC fans in Tir na nOg Irish Pub

thinking this is a great way to see out this game,” he says.

“Seeing what it meant to everyone and how big of an accomplishment that was, is something that I will remember forever and honestly even today first day being like in Leicester itself, I think it put in perspective just how much that means,” he says.

The biggest problem that American fans have with watching Premier League football is the difference in time zones, early starts and late nights are sometimes on the agenda.

“We’re on the East Coast, so I have to say it’s not the worst thing in the world 3.00 PM kickoffs in England, are 10.00 AM kick-offs in Philadelphia,” he says.

“The night games are a 3.00 PM kick-off generally, so that’s not too bad, you can usually slide out of work a little early.”

“The ones that are not great are the 12.30 PM kick-offs, that’s a 7.30 AM kick-off for us, but I will say on the West Coast they’re three hours behind the East Coast so 3.00 PM kick-offs are at 7.00 AM for them,” he says.

Ben is part of a supporter group in Philadelphia called the Phillyfoxes, where he and other Leicester fans meet to watch the Leicester games.

This is one of many supporter groups in the USA, with fan groups in New York and San Diego.

“The San Diego Foxes have a pub out on the west coast that opens up at 4:30 in the morning, there are always probably five to ten of them out there that early so

honestly, it’s not the worst thing in the world,” he says.

“It’s kind of fun to go out at 10.00 AM, have a pint, see some friends, watch the match, and sing a few songs.”

There is much debate surrounding the idea of playing Premier League football overseas at the moment. Some suggest that it would bring in a huge amount of money that would help clubs, but some argue that it

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THE FRESH PRINCE OF

LEICESTER: Ben

Ferree pictured

outside the fanstore

before the game

against Leeds

would lose the essence of the game. The NFL in America has begun branching out and playing matches in England as well.

“So obviously football in America is a big topic at the moment, I don’t doubt that there will be competitive games played in America it’s bound to happen,” he says.

“I think it will raise some issues, one of the great things about football is that you have 38 games, one home and one away, so it’s balanced in that sense.”

“If you play competitive games in America, that balance will get thrown off,” he says.

“I think money-wise it’s going to happen at some point I just hope we continue to respect where it came from, and the fans and not sell out too much to it, but the game is growing

rapidly in America, so we will see,” he says.

Some people find the Leicester City project hard to describe.

Hard to put into words.

Unbelievable. But Ben sums it up in just one word.

“The simplest word I can give you, to sum up, Leicester City is a community,” he says.

“It’s something you just don’t get with other clubs, especially in the states. I feel that when I’m here as well, going to the pubs in town, everyone knows each other.”

“There is just such a great, community feel here,” he says.

For Leicester fans, the rollercoaster will continue.

There will be ups and downs.

But that’s the thrill of it and American fans seem to love it too.

Leicester is no longer an unknown, it is a city known for its never give up attitude.