

## Two candidates, two different campaigns and one thrilling race

Includes this week's Nouse Sports Podcast – a debate between the two candidates



By [Leigh Clarke](#), Sports Editor (2009/10)

Thursday 4 March 2010



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York Sport President. Some will consider it the least important of all the sabbatical positions; for others it will be the only race in which they vote. Candidates are faced with the extremely difficult task of impressing a range of very different sports clubs all with their own sense of autonomy; of pleasing both those for whom sport is their principal concern at university and those that just want the 22 Acres to be available for a Sunday college football game.

Perhaps more than any other position, they must tread a fine line between the ambitious and the realistic. They must realise that, while many want change, sports clubs notoriously do not want to be told how they should be run.

This year's contest for York Sport President has the potential to be the most exciting of all the sabbatical races. There are only two candidates competing and their campaigns reflect very opposing views of how sport at York should be approached in the next year. Enter Sam Asfahani, the ambitious dreamer, with talk of 3G pitches and coaching clinics and Rob Newton, some would say a pragmatist, who promises "no grand sweeping changes."

The leaning of their campaigns is reflected by their main policies. Asfahani admits he "can't promise" a 3G pitch but calls it an "achievable" goal in the next few years. In many ways choosing this as a policy to lead your campaign is a risky move. What if the electorate don't buy it? We all know that next year is likely to be a cash-strapped one for York Sport, so is this really the time for these kind of promises? Asfahani answers this by saying that he would use "Union funds" to pay for it and says that, although it might not be built next year, it could be provided in the long term – something which ties in with his promise to end the one year cycle of student politics.

Newton leads his campaign with the pledge to make York Sport more accessible to disabled students, and the promise to recognise those clubs that progress and develop well with a "Club Mark" award. He says

that the lack of funds in York Sport and the University makes improvements on the pool, running track and the pitches unrealistic. Newton's more conservative and, some would say, realistic approach might appeal to an electorate wary of broken promises, but one wonders if he might regret not having a huge crowd-pleasing policy like Asfahani later in the campaign.

Both gave impressive performances at Hustings, coming across as likeable, eloquent and very well informed as they answered a series of tricky questions. It was also noticeable how neither candidate took the opportunity to go on the offensive towards the other; on many of the issues raised they seemed to largely agree. Both said that participation and success were both important, that a good relationship should be maintained with the Sports Centre and that poor communication was to blame for the recent rugby men's firsts fiasco.

They would do worse to look at the tenure of past York Sport Presidents in order to give them pointers on how to progress. Alex Lacy started with a bang, making big changes but perhaps annoying some clubs initially, yet a resounding Roses win and a strong finish meant that most people I spoke to at the time agreed his year in charge had been a success. Emily Scott has of course been constrained by lack of funds but, rugby-gate aside, can be pleased with her success so far – last weekend's Varsity tournament being a notable highpoint. Of course she will be ultimately judged by her ability to hold onto the Carter-James Trophy next term – it maybe frustrating for all York Sport Presidents, but that is usually what they are remembered for.

Overall it's crucially important that anyone involved in sport at the University of York votes for a position that will undoubtedly affect them directly next year. One thing is for sure, in the next week and a half of campaigning the contest between these two highly impressive candidates might well be more exciting than anything on the 22 Acres.



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## One comment

anon

8 Mar '10 at 12:16 pm

what is up with leighs face? too many beetroots?

[Report](#)

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