

Interview* with John Stewart, groundsman of Deportivo Alavés

*ECP Coach Kez tried to interview the **elusive** Scotsman John Stewart. Having had no luck, Kez invented the interview, which might have sounded like this...

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

elusive: difficult to find or catch

groundsman: a person who maintains a sports ground

pitch (n): an area of ground marked out to play an outdoor team game

to hold up: to resist

blade (of grass): a long, narrow leaf

(the) shade: darkness and coolness, caused by shelter from direct sunlight

to time s.t.: to plan or arrange when something should be done

to mow (mowing): to cut (cutting) the grass

Kez: Hi John. Say hello to our listeners, readers and viewers and tell us who you are.

John: Hello to you all. I'm John Stewart, the **groundsman** at Deportivo Alavés's stadium, Mendizorrotza.

Kez: What type of grass do you use to make the **pitch** at Alavés?

John: We use English ryegrass. It's a variety that **holds up** much better in the lower temperatures.

Kez: And approximately how long is each **blade** of grass on the pitch in Spain?

John: It's between 18 and 26 mm on the pitches in the north of the country. It's a bit shorter in the south where they use a different type of grass.

Kez: What's the biggest problem you have maintaining the **pitch** at Mendi?

John: Well, the biggest problem for this pitch is the **shade**. In the middle of winter, it covers 4000 m² of the pitch. After about the 21st or 22nd of December, the time of the shortest day, it starts to recede, and we get back about 300 to 1000m² a day. We've done the calculations.

Kez: And at this time of year, how much of the **pitch** is in the **shade**?

John: Right now, we've got two lines, with some 11 to 12m in the **shade**. It's quite complicated because I've got to plan the fertilisation and **time** the **mowing** of the grass as if it were two separate **pitches**. There's a part of the **pitch** that gets the sun all year long, from the post to the sidelines where the grass is in much better condition.

Although it can get very cold in winter, the grass is denser. It's even got a brighter colour than on the **shaded** side.

Kez: John, you must have a lot of problems when there's snow on the field.

John: Yes, Kez. When there's snow on the pitch, we first of all remove it from the part of the pitch in the shade. We leave the other side because it sometimes melts on its own, without us having to interfere. We try to push the snow as far up the pitch as we can, and then we go back to the other side and shovel it. We leave a strip of snow across the pitch. Then we come on with a small dumper truck and load it from there. The good thing about this method is we never tread on the grass; we are always standing on the snow. Finally we carry off the snow. So that's how we look after the pitch at Mendizorrotza in winter.

Kez: Do the players damage the grass when it's frozen in winter?

John: If the players step on the pitch when it's partly frozen, they damage the grass, and it won't be able to recover until spring. We apply blankets in the winter. The blankets raise the temperature of the grass by 4 to 6°. That helps us a lot, especially on match days. We inflate a tube, which has a strip of Velcro in the middle and this is where the blanket is attached.

Kez: And is it difficult to transport these blankets?

John: Between two people, you can transport a blanket that measures 22m x 76m. We've got five pieces which cover the entire pitch.

Kez: Finally, do you think that Alavés can win the league next year?

John: Of course, Kez. They're the best team in "La Liga";)

To find out more about John and his other talents, turn to page 2 📖 📖 📖

Adapted by ECP coach Darren "Kez" Kurien (watch the original LaLiga video in English [here](#))

Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- Do you think John's job is difficult? Why/not?
- Do you have a garden or any land that you have to look after?
- How does your town/city deal with snow in the winter? Is it effective?
- Can Alavés win the league (La Liga) next year? Why/not?
- Which is the best Basque football team? Please provide evidence.



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Thanks to everyone who came to our Coffee Saturdays this year. See you again in 2019-20!

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Friday 28th June



**CINEMA
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Date: Fri 28th June **Time:** 19:30 to 21:30
Place: ECP Hub (C/San Ignacio de Loyola 15)



John Stewart, originally from Falkirk, is also a **renowned bagpipe player**.

Not only did he lead the pre-match commemorations at the **75th anniversary of S.D. Eibar** when they played the Scottish team Celtic FC (left), but he also played at the **funeral of golf legend Severiano Ballesteros**.

So it was a real honour when he helped **inaugurate ECP's first office** back in 2011! (below)



Some odd Scottish phrases

"Lang May Yer Lum Reek"

Translation - Long may your chimney smoke

Meaning - I wish you well for the future

"Haud Yer Wheesht"

Translation - Hold your tongue

Meaning - Be quiet!

"Keep the Heid!"

Translation - Keep your head

Meaning - Stay calm and carry on!

"Ye mak a better door than a windae"

Translation - You make a better door than a window (sarcastic).

Meaning - You are obscuring my view!

Q: **"Foos yer doos?"**

A: **"Aye, Peckin Awa Min"**

Translation - Q: How's your pigeons?

A: They are still pecking

Meaning - Q: How are you doing?

A: Very well thank you.

What do you think these words mean?

aye - wee - a dram

to ken - some scran

Ask your ECP coach for help!