

The Justin Campaign



Welcome to the Justin Campaign, a campaign to get justice for **Justin Fashanu**, the world's first openly gay professional footballer who committed suicide in 1998.

For a decade, the tragic story of Justin Fashanu has been silenced, surfacing only as a warning against coming out for any football player struggling with his sexuality. **Justin** is a campaign against homophobia in football that focuses on vindicating the memory of Justin Fashanu.

Our ultimate aim is to get the football authorities in England to observe **Saturday 2 May 2009** as **Justin Fashanu Day**. More generally, we want 2nd May to become the annual international day of protest against homophobia in sport.

The Campaign so far

The Justin Campaign was launched on 4 May 2008 in Brighton. After marching in the Stonewall Equality Walk carrying placards bearing Justin Fashanu's name, the team spoke at the Amsterdam Bar and Hotel about Justin's life and death, alongside Justin's close friend, gay rights activist Peter Tatchell.

The launch followed an appearance on BBC Southern Counties Radio on 2 May, ten years to the day after Justin's body was found in London. In an interview with DJ Gordon Astley, the team spoke about Justin's career, homophobia on the terraces and in the dressing room and the thriving gay football scene of the present day.

On 17 May, the team staged a screening of Ian McDonald's documentary **Brighton Bandits**, which featured many members of the GFSN National League team, including Justin campaigners Jason Hall and Paul Windsor.

The event included talks from Chris Basiurski of the GFSN, and Brunel University lecturer Pam Alldred, and a lively Q&A session with the Brighton Odeon audience about Justin Fashanu and gay football.



Who was Justin Fashanu

For all his talent, **Justin Fashanu** is chiefly remembered for two things: firstly, for being the world's **first openly gay professional footballer**; and secondly, for **committing suicide**, whilst facing sexual assault charges in America. There is no doubt that the pressures and prejudices Justin experienced as a gay black man in the harsh world of professional football contributed significantly to his downfall.

Put up for adoption, aged three, when his parents divorced, Justin and younger brother John grew up in a leafy Norfolk village and both signed for First Division side **Norwich City**. Justin broke into the team aged just 17 and soon became a superstar, scoring the Goal of the Season against Liverpool in 1980 and 19 goals in 40 games during the 1980/81 campaign.

In 1981, Justin became Britain's first black £1 million player when he joined **Nottingham Forest**, managed by **Brian Clough**. The move was a disaster: Justin didn't fit their style of play, his form suffering after he discovered his homosexuality and became a born-again Christian in search of 'forgiveness', if not a cure.

Clough took exception to Justin's style, spirituality and sexuality, famously confronting him at the training ground:

Clough: Justin, where do you go if you want a loaf of bread?

Fashanu: The baker's.

Clough: And where do you go if you want a leg of lamb?

Fashanu: The butcher's.

Clough: So why do you keep going to that bloody poofs' club?

Clough banned Justin from the club, but the Football League ruled that there was no evidence supporting the suspension and Justin returned to training, to find that he still was not wanted.



Nottingham "hero"
Brian Clough

Who was Justin Fashanu

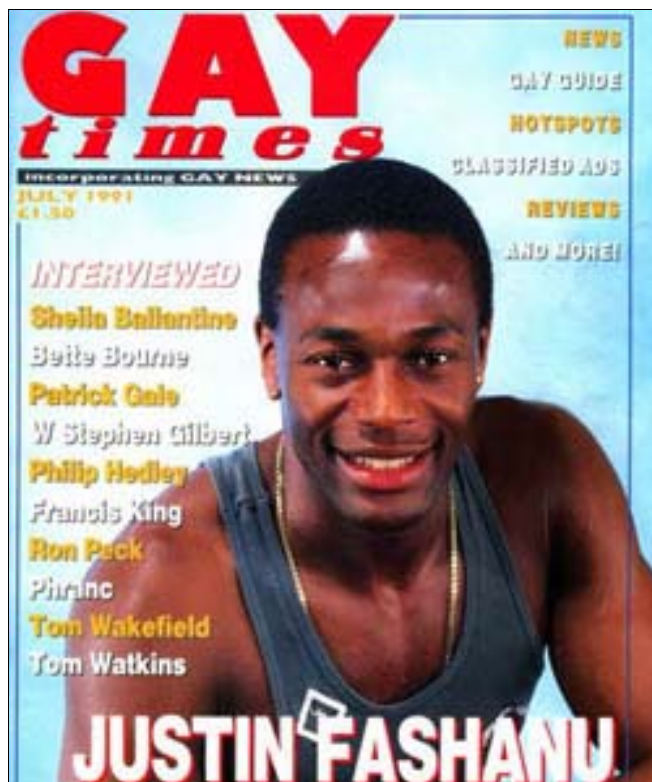
In December 1982 he joined **Notts County** for just £125,000. Still only 21, Justin hoped to reclaim the place in the England squad he had won at Norwich City, and he was returning to form when he suffered a horrendous knee injury late in 1983. He played on, but could never again reach the heights he had at Norwich, and in 1986 he was forced to retire.

Justin refused to give up, though, and spent £200,000 on pioneering surgery in the USA, hoping to rebuild his English League career. Despite having brief trials with several clubs in 1989/90, he couldn't find a club, and in 1990 he decided to take an unprecedented step – coming out.

Justin decided to come out on the front page of **The Sun** – just one aspect of the story that caused huge controversy. He claimed that coming out “in the newspaper that football fans read” would allow him to reach the largest number of people, and change the attitudes of people that mattered to him. But he was criticised by the LGBT community, who felt that he had sold out.

Certainly, he was prepared to take money from the tabloids for stories about his life – perhaps as a result of the money he lost when he damaged his knee, and when top clubs were unwilling to take him on after his revelations about his sexuality. In February 1994, **Heart of Midlothian** sacked him after he tried to sell false stories about relationships with Conservative MPs.

He wandered the world thereafter, playing for teams in America and New Zealand, before the sexual assault allegations in Maryland and his consequent suicide. His death was covered with little sympathy, except in the gay press, who highlighted Fashanu's claims that his accuser was blackmailing him, and his tireless attempts to bring the world of football and the gay community closer together. Ten years after his death, Justin Fashanu remains the only openly gay professional in the history of football.



John Amaechi talks about Justin Fashanu and about being black and gay



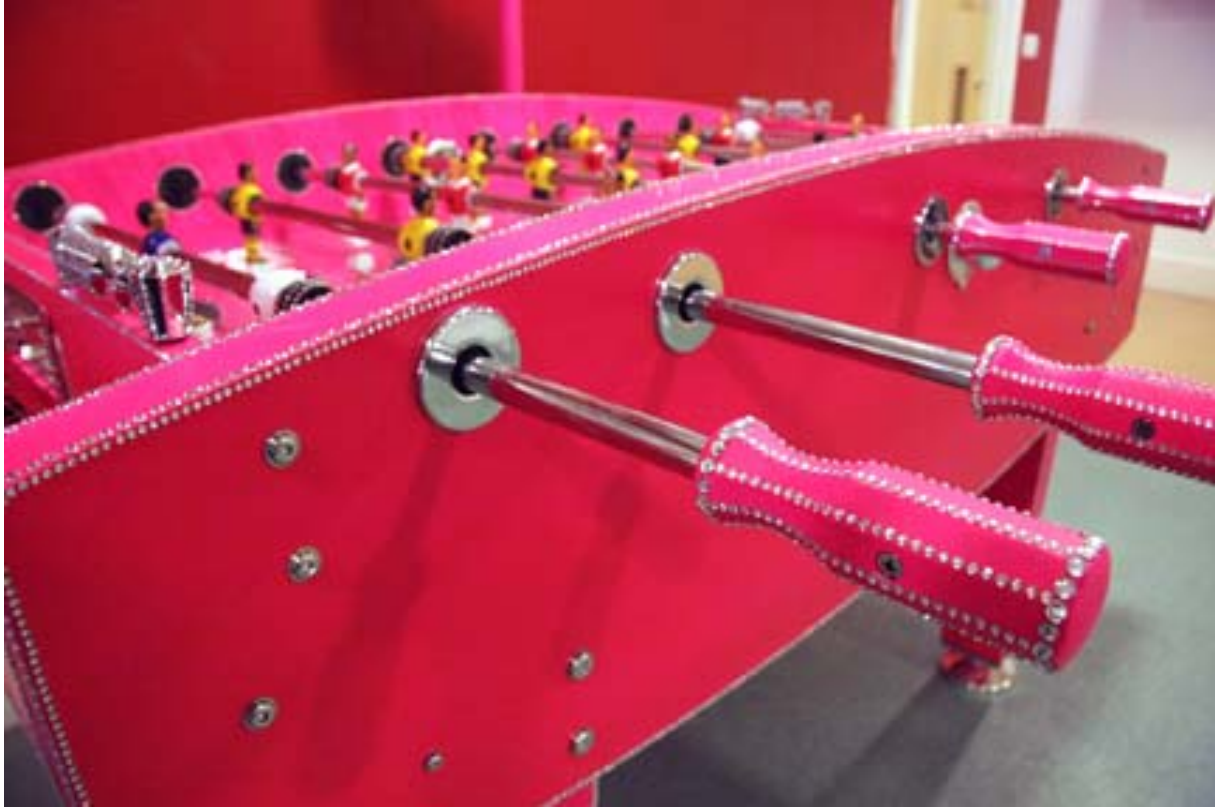
I don't think you can take anything away from the abject bravery of what he did. I just think that he entered the storm completely alone.

I looked at his experience as a bench mark for how bad it could get, because it wasn't just the fans - a lot of what went on was the absolutely abominable news coverage.

The juxtaposition of being gay and black in sports is especially powerful. Because if people were to guess who the gay people in sport were, they'd pick the white folk.

The bad part about that is it leads to a double prejudice. So you've got the black people stereotype - that black people are strong, can jump high, are really quick and very masculine.

Then because you've got this one stereotype of black people, that automatically means they can't be gay, because you've got a stereotype about what gay people are, which is absurd.

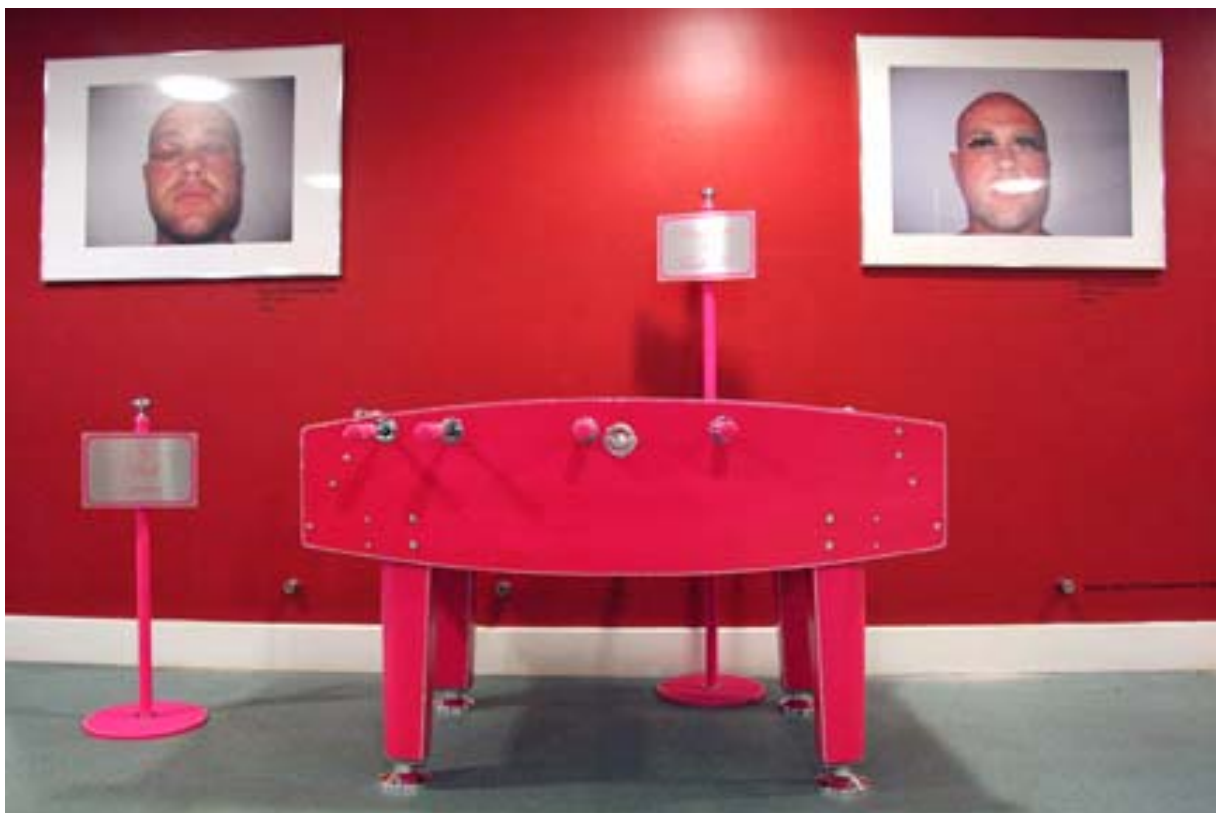


Football-themed art by Jason Hall





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Many of the images in this section are reproduced by kind permission of artist Jason Hall. Jason says

“I marked the tenth anniversary of Justin Fashanu's death by collecting and displaying memorabilia and press cuttings about his life. Being from Nottingham (and supporting one of Justin's clubs, Nottingham Forest FC) and being gay and playing football, I started to see slight parallels between my life now and Justin's life then.

I staged an Open House exhibition during the Brighton Festival throughout May 2008. On May 17th I also demonstrated as part of The Justin Campaign to have Justin Fashanu's memory honoured. This demonstration coincided with IDAHO day and the FA Cup Final 2008.

The exhibition consisted of a decommissioned tank bullet shell, an AK-47 and some bullets. I've engraved homophobic insults on the edge of the tank shell. This stands as a reminder of words that have now passed – that are no longer so damaging – therefore decommissioned. I want to use my art as a weapon against homophobia.”

