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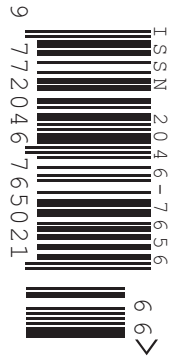
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LATE TACKLE



**SHOW THE
CUP SOME
RESPECT**



TRENT

**TOO GOOD
TO PLAY
RIGHT-BACK?**



**YOU'RE A
DISGRACE,
KLOPP**



**IT'S GETTING
MESSI AT THE
CAMP NOU**

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WELCOME TO LATE TACKLE

WE'VE all got our favourite memories of the FA Cup, haven't we?

It's a competition that has meant so much to so many people over almost 150 years.

Perhaps now, though, it is facing its toughest challenge. True, weakened teams have been par for the course for a number of years as the Premier League – and Champions League – take priority, but a manager not turning up for a game?

Experienced journalist John Wragg gives us his verdict on Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp's decision to swerve their replay against Shrewsbury, while Rob Wilson laments the way the Cup has been marginalised.

Those are just two articles of many in this new edition.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed this time around.

If you fancy writing for the magazine please get in touch. You can send submissions and ideas to late-tackle@hotmail.co.uk

We read everything that comes in and use the best stuff each issue. Please do remember that as the magazine is printed only every six weeks, we can't use time-sensitive pieces.

That aside, the main rule is there are no rules: as long as your piece is about football (pretty crucial, that) and on the right side of legal, we'll consider it for publication.

We just want stuff that is interesting, funny, poignant, insightful, or maybe even all four.

John Lyons, editor

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04. ALEXANDER-ARNOLD

Could he make central switch?

06. CAMP NOU CONTROVERSY

Life gets Messi at Barcelona

09. MEMORY LANE

When Duncan bashed Germans

10. JURGEN'S FOLLY

Cup no-show crossed line

13. SHOW CUP RESPECT

Rob Wilson laments decline

16. THE POWER OF URUGUAY

How they punch above weight

18. RON GREENWOOD

Football's forgotten gentleman

20. RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Promoted teams who thrived

25. BILL GLAZIER

Sky Blues legend

28. BUZZING BEES

Brentford on the up

30. HOLLAND V BRAZIL

Clash of the giants

35. BACK TO THEIR ROOTS

Players meet again



36. GORDON ASTALL

England's oldest

38. NUMBERS GAME

How it all adds up

42. BACKROOM BOYS

The team behind the team

44. THE CHAGOS ISLANDS

Making their presence felt

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TRENT COULD KOP A NEW ROLE...

JACQUES LE-BON PONDERES WHETHER
TALENTED LIVERPOOL FULL-BACK TRENT
ALEXANDER-ARNOLD WOULD BENEFIT
FROM A POSITIONAL SWITCH...



**Bursting forward:
Trent Alexander-Arnold
has already proved his
quality with Liverpool and,
inset, England**



WHETHER it was the highlight of your week or a moment you dreaded, we all have vivid memories of our PE lessons at school – and, more specifically, football.

From an early age you would be pigeonholed into your position.

The best player on your team would almost always lead the line, whilst you would usually stick the unnaturally over-developed kid to man the fort at the back.

It would continue until you were left with the weakest players, or the ones who clearly didn't want to be there. Where would they fit in? Usually at full-back, a role no-one seemed too like.

There is almost a negativity that surrounds the position, with many arguing those who play at full-back are the least influential players in the game. However, whilst that may still apply in the playground, the gradual switch to more progressive coaching has brought about a change in the way that full-backs are utilised.

You now have to be one of the most versatile players to feature in this position. Pace, passing, bundles of energy and defending are all needed to a high degree.

The role can now stretch from a defensive full-back to an attacking wing-back (bombing forward and acting as an extra body in the final third).

As a result, we've been blessed to witness the emergence of one of the most exciting young talents for many a year.

The player in question already looks to be a master of his full-back trade – epitomising everything that you'd wish to have in a player of his position.

A born-and-bred scouser, Trent Alexander-Arnold came onto the Reds' radar at just six and stepped up through the age ranges, proving himself a versatile player.

He made his senior debut on October 25, 2016 in a 2-1 victory over Tottenham in the fourth round of the EFL Cup. He'd turned 18 earlier in the month.

He hasn't looked back since, capitalising on a serious injury for Nathaniel

Clyne and dethroning him as Liverpool's starting right-back in the 2017-18 campaign.

It is no coincidence that the right-back's emergence coincides near perfectly with Liverpool's dramatic upturn in form.

Two Champions League final appearances (the youngest player to so far to accomplish this) and a key role in Liverpool's previous and current title challenges are both notable mentions for the 21-year-old's ever-developing CV.

However, could it be that he is just too outstanding for his position? Could he make more of an impact on the game if he was playing more centrally?

Very few full-backs are capable of capturing attention and writing themselves into the ranks of history's greatest – Javier Zanetti and Philipp Lahm spring to mind as examples of those who have broken this mould.

However, Lahm also spent multiple occasions situated in midfield and possibly this is an alternative plan for Alexander-Arnold in the future.

Clearly, Reds boss Jurgen Klopp's system is very dependent on his left and right-backs pushing forward to create quality chances for Liverpool's potent finishers.

Yet, whilst this is currently highly effective, all successful systems can be deciphered and a solution implemented to counteract this threat in time.

Therefore, a Plan B, if you like, may be worthy of deliberation.

It is not an untrodden path he would be embarking on. Additionally to Lahm, Joshua Kimmich – a traditional right-back for Bayern Munich who possesses many comparable key attributes to Alexander-Arnold – has seen the majority of his deployment in the centre of the park this season. He has excelled, being able to express more creativity whilst still acting as a key defensive component.

Ultimately, it is unlikely Klopp will drastically alter his tactics in the near future, but it is an interesting point for discussion.

Perhaps England may find it more beneficial, though. With a plethora of exciting right-backs, maybe Alexander-Arnold could adopt a new position and become even more influential with his play.



Big-hitter:
Lionel Messi has
a massive influence
at Barcelona



CAMP NOU CONTROVERSIES



IAN McFARLANE REPORTS ON A TUMULTUOUS SEASON AT LA LIGA GIANTS BARCELONA



CONTROVERSY has abounded at Barcelona this season. Ernesto Valverde's managerial reign was curtailed in the midst of "unacceptable performances".

Strangely, the superstar replacement never materialised, as Quique Setien was unveiled as Barcelona's new manager.

Setien, a midfielder in his playing days, had a decent career, even turning out for Atletico Madrid at one point.

Coaching-wise, he is of a more modest quantity. Taking in spells in the lower leagues of Spain, coaching on the international stage with Equatorial Guinea in 2006 before steering Las Palmas to safety in La Liga, until having a mixed-bag of fortunes within his last appointment in charge of Real Betis.

Successful recruitment has been somewhat of a problem recently.

Philippe Coutinho was signed for mega-bucks, didn't fit the Barca style and ended up on loan at Bayern Munich.

Ousmane Dembele, another high-profile signing, has been blighted with injuries, which has limited his playing time and affected his confidence.

Frenkie de Jong was a much-hyped addition from Ajax (embodying the Barca DNA), but hasn't yet shown his full capabilities.

Barcelona's classic attacking 4-3-3 formation has had to be put on the back-burner for now as Luis Suarez is out injured for a sustained period.

Barca failed to bring in a replacement in January, even being snubbed by Ever-

ton while trying to prise away Brazilian Richarlison for a desperation-laden £85m. In February, they surprisingly snapped up former Middlesbrough striker Martin Braithwaite, 28, from Leganes.

Before being injured, Suarez had netted 14 goals in all competitions, €108m summer-signing Antoine Greizmann plundering 12 and Lionel Messi hitting 19. The front triumvirate, without being on fire, were bobbing along nicely.

In typical Barca-style, a host of teammates have contributed in the goalscoring stakes, including La Masia graduate, 17-year-old Ansu Fati, who, at the time of writing, had registered five in all competitions and recently bagged a brace, from two Messi assists, in the 2-1 home win against Levante.

Other youngsters to have made an impact on the first-team are right-winger Carles Perez and attacking-midfielder Riqui Puig. It shows La Masia is still creating potential stars.

There is still impressive depth in all other areas. In goal, you have Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Neto, bought from Valencia as back-up.

In central-defence there is the ever-solid Gerard Pique and French duo Clement Lenglet and Samuel Umtiti.

At left-back you've got 'Messi's waiter' Jordi Alba (nickname based on service through the years to Messi) and summer-signing Junior Firpo.

At right-back, Sergi Roberto and Portuguese international Nelson Semedo fill the ranks.



Teen talent:
Young Ansu Fati
has shone for Barcelona
this season and, Insets,
former boss Ernesto Valverde
and injured striker Luis Suarez

Defensive-midfield is still usually occupied by Sergio Busquets, while a host of talent is present in the midfield engine-room. De Jong, Arthur, the under-utilised Ivan Rakitic and Arturo Vidal all fill this void between them.

When fit, Dembele predominantly plays on the left-wing as does Fati.

Barcelona currently lie in second-place in La Liga, just a point behind arch-rivals Real Madrid, and have a two-leg second-round tie with Napoli to look forward to in the Champions League.

Off the pitch, there was disharmony between director of football Eric Abidal and current Barca legend and captain Messi.

"Many players weren't satisfied or working hard and there was also an internal communication problem," said Abidal in February.

"The relationship between the coach and the dressing room has always been good but there are things as an ex-player that I could smell.

"I told the club what I thought and we reached a decision (on Valverde)."

A fuming Messi replied on Instagram: "I honestly do not like to do this kind of thing, but I think that everyone has to be responsible for their job and take responsibility for their decisions.

"Players for what happens on the field, we are also the first to acknowledge when we don't play well.

"Those in charge of sporting direction should also face up to their responsibilities and, above all, take charge of their own decisions.

"Lastly, I think when you talk about players, you should give names because otherwise you are tainting everyone's name and feeding rumours that spread and are not true."

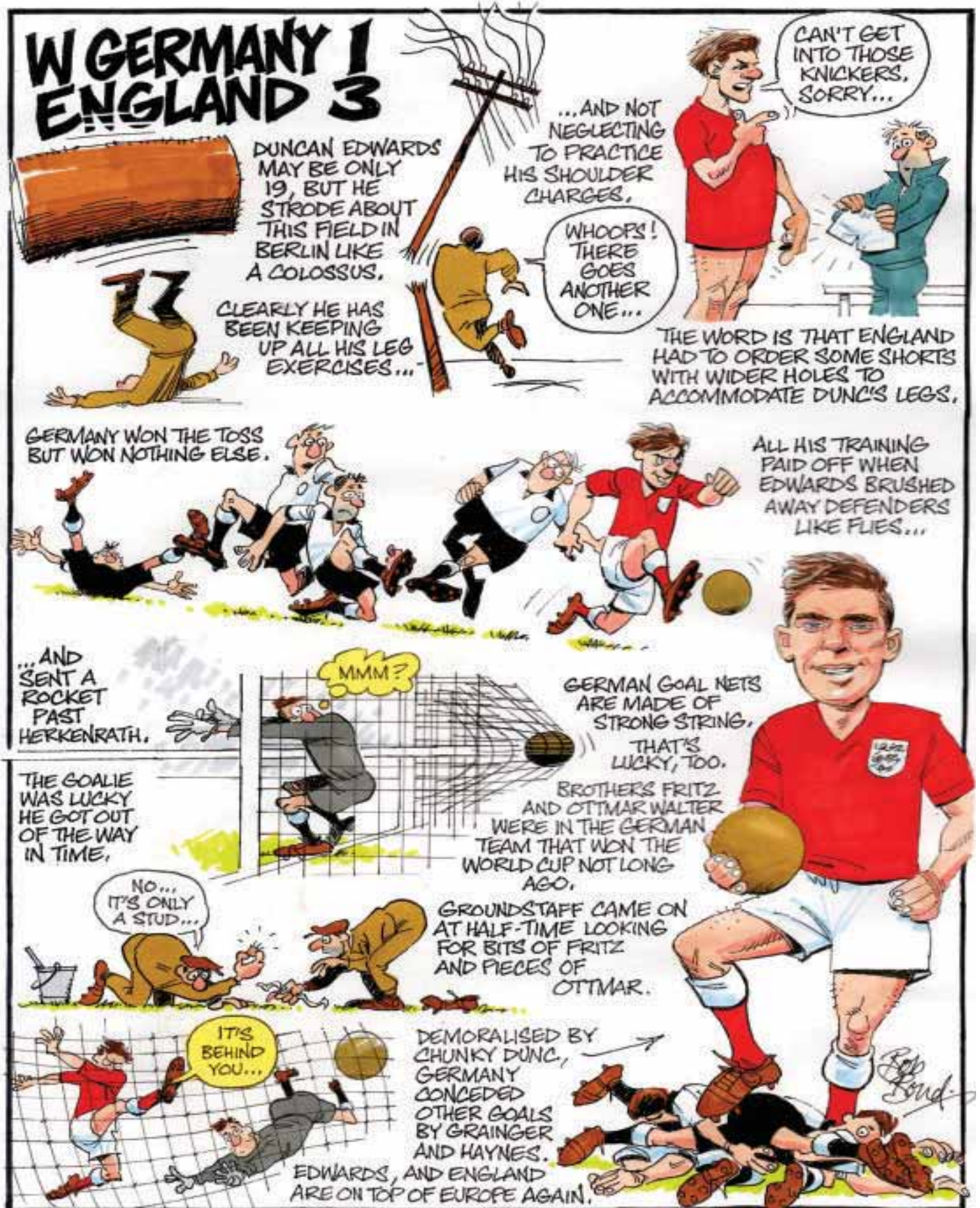
It appears now that things have been somewhat smoothed over by the two. Hysteria immediately followed this altercation, with suggestions that Messi would link up with old boss Pep Guardiola at Manchester City.

Guardiola calmly stated Messi should stay put and the player himself has stated many times that he would only ever leave Barcelona to return to boyhood club Newell's Old Boys in Argentina.

With Valverde out, Setien in, Suarez out injured and the Messi/Abidal spat, one thing is clear: life is anything but boring at the Camp Nou right now.



Remarks: Barca
director of football
Eric Abidal





YOU'RE A DISGRACE

Stern-faced: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp at the 2-2 draw between his side and Shrewsbury in the FA Cup fourth round and, Inset, the Shrews' Ro-Shaun Williams scores an own goal to settle the replay at Anfield



KLOPP

EXPERIENCED JOURNALIST JOHN WRAGG
SAYS THE LIVERPOOL
MANAGER'S FA CUP
NO-SHOW CROSSED THE LINE

ON LIVERPOOL'S club badge it says 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.

Underneath it says 'Established 1892'.

The FA Cup was established in 1871 and selfish Liverpool have left it to walk alone.

Jurgen Klopp's obdurate decision to stay on his winter break has left the

FA Cup at the mercy of any club not fancying, say, a wet January Saturday in Morecambe.

The FA Cup is unlikely to ever recover from Klopp playing what was called, back in the years when the Cup was in its pomp, an "A" team

against Shrewsbury in a fourth round replay.

The Cup took a huge blow 21 years ago when Manchester United were allowed to opt out of the competition to play in the inaugural Club World Championship in Brazil.

United took the stick for that when in fact the FA kicked a huge dent in their own Cup.

Manchester United were the victims of politics because the FA, incredibly, and the Government felt that United playing in the Club World Championship would help England's bid to host the 2006 World Cup.

It didn't, but United did benefit from a two-week break in the sun, going on to retain the Premiership title by 18 points.

The argument then was the same as it is now - too many competitions, too many games, players can't cope.

So let's have a look at that.

Liverpool had played 39 games across the Premier League, FA Cup, Carabao Cup, Community Shield, Champions League, European Super Cup and Club World Cup before that Shrewsbury replay on February 4.

But the Community Shield is little more than a glorified pre-season friendly. Two were youth sides playing in the Carabao Cup. Two more were youth sides playing in the FA Cup.

So the net total of proper first team games was 34.

On February 18, 1996 when Liverpool went to Shrewsbury in the FA Cup fourth round and beat them 4-0, that was their 35th game of the season across the Premiership (26), FA Cup (1), League Cup (4) and UEFA Cup (4).

Klopp's fury about player burn-out does not stand up and his actions have done more damage to the Cup than Ferguson.

Liverpool's line up at Shrewsbury in 1996 was David James, Rob Jones, Jason McAteer, Mark Wright, Phil Babb, Stan Collymore, John Barnes, John Scales, Michael Thomas, Steve McManaman, Robbie Fowler.

Collymore, then the country's most expensive player at £8.5m, scored and Fowler got two, plus a Dave Walton own goal.

The team for Liverpool's next game,

a 3-2 win at Blackburn, was exactly the same.

Liverpool finished up playing 55 games that season, were third in the Premiership, FA Cup runners-up, and went out in the second round of the UEFA Cup and fourth round of the League Cup.

The only teenagers who got near that squad were the ones making the tea or cleaning the boots.

Klopp, if he still wanted to stand his ground, could look at that and say well, of course, if the first team players had been rested Liverpool would have won every trophy.

It's rubbish.

Today's rest and recuperation mantra is a myth.

That Shrewsbury v Liverpool game in '96 had to be put back three weeks to February because the snow had been so bad football was impossible.

Pitches were either still half frozen or heavy with mud, the grass was thin or gone by the turn of the year, even where linesman patrol up and down would be a churned up mess.

Conditions were tougher, training and player treatment lacking, we are told, the quality of today but still teams were not heavy on acne and youth.

There is not a footballer I know who is happy not to play. Nor, for that matter, one who doesn't want to win a medal.

Klopp is a terrific manager and engaging company. But what he's done by playing under-strength youth teams in the League Cup and FA Cup is devalue and, in the FA Cup's case, totally disrespect football in this country.

He is not the first to do it but he is the first, to my knowledge, to not bother turning up for a game, like his no-show for the Shrewsbury replay.

That was disgraceful.

It won't be repeated by other managers, but what it does do is set a standard.

Clubs, managers, are like sheep. What one gets away with, the rest will follow. ►



Stand-in: Liverpool Under-23s manager Neil Critchley took charge of the Reds for the Cup replay against Shrewsbury



It does still matter: Jubilant Shrewsbury fans celebrate on the pitch after their side came from 2-0 down to earn a replay against Liverpool

If you see a full first team in the early cup rounds these days it's headline news.

Before reporting on a Carabao Cup or FA Cup tie, the first thing you do is check the team changes from the last league game. It usually works out at 6 v 5, something like that.

Now it's filtered down to Non-League.

The FA Cup, thankfully, is still treated with respect and Non-League clubs go for the glory and the cash bonus that comes with a Cup run.

But what Klopp and the big guns do has an impact.

My local team, Tamworth, down in the BetVictor Southern League Premier Central Division - more like a sentence than a title - put a youth side out in a Staffordshire Senior Cup tie recently and lost.

There was an attractive tie against Stoke City on offer in the next round and, possibly, going on to win a cup.

But Tamworth are top of their league and bidding for promotion, so they went the Klopp route.

That little story is significant because it shows how insidious this has become.

What it's all about, of course, is money.

It will be interesting to see



what stance Klopp takes when the Champions League is revamped.

Will Klopp be as angry at the probable increase in Champions League fixtures from a maximum 13 to 17 if you want to win it?

It's more games, more strain on your players.

But there will be more money from more games, extra prize money, gate receipts, TV money.

What's Klopp's answer? What? Scrap the Carabao Cup, you say?

Let me remind you of something.

When Liverpool beat Shrewsbury 4-0 in the FA Cup of '96, it was four days after the death of Liverpool's most successful manager, Bob Paisley.

He won three League Cups in a cupboard of silverware that also included six league titles, three European Cups, the UEFA Cup and UEFA Super Cup.

Be careful of the history you are throwing away, Herr Klopp.



Prize guy: Legendary Liverpool manager Bob Paisley



SHOW THE CUP SOME RESPECT

ROB WILSON LAMENTS THE WAY THE FA CUP HAS BEEN MARGINALISED IN THE CHASE FOR MEGABUCKS

THE first ever FA Cup final took place in 1872 at the Oval Cricket Ground. Wanderers FC became the first winners of the competition thanks to a 1-0 win over the Royal Engineers. Only 2,000 spectators were in attendance and, although still in existence, a reformed Wanderers FC now play in the Surrey South Eastern Combination.

Since its infancy and humble beginnings, the FA Cup has come a long way. It remains the oldest cup competition in world football and still attracts a capacity crowd at Wembley Stadium for the final.

If you agree with it or not, the semi-finals being held at Wembley also generates enormous crowds.

The FA Cup remains the showpiece of our club football season. I'm sure traditionalist football supporters much prefer it being played after the climax of the Premier League season rather than a couple of games before. There have been so many memorable moments in the FA Cup over the past 149 years, so many great players that have graced the competition.

When you mention names such as Stanley Matthews, Ricky Villa, Ronnie Radford, Ian Rush, Alan Sunderland and Bobby Stokes for example, you more often than not think of the FA Cup.

How about the White Horse? Sutton United? The Crazy Gang or Gazza's knee? They mean something to those passionate about our sport.

For those brought up on the traditions of the FA Cup, it is a sacred competition that continues to stir emotion. Before Sky TV, BT Sport, Amazon or illegal streaming off the internet, the screening of the FA Cup final in May was your lot.

It was the one-off football match



Party time: Blackpool outside-right Stanley Matthews, right, and captain Harry Johnston are chaired aloft after their dramatic 4-3 win over Bolton Wanderers in the 1953 FA Cup final

that was always broadcast on terrestrial television and supporters lapped up the whole occasion.

There was nothing better than waking up on Cup Final day as a kid and seeing the immense build-up starting from about 9.30am on the Saturday morning. Our screens were dominated with football and preparing for the big kick off at 3pm.

There was footage of the pre-match meal, the travel in on the team bus, interviews with fans outside Wembley, the walk onto the pitch and the singing of 'Abide With Me'.

You could literally set your watch to it. It was a fantastic spectacle and we have had some memorable finals down the years to match it as well.

Therefore, it is irritating that the influence of foreign coaches and the riches now on offer for Champions League success and league position in the Premier League is seeing the FA Cup discarded as something of a nuisance by a num-

ber of clubs. Struggling Premier League teams 'rest players' because their focus is on retaining their status and millions by remaining in the top tier.

Even Championship clubs are electing to pick and choose their line-ups in the FA Cup because their main priority is promotion and guess what...the millions that arrive with that.

Well-respected coaches such as Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola are now openly complaining about FA Cup replays and how they should be erased from history.

They argue that ties should be decided on the day. We are not daft - we know that because they are prioritising the Premier League and the Champions League, they are degrading the FA Cup.

If they go out of the competition in the earlier rounds they are not overly bothered because they can apply all their focus on to the main prizes.

The prize money on offer in the FA Cup is nothing compared to what is on ►

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offer with a top four finish or progression to the later stages of the Champions League.

That is fine but winning the League title or the then European Cup was probably more prestigious before anyway. The only main difference now is the money.

You shouldn't be fooled by them because as a football supporter you want those days out at Wembley and hopefully seeing your team lift a trophy for once in your lifetime.

That is why you travel up and down

the motorway every Saturday for those one-off glory days.

Genuine football supporters couldn't, or shouldn't, care less that their team gets more money in the coffers if their team finishes fifth rather than sixth. Who cares?

Yes, money is important in the game because it gives you a chance to compete but surely any club wants to generate money to build a better squad and in turn be successful on the pitch and win trophies. That is the purity of sport.

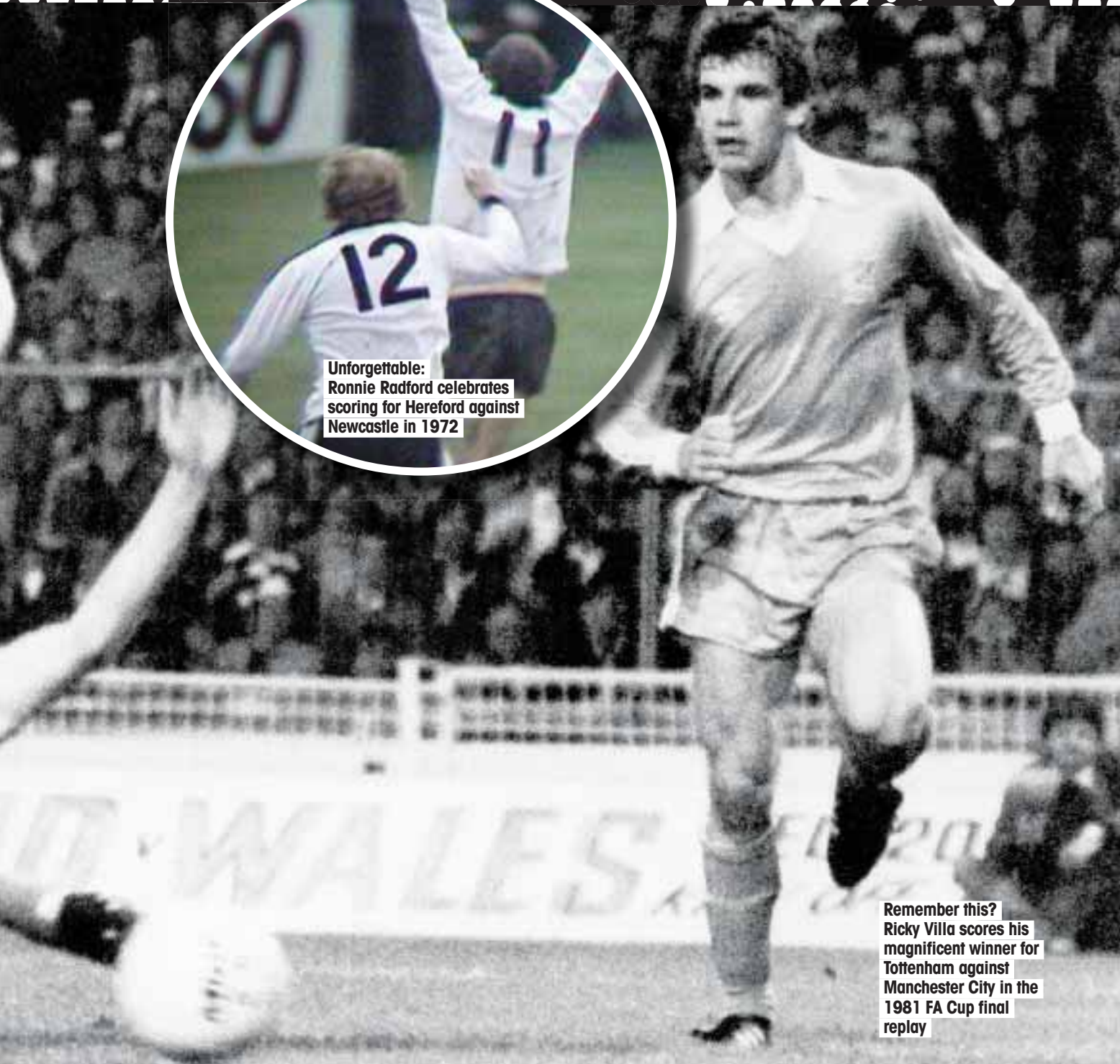
Klopp didn't show up for Liverpool's FA Cup replay at home to Shrewsbury. He had obviously booked a holiday during the newly introduced winter break and wasn't going to budge.

He never expected that he would be facing a Cup replay, especially after going 2-0 up - but his young team underestimated Shrewsbury and they deserved their pay day and 'unforgettable moment' at Anfield.

Klopp's desperation to win the tie at the first attempt saw him introduce big



Unforgettable:
Ronnie Radford celebrates
scoring for Hereford against
Newcastle in 1972



Remember this?
Ricky Villa scores his
magnificent winner for
Tottenham against
Manchester City in the
1981 FA Cup final
replay

hitters Mo Salah and Roberto Firmino late on but to no avail.

That is Klopp's fault. He should have selected a team to make sure that having a replay was never a possibility. Once a replay was needed, he should have been in attendance for a first team match. It was disrespectful to the competition that he wasn't.

Foreign coaches just don't get the FA Cup, do they? Their own domestic cup competitions play second fiddle to everything else and they then disregard

our competition as not 'overly important'.

Tell that to the 8,000 Shrewsbury fans who travelled to Anfield for the replay. That is one of their great nights supporting their local team. In the future please don't take that possibility away from them.

If clubs are now deeming success on how much they can bring in commercially, the size of the worldwide fan base or where they appear on the football rich list, then the game has gone.

Football is about suffering, hardship, adversity and then tasting those glorious moments. Those unforgettable days out as a supporter regardless of what level your team plays at. Those trophy-lifting days, not finishing in a Europa League spot.

Those nights out at Anfield for an FA Cup replay supporting your team instead of going to Exeter, Plymouth or Crawley on a Tuesday night. Those one-off occasions are a reward for all the bread and butter.



THE POWER OF URUGUAY

DYLAN KRAIN EXPLAINS HOW THE SMALL SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRY PUNCH ABOVE THEIR WEIGHT...

IN LATE October 2018, I created a simple statistics sheet that displayed and compared the ability of countries to develop footballing talent, naming it the Player Development Index (PDI).

PDI scores are calculated by tallying the transfer market values of the top five most valuable players representing the country (according to transfermarkt.com) and dividing them by the country's population.

The PDI only calculates the scores of the ten highest ranking men's national teams, according to the FIFA World Rankings.

Thus, a high PDI score would indicate that the country in question is uncovering and developing quality footballers without a particularly large talent pool at their disposal in the form of the country's population.

Upon looking over the index thus far, one thing becomes very evident: Uruguay are the PDI kings.

They have had the highest score in every instalment, with their score peaking at 80.14 in April 2019.

This is no great sur-

prise considering the small South American nation have always been somewhat of an anomaly in world football.

Uruguay hold the record for the smallest nation to lift the World Cup, with a population of only 1.5 million amid their success in the inaugural tournament, held in 1930.

Although their population has now grown to 3,369,299 (according to the 2018 census), Uruguay is continuing to grow at a very leisurely pace, thanks to a very low birth rate.

So it probably will not come as a surprise that Uruguay is the smallest country to have featured in the PDI and their low population plays a significant role in calculating their high PDI score.

The obvious question is: how is Uruguay able to produce so much quality footballing talent with such a small population?

The answer, in short, is that the country's success is truly a testament to Uruguay's football culture and history.

In a BBC Sport article from 2002, writer Tim Vickery points out that "football owes a huge debt to the Uruguayans [because]... football's global success today - both in the way it is played and



Star quality: Uruguay produce top quality strikers like Luis Suarez and, left, Diego Forlan



watched - was given enormous impetus by the Uruguayans."

Vickery is referring to the great Uruguayan team of the 1924 and 1928 Olympic Games, whose dominance eventually led to them hosting and going on to win the aforementioned, first ever World Cup in 1930.

However, Uruguay's football roots go back much further than the 1920s and 30s.

In a separate article, Vickery wrote that, "football in South America began with the European-educated elite," and Uruguay is no exception.

As of 2011, 87.7 per cent of Uruguayans are of European descent. What's more, the immigration of a football-rich culture to Uruguay upon its independ-



**Sharp-Shooter:
Edinson Cavani**

**Champions:
The 1930 World
Cup winners**



ence in 1828 has greatly bolstered their own above-mentioned football history and culture.

Another factor in developing more modern football talent, such as Luis Suárez, is Uruguay's mass urbanization.

As of 2019, 95.4 per cent of Uruguayans live in urban areas. As Vickery once again pointed out, this urban population allowed football to move "down the social scale very quickly. They (football academies) were picking financially-poor players earlier than their rivals, drawing on potential from all walks of life."

This is perhaps best exemplified by Suárez's own rags to riches backstory.

Luis Suárez was born in 1987 in the city of Salto, Uruguay. However, seven

years later, Luis and his family moved to Montevideo, the largest city in Uruguay.

Despite ranking just above Salto (Uruguay's second largest city), Montevideo is home to over 13 times more people, making the move very difficult for a young Suárez.

Not making things any easier on the young boy were the emotional and financial difficulties which him and his family experienced at home. But then... he found football.

He began playing for his local youth club, Urreta FC, shortly after moving to Montevideo. His former coach at Urreta, Antonio di Candia, recalled that little Luis "didn't speak much, but on the pitch he was pretty unbearable" also mentioning in a separate interview that

"he liked the fights, the clashes, chatting, complaining".

Another seven years down the line, Luis' talent led him to Nacional, one of Uruguay's biggest clubs, to join their youth team.

At this point, you may be wondering, what does the backstory of Luis Suárez have to do with a silly, and very simple, little statistics sheet?

The answer is everything. The football culture and structures seen in Uruguay have allowed players like Suárez to be taken out of poverty and into the world's elite.

Yet arguably the most important aspect of football in Uruguay is their demographics. While countries like France rely on both immigration and a global network of scouts to unearth football talent, Uruguay has also produced elite footballers with a fraction of the talent pool.

Their football system is aware of and works with Uruguay's mass urbanization, turning their small population into one of their biggest strengths.

In other words, Suárez might not have been able to make it from rags to riches if he had not grown up in Uruguay.

Therefore, as a nation, Uruguay demonstrates my original intents and purposes for the Player Development Index - that being to reward countries that, in footballing terms, are doing a lot with a little.

■ For more about the Player Development Index and other footballing matters, check out cleansheetfootball.com



RON GREENWOOD

FOOTBALL'S FORGOTTEN GENTLEMAN

MIKE MILES LOOKS BACK AT THE CAREER OF A LEGENDARY ENGLISH MANAGER...

WANTED to see pleasure on the pitch and pleasure on the terraces... football is a battle of wits or nothing at all."

"Football is a simple game. The hard part is making it look simple."

The words are those of one-time West Ham and England manager Ron Greenwood and they sum up, with characteristic simplicity, the sporting creed of one of the most imaginative, idealistic and downright decent men to have made their living as a manager in English football since the Second World War.

After Greenwood's death at the age of 84 in February 2006, the acclaimed sportswriter Hugh McIlvanney wrote that: "Obituarists rightly emphasise his distinction as an innovative coach whose advanced thinking and purist philosophy enabled West Ham United to supply three key players to England's World Cup-winning team of 1966.

"But, above all, Greenwood was a lover of the game, of the beauties implicit in its fluid geometry.

"He was immensely proud of England's triumph, and of the part played by Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters, but it was characteristic that when we discussed those 1966 finals, he rhapsodised about a goal scored for Hungary by Janos Farkas.

"It happened to be the best goal of the tournament and Ron wanted to celebrate excellence."

Greenwood's playing career from 1945 to 1956 took in over 300 appearances for the likes of Bradford Park

Avenue, Brentford, Chelsea and Fulham (and one England B appearance).

A cool, constructive defender, he captained both Bradford and Brentford. By the time he joined Fulham he was 33 and coming towards the end of his playing career, and becoming captivated by coaching.

He had fallen under the spell of the England coach Walter Winterbottom, and while still playing he had already coached several amateur teams, including Oxford University and Walthamstow Avenue.

He was already the holder of a full FA coaching badge.

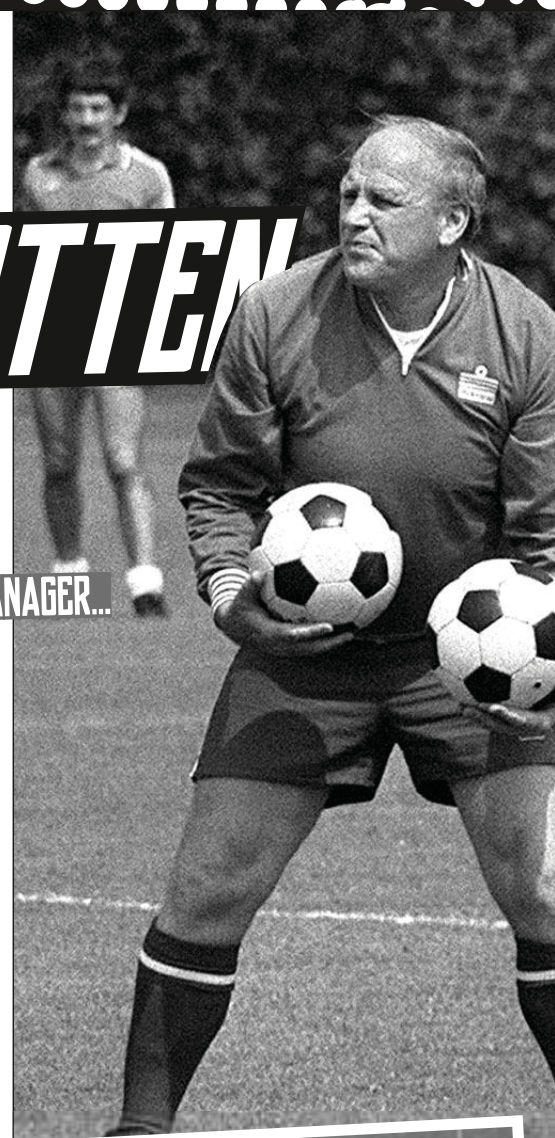
Both men had witnessed the Hungarian destruction of England at Wembley in November 1953, and the influence of that game was with Greenwood throughout his coaching career.

In 1957 Greenwood became boss of Non-League Eastbourne United, as well as assuming responsibility for the England youth side, which included a certain Bobby Moore.

In November 1957 he was appointed coach of Arsenal, a job he combined with supervision of the England under-23 team.

In April 1961 he was asked to manage their First Division rivals, West Ham United, a club whose 61-year existence had only a fleeting meeting with on-field success.

Indeed, it was only in 1958 that they had been promoted to the First Division, having been Second Division



Three of a kind: England captain Bobby Moore parades the World Cup around Wembley alongside Martin Peters, centre, and Geoff Hurst after the 1966 final against West Germany

occupants since before the War.

Greenwood was the first manager to be appointed from outside the West Ham "family", and only the fourth manager in the club's history. Since Greenwood became general manager in 1974, there have been 18, including caretakers - and David Moyes twice.

Greenwood lacked the ruthlessness

Getting ready:
England manager Ron Greenwood, left, and Geoff Hurst prepare the team for the 1982 World Cup and, Inset, Greenwood as West Ham United manager



1982 World Cup, having done an honourable and competent job without ever perhaps capturing the imagination of the public. It was his final active role in football.

Greenwood was inducted into the English Football Hall of Fame in 2006, as recognition of his achievements as a manager in the English game. He is also a member of the FA and LMA Halls of Fame, as well as being awarded a CBE in 1981.

As the football historian David Goldblatt wrote in 'The Ball is Round', his 2006 history of global football: "The key English managers (of the 1960s) were Bill Nicholson at Spurs, Ron Greenwood at West Ham United, and Alf Ramsey at Ipswich Town and England. The leading Scots were Matt Busby at Manchester United, Jock Stein at Celtic and Bill Shankly at Liverpool. Between them these cohort of coaches remade British football and in the mid-1960s returned it to the very pinnacle of the world game."

Ron Greenwood had been a strong and positive influence on English football. An impeccable sportsman, he deplored the greed and hostility, the cynicism and win-at-all-costs which had become pervasive.

He was a deep thinker and skilled communicator who painted pictures with words on the training ground, believing simplicity was beauty.

He was no shouter of odds, no conventional hard man, treating players as adults and expecting them to impose their own self-discipline.

He was a noble servant to football; with more men like him, the game would be much the richer.

of more feted contemporaries like Bill Shankly and Don Revie, with whom his success rate, in terms of winning trophies, did not compare.

But his West Ham United team of the mid-1960s had its own moments of heady triumph (an FA Cup win in 1964, the club's first; a European Cup Winners' Cup triumph in 1965, only the second European win by an English club) but, crucially, was invariably easy on the eye, even in defeat.

Then there was the little matter of supplying three members to England's World Cup victory in 1966, a match in which their perfection of Greenwood's near-post cross play proved so devastating.

The club years after 1966 brought no

more silverware, and by the early 70s the "Greenwood Out" banners were appearing at Upton Park.

By 1974 he had had enough and moved upstairs while handing the managerial reins to his protégé John Lyall.

In 1977, he was asked by the FA to restore the fortunes and dignity of the England national side after Don Revie had absconded to the Middle East.

Greenwood, even at the age of 55, remained faithful to his belief that footballers must set out to create rather than to destroy.

However, results were largely disappointing in view of the outstanding players available. By now aged 60, Greenwood took the decision to stand down after comparative failure at the



RISING TO THE

THE prime objective of a newly promoted club in the top flight is survival. Some struggle to stay away from the relegation zone. Others go beyond that and sit comfortably in mid-table, even close to qualifying for Europe. But on occasions, a number of promoted sides have adapted to the top tier very quickly and ended up challenging at the top of the table.

In the last 50 years, only eight teams have finished in the top four straight after promotion. By today's rules, they would get a Champions League spot. So here's a look at those sides who performed miracles in their first season back in the top level.

MANCHESTER UNITED (1975/76)

**Promoted From Second Division: 1974/75
(Finished 1st)**

Position in First Division: 3rd

These days there is no doubt that Manchester United are one of, if not the biggest club in the world. So it's often forgotten that in 1974, United hit their lowest point, after being relegated to Division Two for the first time since 1938.

The Red Devils struggled after their famous European Cup victory in 1968 and Matt Busby stood down as manager just a year later. Mid-table mediocrity followed until Tommy Docherty took over halfway through the 1972/73 season, just saving United from the drop. However, the following campaign, Docherty could not do the same and his side suffered relegation.

The club's directors decided to stick with their manager, confident he could get them back up at the first attempt. Their faith was repaid, as Docherty led United to the Second Division title and an instant return to the top flight. Despite being a side in the second tier, their average home attendance that season was a remarkable 47,781, the highest in the entire country.

Docherty had reinvented United into a



Champion Feeling:
Nottingham Forest manager
Brian Clough, left, and his
assistant Peter Taylor show off
the Division One trophy in 1978

young team who now played without fear. The team's average age was only 24, and in fast wingers Steve Coppell and Gordon Hill, they had two of the most eye-catching players in the league.

As the 1975/76 season was their first one back in the big time, it was viewed as a free hit for United and without that pressure they almost won the double.

Finishing just four points behind league champions Liverpool meant that United ended the campaign in third place and qualified for the UEFA Cup. The only disappointment was their 1-0 defeat to Second Division Southampton in the FA Cup final, although Docherty put that to rest the following year, when they beat Liverpool 2-1 to lift the trophy.

Since that relegation 46 years ago, United have not finished any lower than 11th.



Impressive:
Manchester
United winger
Steve Coppell

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (1977/78)

**Promoted From Second Division: 1976/77
(Finished 3rd)**

Position in First Division: 1st

People say that Leicester City's superb Premier League triumph in 2016 was a once in a lifetime achievement. Well, in 1978 there was another underdog story, which could

CHALLENGE

STUART STEELYARD
LOOKS AT THE
CLUBS WHO HAVE
SHONE ON THEIR
ARRIVAL IN THE
TOP-FLIGHT OF
ENGLISH FOOTBALL...



be argued was even better; step forward Nottingham Forest.

In Brian Clough's first full season in charge of Forest he only finished in eighth position in the Second Division. However, he was reunited with his former assistant, Peter Taylor, in the summer of 1976 and his side scraped to promotion by just one point.

They had to rely on rivals Bolton Wanderers losing 1-0 to Wolves in their final game, after Forest had beaten Millwall 1-0 due to an own goal. It was tight, but Clough's team were up, and once they were in the top tier, there was no looking back.

Forest's first season in the First Division for six years started well, and a few weeks in they signed England goalkeeper Peter



Double trouble:
Watford's John
Barnes and, right,
Luther Blissett,

Shilton, who conceded just 18 goals in his 37 games during the remainder of the campaign.

By March they were in the League Cup final against English champions, Liverpool, where a 1-0 victory in a replay gave Forest their first major silverware since 1959.

With one trophy in the bag, the Tricky Trees homed in on the First Division title and went unbeaten for the remaining 26 matches of the season, eventually winning the league by seven points.

Clough used just 17 players in all competitions over the 55 matches that season, which only highlighted even more the incredible stamina of his men. Forest's triumph was the first time a newly-promoted side had won the league championship since Ipswich Town in 1962.

This opened the door to Forest famously winning back-to-back European Cups in 1979 and '80. During his tenure,

Clough also added three more League Cups to the trophy cabinet before relegation in 1993 ultimately led to his retirement. He brought success that fans at the City Ground are unlikely to see again and will forever be Nottingham Forest's greatest manager.

WATFORD (1982/83)

Promoted From Second Division: 1981/82
(Finished 2nd)

Position in First Division: 2nd

Never underestimate what an incredible job Graham Taylor did during his ten years at Watford. Appointed in 1977

by the young and ambitious chairman, Elton John, Taylor led Watford to three promotions in five years, from the Fourth Division all the way to the top tier of English football - for the first time in the club's history. It was in the 1981/82 campaign that the Hornets clinched their promotion to the First Division, as runners-up to Luton Town.

Despite signing a £400,000 sponsorship deal with Iveco just before their first season in the

top flight, Taylor decided not to add to his numbers, instead keeping faith with the players who had taken them up.

Apart from Pat Rice and Gerry Armstrong, Watford's squad was inexperienced at the elite level, but this seemed to work in their favour as many teams were naïve in thinking they would be pushovers.

Taylor's 'kick and rush' tactics were often criticised by opposition managers and pundits alike, but this attacking approach was entertaining to watch and not many Watford matches ended without both teams scoring.

They started superbly, and with John Barnes on the wing and First Division top scorer Luther Blissett up top, the Hornets miraculously kept up their high tempo





until the end of the season, eventually finishing runners-up, 11 points behind Liverpool. This remains Watford's highest ever finish and also meant qualification for the UEFA Cup for the first and only time in their history.

With an FA Cup final appearance to add in 1984, these were certainly the glory years at Vicarage Road, with the combination of Graham Taylor and Elton John taking them all the way to the top. Taylor left in 1987 and Watford were relegated the following season, only recently establishing themselves again in the big time. No newly-promoted club has finished as high as second in the top flight since.

LEEDS UNITED (1990/91)

Promoted From Second Division: 1989/90 (1st)

Position In First Division: 4th

After an eight-year hiatus from the top flight, Leeds United won the Second Division title in the 1989/90 season on goal difference from Sheffield United.

It was a period of transition down at Elland Road, following Howard Wilkinson's appointment as manager at the back end of the previous season. In came Vinnie Jones and Mel Sterland to bolster the squad's physicality, plus Chris Fairclough and Gordon Strachan for their First Division experience.

Lee Chapman arrived in the middle of the campaign to get Leeds over the line, and became integral part to their attack for the next few years. But this was just the start and once promotion was won, more new faces arrived.

Before their first season back in the top tier, Wilkinson continued to spend, bringing in league title winning goalkeeper, John Lukic, from Arsenal and Gary McAllister from Leicester.

Together with the established youngsters, David Batty and Gary Speed, Leeds were now a force to be reckoned with. The good times were back at Elland Road and the crowds were packed out, they knew something special was on the horizon. Leeds finished in fourth place, 19 points behind runaway champions, Arsenal – who lost only once all season.

However, the 1990/91 campaign was the foundation for the next, when they won the league championship for only the third time in their history. The quartet of Strachan, McAllister, Batty and Speed had developed into one of the best midfields to ever win the trophy. Those players and



Class act:
Leeds midfielder
Gary McAllister



Big Influence:
Gary Speed



Leader: Leeds boss
Howard Wilkinson

Wilkinson left in time, and apart from a short spell of success at the turn of the century, Leeds Utd have turned into a sleeping giant. Since relegation in 2004, they have never been back to the top flight and for a club of that size, it's about time they did.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (1991/92)

Promoted From Second Division: 1990/91 (3rd)

Position In First Division: 3rd

The early 90s brought about some of the most eventful years in Sheffield Wednesday's history. Relegated to the second tier in 1990, the Wednesday board kept faith with manager Ron Atkinson to make a quick return to the First Division, and they were not disappointed.

Not only did the Owls win promotion back to the

top flight, but they also won their first major trophy in nearly 60 years – John Sheridan's goal defeating Manchester United 1-0 in the League Cup final. At the end of the campaign, Big Ron stated that he would remain manager of Wednesday despite the interest of Aston Villa, only to leave for Villa a week later, much to the fury of the fans.

Senior player Trevor Francis took over the reins before the 1991/92 season as player/manager. The bulk of the side which gained promotion stayed the same, with Francis adding England goalkeeper Chris Woods and the versatile Paul Warhurst to his ranks.

Atkinson went back to face the angry supporters at Hillsborough with his new Villa side in a fiery

opening day fixture, leaving with a 3-2 victory after being 2-0 down.

Despite that start, Wednesday enjoyed a fabulous season back in the big time, finishing in third place (just seven points behind champions



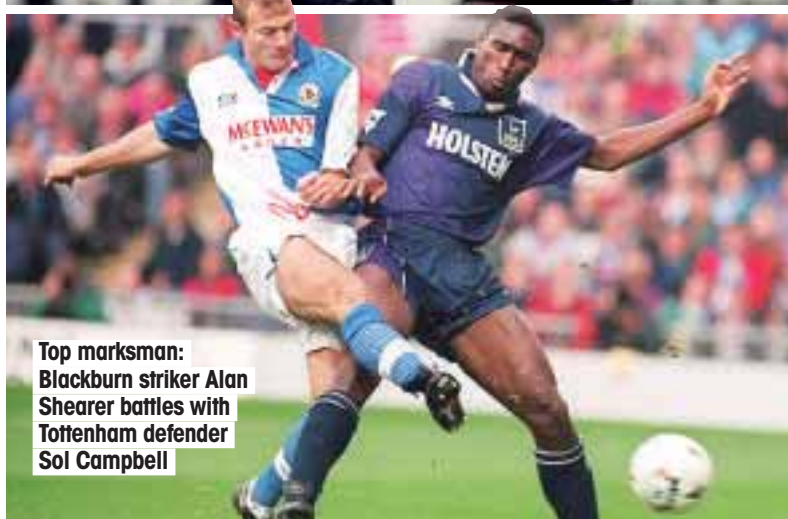
Player-boss:
Wednesday's
Trevor Francis



Tigerish:
David Batty



Prolific:
Sheffield
Wednesday
striker
David Hirst



Top marksman:
Blackburn striker Alan
Shearer battles with
Tottenham defender
Sol Campbell



Revolution:
Blackburn boss
Kenny Dalglish

Leeds) and qualified for the UEFA Cup. A position that looks even more remarkable when you consider they lost 6-1 at home to Leeds, 7-1 away to Arsenal and were beaten in both derbies against Sheffield United throughout the season.

The drama didn't stop for Wednesday fans the following season, when new signing, Chris Waddle, inspired them to two domestic cup finals, unfortunately losing out in both to Arsenal. The South Yorkshire side stayed in the Premier League until they were relegated in the year 2000. Just like Leeds, they haven't been back since and they both remain two of the biggest clubs outside the top tier.

BLACKBURN ROVERS (1992/93)
Promoted From First Division: 1992/93 (6th
- Play-Off Winners)

Position In Premier League: 4th
Blackburn Rovers actually started the 1991/92 season with Don Mackay in charge, as he had been for the previous four years. But new owner, Jack Walker, had £360 million burning a hole in his back pocket following the sale of his steel firm to British Steel, and he had ambi-

tions of his hometown club winning the Premier League within five years.

In came Kenny Dalglish in the November and the spending began. The new manager's appointment had an immediate impact and with the arrivals of Mike Newell, Gordon Cowans and Alan Wright, Blackburn went rocketing up to the top of the Second Division table. However, a poor run of six defeats on the bounce saw them out of the play-off places, which they just made on the last day of the season in sixth place. A Newell penalty won the play-off final 1-0 against Leicester City at Wembley to gain promotion. Part one of Jack Walker's plan was complete.

Blackburn returned to the top flight at just the right time as the Premier League was about to start its inaugural season. The chairman again got his chequebook out, signing Alan Shearer for a British record transfer-fee of £3.5 million from Southampton.

The England striker started off with a superb 16 league goals in 21 matches, before snapping his cruciate ligament which ended his campaign. Rovers sol-

diered on without their main goalscorer, whilst continuing to sign quality players, such as Kevin Gallacher, Graeme Le Saux and Henning Berg.

With Gallacher filling the gap left by Shearer's absence, Blackburn finished the season strong, winning eight of their final ten matches, finishing in fourth place. It does make you wonder how far they could have gone that year if Shearer had stayed fit.

Following this impressive first campaign, Rovers kept improving, finishing runners-up a year later, before they won their first league title for 81 years in the dramatic 1994/95 season. A dream of an ambitious chairman had been realised. The team that Jack built will never be forgotten in Blackburn.

NEWCASTLE UNITED (1993/94)
Promoted From First Division: 1992/93 (1st)
Position In Premier League: 3rd

The appointment of Kevin Keegan in February 1992 was a massive moment in Newcastle United's history. On the brink of being relegated to the third tier of English football and possible bankruptcy, ►



new chairman Sir John Hall took control and made the inexperienced Keegan the new boss.

His presence captivated the area and St James' Park was full to capacity once again, with the Magpies securing their Second Division status on the last day of the season.

The following campaign, Keegan spent his chairman's millions wisely on Barry Venison and Rob Lee amongst others and Newcastle romped to the title. The acquisition of Andy Cole in March was vital, not only to secure them the trophy, but also for their first season in the Premier League to come.

The return of Peter Beardsley to partner Cole for the 1993/94 season created a prolific strike partnership in the top flight that has never been topped since – the pair scored 55 league goals between them, with Cole's 34 winning him the Golden Boot.

Nicknamed 'The Entertainers' in the press, Newcastle's attacking style was very easy on the eye and Keegan's tactics of trying to score more than his opponents worked against most sides. Their 82 goals in the league that year helped them finish in third place and qualify for Europe for the first time since the early 70s. There was a feel-good factor now on Tyneside.

Two years later Newcastle launched a huge title challenge, narrowly pipped by Manchester United on the last day of the season, despite being 12 points clear in January. Keegan left during the following campaign and although there have been a couple of Champions League qualifications under Kenny Dalglish and Sir Bobby Robson, the Toon Army have not been close to winning the Prem since.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (1994/95)

Promoted From First Division: 1993/94
Position In Premier League: 3rd

A second entry in this list goes to Nottingham Forest. Following Brian Clough's retirement in 1993, one of his former European Cup winning players, Frank Clark, took charge at the City Ground.

His first action was to sign Stan Collymore from



Toon King:
Newcastle boss
Kevin Keegan

Southend United for £2 million – a massive fee for a second tier side. The spending was rewarded as Collymore's goals fired Forest to a quick return to the Premier League, finishing as runners-up to Crystal Palace.

That summer Clark forked out £2.5 million for the Dutch World Cup star, Bryan Roy, converting him from a winger to partner Collymore up front. It was a masterstroke, becoming the focal point of Forest's free flowing brand of football that year.

With captain Stuart Pearce leading from the back and a midfield that included talented midfielders, Steve Stone and Ian Woan, and the underrated Lars Bohinen, Forest were the surprise package of the 1994/95 season.

Their third placed finish was just 12 points behind the champions, Blackburn Rovers, and for the fifth year in a row, a promoted side ended the campaign in the top four.



Talent:
Newcastle's
Peter Beardsley

That was as good as it got for Forest, as a UEFA Cup run to the quarter-finals took priority the next season and in 1997 they were relegated. A quick return in just 12 months followed, but the Tricky Trees have now not been in the top division for 21 years.

In the mid-noughties, a further drop into League One meant that Nottingham Forest became the first European Cup winners to be relegated into the third tier of their respective league. They, like Leeds, are in with a chance of a return to the top flight this year, so who knows, we may just get a 90s reunion in next season's Premier League.

TOP SIX PLACINGS

In the last 50 years there have also been a number of newly-promoted clubs who managed a top six finish. They are as follows:

- Burnley (1973/74) – 5th
- Swansea City (1981/82) – 6th
- Queens Park Rangers (1983/84) – 5th
- Chelsea (1984/85) – 6th
- Norwich City (1986/87) – 5th
- Wimbledon (1986/87) – 6th
- Chelsea (1989/90) – 5th
- Ipswich Town (2000/01) – 5th

Although a top four finish is probably asking too much, it will be interesting to see if Sheffield United can continue their brilliant effort so far this season and join this top six club.

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Big impact:
Nottingham Forest
striker Stan
Collymore and,
inset, manager
Frank Clark

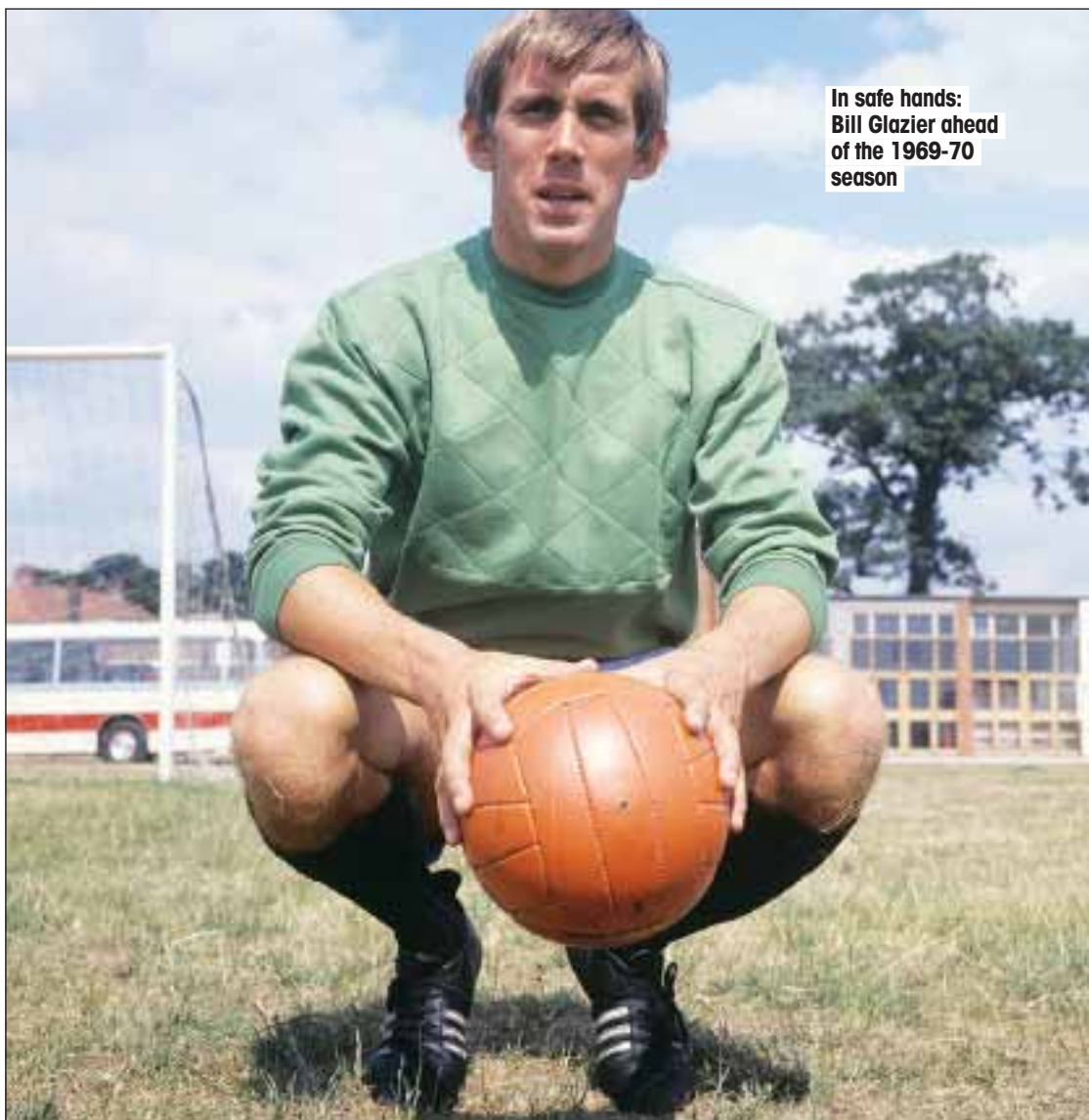


Standing tall:
Former Coventry
goalkeeper Bill
Glazier at the
Legends Parade at
the Ricoh Arena in
April 2017 and, left,
in typical action for
the Sky Blues



BILL GLAZIER- SKY BLUES LEGEND

KEVIN HALLS RECALLS A GOALKEEPER WHO WOWED
THE FANS AT COVENTRY WITH HIS BRILLIANCE...



**In safe hands:
Bill Glazier ahead
of the 1969-70
season**



EVERY football club has its legendary players. Some may have only played for the club for a short period, while others may have stayed for years and years.

They might have gained legend status through all the goals they scored, through being tough and uncompromising or by giving one hundred per cent every time they played.

The reasons for legend or cult status are numerous, but you mention the name Bill Glazier to Coventry City fans of a certain age and I guarantee they will all say: "What a great keeper he was."

And, for me, he is without doubt the best keeper never to have been capped by England.

Born in Nottingham in 1943, Bill Glazier started his career at Torquay United as a member of their ground staff, but combined this as goalie in the reserves

in the Western League. Crystal Palace were impressed with the six feet tall keeper with the strong athletic build, so the Eagles took him to Selhurst Park where he spent three seasons as their first choice goalkeeper.

Another football club also liked Glazier and saw him as a keeper who would fit in nicely with their ambition of becoming a top-flight football team. And so it was that Jimmy Hill, the ambitious Sky Blues manager, made the London club an offer of £35,000 in 1964 which, at that time, was a world record for a shot-stopper. Palace couldn't turn it down so Glazier was on his way from the capital to the West Midlands.

And what a signing it turned out to be as he became a fans' favourite with his amazing ability, his consistency and the familiar sight of him diving to tip shots and crosses away from his net.

Hill brought him to Highfield Road as he knew promotion would be out of reach without a top-class keeper.

Glazier quickly established himself as a potential future England international with outstanding performances between the posts. They earned him three appearances in his debut season for the England under-23 team.

But just as he was being tipped for full international honours, disaster struck when he broke his leg badly in a game versus Manchester City in 1965.

The injury kept him out of action for a whole year and as a certain Gordon Banks was now England's number one goalie, his international career was over before it had started.

But in the season of 1966/67, after working his way back to fitness, Glazier was back in goal for Coventry City and part of the team that won the Second



Flying high: Coventry goalkeeper Bill Glazier pushes a shot from Chelsea's Bill Garner round the post during the Sky Blues' 1-0 defeat at Stamford Bridge in September 1973

Division championship, missing just one game in the successful campaign.

So Hill and Coventry City breaking the world record for a goalkeeper paid off as they were now a First Division side.

Glazier remained at Highfield Road for another eight seasons, making a total of 402 appearances. During his time, he saved the Sky Blues many times from dropping back down to the second tier with breathtaking performances.

He became adept at saving penalties, keeping an impressive eight out of the net. And, strangely, all of these were away from home.

Amongst these penalty saves were stops from the likes of Denis Law, Charlie Cooke, Francis Lee, and Martin Peters. No mean feat there.

His career at Coventry was rewarded in November 1974 with a testimonial

against England's World Cup-winning side of 1966.

What a tribute to a great goalkeeper and a crowd of 15,525 turned out to watch an entertaining 6-6 draw.

It showed how well regarded he was as the England side that won the World Cup at Wembley against West Germany all turned out that night. Banks, Cohen, Wilson, Stiles, Jackie Charlton, Moore, Ball, Hunt, Bobby Charlton, Hurst, Peters.

Bill Glazier liked to roll his sleeves up and spit into his gloves as a player, and when the sun was strong he would put his favourite red cap on his head.

As a supporter stood behind the goal I had great views of him diving about making tremendous saves. The City fans loved him.

They say you should never meet your hero as you can be let down and disappointed.

Well, I recall I was stood at the bar in the casino next to the Ricoh Arena before a home match. The service was slow, which I mentioned to the bloke stood at the bar next to me. He agreed and asked me if I was going to the game.

His face looked familiar and I asked if he was a City fan, too? He told me he was there for the Legends Day as he was an ex-Coventry player. It was Bill Glazier!

If I hadn't had the bar to rest on, I reckon I'd have done a Del Boy and fallen over! When I composed myself, I ended up having a pint with Bill, now 76, and he told me a few tales about a couple of players, and he was a really modest chap.

So that's Bill Glazier, the best keeper never to be capped by England – and a true legend.



BUZZING BEES

LUKE PHELPS EXAMINES HOW BRENTFORD'S SHREW
RECRUITMENT HAS HELPED THEM CLIMB HIGH...

BRENTFORD'S steady ascent up the Football League is one to be both studied and applauded.

A team who little over ten years ago were toiling in League Two have taken a maverick route to the near-top, and their journey is far from over - the Brentford Community Stadium awaits their next semester, and so too could Premier League football in this new chapter of the club's 130-year history.

The man responsible for Brentford's recent success is Matthew Benham. This self-made millionaire and Brentford fan made his fortunes through his company Smartodds, founded in 2004.

It's a betting-analysis platform that piles together every stat imaginable to give the user the supposed edge in betting, and is a widely used tool of many 'professional gamblers' today.

It's a company that's well respected in the gambling community, making Benham a name to be.

He first reached an agreement with the Brentford Supporters' Trust in 2009, wherein he agreed to invest large sums of capital over the following five years and, in return, he'd eventually have the option to own the club, providing that the Supporters' Trust didn't want to repay the money invested.

Inevitably, Benham was welcomed into the chairman role in 2012 and two years later Brentford were promoted to the Championship under Mark Warburton. They have invested upwards of £100m on staff and infrastructure since.

That same summer, Benham flexed his financial muscles to become the majority shareholder of Danish side FC Midtjylland, kick-starting Brentford's Europeanisation.

In Benham's first season as majority shareholder, Midtjylland won their



One to watch:
Ollie Watkins
has shone with his
goals for the Bees
this season

first-ever Danish Superliga title. They followed it up with their second in 2018 and their first Danish Cup in 2019.

Acting chairman for Midtjylland at the time was a certain Rasmus Ankersen. He and Benham are a match made in mathematical heaven - Ankersen's background in performance analysis goes hand-in-hand with Benham's in statistics.

Together, they've created one of the

continent's best recruitment systems at Brentford since Ankersen was made co-director of football in 2015, following the pair's domestic success in Denmark.

Ankersen now holds a part-time role with the Danish club, dedicating most of his time to Brentford.

With the pair in place at Griffin Park, work could begin. Extensive scouting was, and still is, done in the niche tiers of European football, and when the perfect match is found and checked for anomalies, they're brought over to Brentford to join their unique 'B team'.

Brentford's youth academy was going nowhere. It couldn't cope with the vulturous west London likes of Chelsea, Fulham, even QPR, and the club made the radical decision to bin their academy in 2016, replacing it with a Euro-inspired B team.

Brentford have since imported



Brains trust: Rasmus
Ankersen and, right,
Matthew Benham



Mr Cool:
Winger Said
Benrahma has caught
the attention of Premier
League clubs

King Bee:
Brentford manager
Thomas Frank

some of the Championship's most sought-after goods, boasting huge profit margins in the process and playing host to some of Europe's best young talents in their rapidly expanding B team.

The 2018 signing of Algerian winger Said Benrahma is arguably the transfer that set the tone and the bar for Brentford's future recruitment.

Since then, the likes of Neal Maupay have come and gone for a profit of nearly £20m, and this season Bryan Mbeumo, Christian Norgaard and Mathias Jensen have all come in and helped transform the Bees into a promotion-chasing side.

Benrahma's future, though, looks very much like it will be determined by this season's fortunes in the Championship, and they'll be in for another high profit margin if they're forced to sell.

That's not to discredit Brentford's recruitment in England, though.

Whilst networks have been set up all across Europe, they've brought in some

fine players from the domestic divisions in past seasons - Ezri Konsa signed from Charlton Athletic in 2018 for £2.5m and went to Aston Villa after one season for nearly £12m. Fellow defender Chris Mepham was promoted from the B team in 2017 and went to Bournemouth in January last year for the same fee.

Another name who will prove profitable if he leaves is Ollie Watkins - signed from Exeter City in 2017 for £1.8m, the winger-turned-striker is now rated at above £20m.

As far as Brentford B are concerned, that's a team made up almost entirely of European players, with a heavy Scandinavian influence.

There's even a likeable Dane in the Griffin Park dugout now - Thomas Frank has earned the title of the league's 'Mr Nice' and even resembles a young Howard Marks to an extent, but don't underestimate him.

He's a ruthlessly intelligent coach who's well-respected in his home nation,

and looks set to take Brentford into the promised land very soon.

Frank is the man that puts research into action and deserves as much praise as both Benham and Ankersen.

But how the latter two have radicalised the way that football teams should find and develop players is an unsung feat, and expect to see a lot more clubs follow this format in the near future.

Maybe one day, they and Brentford will be accredited with dawning a new era of football recruitment. It, like so many things, is an art. Enough profit-hungry, black-ties come and go in football, leaving no impression on the club or their wallets.

Benham's approach, though, is not only effective but sustainable, and that, above all, is what could lead Brentford to a prolonged future in the Premier League.

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HOLLAND v BRAZIL

- A WORLD CUP RIVALRY

ROSS KILVINGTON LOOKS BACK AT THE CLASHES
BETWEEN TWO OF FOOTBALL'S GIANTS...

THE third place play-off at the World Cup is often seen as an afterthought, a meaningless game before the much-awaited final.

The 2014 edition, however, was different, especially for the Brazilians.

After being utterly humiliated on their home turf by Germany 7-1 in the semi-final (which overtook the Brazil v Uruguay match at the 1950 finals as the biggest shock in the history of Brazilian football), Brazil had a point to prove.

The Dutch, on the other hand, had been unlucky to be defeated by Argentina on penalties in the other semi-final and wanted to end the World Cup on a high.

What followed was a relatively straightforward 3-0 win for Holland. The Brazilians seemed to give up after the second goal was scored and it was an easy game for the Dutch to see out. This was a World Cup full of contrasting records for the two teams. Brazil had conceded the most goals by any team since the 1986 finals, whereas the Dutch had secured a consecutive top three finish at the tournament and were unlucky not to reach the final.

The two nations' respective World Cup records could not be more different, however. The Netherlands have never been victorious, having recorded the unwanted stat of reaching the most

finals without triumphing. Brazil have won the tournament five times, been runner-up twice and had, arguably, the best team to never win it in 1982.

The matches between these two nations have surprisingly favoured Holland - three wins (1974, 2010 and 2014) compared to two by Brazil (1994 and 1998, the latter on penalties in the semi-final).

Aside from the previously mentioned 2014 third place play-off, the other four ties have been classics and have gone down in history as a battle between football's two most revered styles of play.

1974

THE first meeting in a World Cup match between Holland and Brazil came at the 1974 finals in West Germany.

The format of the tournament included a second group stage instead of a straight knockout competition for the first time.

After the two nations had won their first two matches in the group, the meeting was effectively billed as a semi-final clash; whoever won was through to the final.

Dutch football was on a high in 1974. The European Cup had been won by a team from the Netherlands in four out of the past five seasons.

Feyenoord, under the great Ernst Happel, had beaten Celtic in the 1970



Full stretch:
The Netherlands' Mark
Van Bommel, right,
battles for the ball with
Brazil's Kaka in 2010

final and Ajax, led by the marvellous Rinus Michels (followed by Stefan Kovacs) and his star pupil Johan Cruyff, had triumphed for three consecutive seasons ('71-'73).

Ajax used a style of play termed total football, a system which is fluid and allows any outfield player to take over the



role of any other player on the team.

Michel slightly reworked this style that allowed for the genius of Cruyff to use his creative ability to exploit the opposition team.

Holland's World Cup record had been abysmal up until 1974. They had only qualified twice, in 1934 and 1938,



Master at work:
Holland's Johan Cruyff
volleys home their
second goal against
Brazil in 1974

exiting at the first round both times.

Compare this to Brazil's record of having been present at all tournaments up until 1974 and having won three out of the last four editions. It meant they were one of the favourites to win the competition.

The Seleccion, however, had to deal





with the retirement of several key players since their victory in Mexico in 1970, most notably Pele.

The Dutch qualified fairly easily for the second group stage by topping their section with two wins against Bulgaria and Uruguay whilst rounding off with a draw against Sweden.

This match was to be remembered fondly for the introduction of the "Cruyff turn".

Cruyff had control of the ball facing his own goal; he feigned a pass and dragged the ball behind his standing leg and he accelerated away in the other direction, leaving the Swedish defender Olsson bewildered.

Brazil didn't have it all their own way in qualifying for the second group stage. They won against Zaire (making their debut), however they could only draw against Yugoslavia and Scotland, securing qualification by the tightest of margins as they had scored one more goal against Zaire than Scotland.

After two wins each in the second group stage, Netherlands would play Brazil to decide who qualified for the final.

This game almost signalled the passing of the torch, from the beautiful game to total football. The first half was marked by some rough challenges and scrappy football, with chances relatively even for both teams.

The Dutch got off to the perfect start in the second half, with Johan Neeskens scoring his fourth goal of the tournament. This gave the Netherlands confidence and a second goal followed; Cruyff scoring a lunging volley past the Brazilian keeper Leao.

This effectively killed the game and with the Netherlands defending well, Brazil suffered from Luis Pereira being sent off for a bad foul on Neeskens.

Holland had won with their swash-buckling style of total football, outplaying the Brazilians. However, the Dutch lost the final to the hosts West Germany, while Brazil finished in fourth place.

The next meeting at the World Cup between these two nations wouldn't be for another 20 years where the Brazilians would gain their revenge.

1994

The fortunes of both nations at the World Cup had varied since their first

**Hero: Brazil's Branco
wheels away after
scoring the winning goal
from a free-kick in 1994**



meeting in 1974. The Dutch reached another final in '78, and ran Argentina close before ultimately losing in extra-time.

Then they didn't qualify until 1990, marking a generation of Dutch players who would never play at a World Cup.

However, under Michels, they did win the European Championship in 1988 with one of the finest Dutch teams.

The Brazilians had finished fourth in 1978, but then, including arguably the greatest team never to win the competition in '82, failed to even reach the semi-finals for the next three tournaments, making it 24 years since the Selecao had last won the World Cup.

Both teams moved towards an eventual quarter-final showdown in Dallas relatively easily.

The Dutch were beaten by Belgium in the second group game but won against Morocco to qualify for the last 16.

Brazil topped their group and defeated the hosts USA to go through to the

quarters. The match between the two nations was held in Dallas in scorching temperatures, which slightly favoured the Brazilians.

Both nations were playing in their away shirts, Brazil in their changed blue kit and the Dutch in white.

The match was to be a classic. After a slightly underwhelming first half with no goals, the game sparkled into life after the break. Romario and Bebeto, leading the line for Brazil, combined well for the first goal, then Bebeto rounded the keeper and scored the second, and introduced the cradling baby celebration that has since become famous. The Dutch, seemingly out of the match and the tournament, struck back immediately with a goal by Dennis Bergkamp – a stunning solo effort, and they were level shortly after with a goal by Aron Winter.

Extra-time loomed, and with the temperature in Dallas draining, the Brazilians found their reward with a winner by Branco, whose 25-yard free-kick nestled



in the corner, allowing them to qualify for the semi-final.

Brazil went on to win the tournament, while the Netherlands could count themselves unlucky to go out.

After two competitive matches, the score between them was even at one win each - and both nations would not have to wait long to try to edge ahead in the rivalry. The semi-final between them in Marseille at France 1998 was to be a cracker.

1998

The Dutch and the Brazilians arrived at France '98 with two of the finest national squads at the tournament and were both heavily fancied to go far.

The Dutch squad featured a group of players who had excelled in the famous Ajax side of the mid 90s which won the Champions League in 1995 and should have won it the following year but lost to Juventus in a penalty shootout.

Bergkamp was their focal point; an

outstanding talent who had helped Arsenal win the Double a month prior to the finals starting.

Brazil were on a high as they were the holders and had also won the Copa America in 1997. They also had arguably the best striker in the world in their side - Ronaldo.

The Dutch were unconvincing in the group stage, beating South Korea 5-0, but drawing in a fiery clash with Belgium and also against Mexico.

This was followed by two last-minute winners against Yugoslavia and Argentina to see them through to the semi-finals.

Brazil's route was slightly easier, on paper at least. Topping group A, they then beat Chile and Denmark to set up the semi-final clash with the Dutch in Marseille. Ronaldo was in fine form and they were desperate to retain their title.

The third meeting between these old foes at a World Cup started off tense; no goals were produced in the first half.

Ronaldo saw his chance at the be-

ginning of the second half, scoring after receiving a fantastic pass from Rivaldo.

The Dutch needed another late show like in their previous two matches if they were to salvage anything from this game, and they got it. Patrick Kluivert powered a header past Taffarel.

Extra-time ended without any further goals, so it was to be penalties that would determine who would face the hosts in the final.

Brazil scored all four of their penalties, while Taffarel guessed the correct way four times, saving two spot-kicks, from Phillip Cocu and Ronald de Boer.

Holland's disappointment at the World Cup continued - they still hadn't won the competition.

Brazil failed to be the first team to defend their trophy twice by losing to a Zinedine Zidane-inspired French side in the final 3-0. The next time Holland and Brazil would meet on the grandest stage of all, the world of football looked a lot different.



Key moment:
Wesley Sneijder
heads Holland's
winner against
Brazil in the
quarter-finals in
2010

2010

After losing in the '98 final, Brazil were the classiest team at the 2002 finals, which was partly a World Cup of the underdog, with South Korea and Turkey providing big upsets to reach the semi-finals.

Ronaldo redeemed himself by being top scorer and resurrecting a career which was seemingly about to be cut short after several knee injuries.

In 2006, in what was almost like déjà vu from '98, they went out after another uninspiring performance against a French team led by Zidane.

Holland hadn't even qualified for the 2002 finals; semi-final appearances at Euro 2000 and 2004 were as good as it got for a Dutch team in transition before the 2010 finals.

This was also a Brazil team in the midst of change; this was the first World Cup since 1990 to not feature Cafu and first since '94 to not have Ronaldo in their squad.

Therefore, the team had a relatively new feel to it compared to usual.

They beat North Korea unconvincingly in their first match, followed by a

3-1 win against the Ivory Coast. They rounded off the group with a stalemate against Portugal.

Their most impressive performance came against Chile in the last 16 where they won 3-0 in convincing fashion to set up a tie against the old foes, the Netherlands.

The Dutch finished top of group E after winning all three of their games. Efficient rather than with their usual entertaining philosophy, it would lead them all the way to the final.

A tight 2-1 victory over Slovakia set up a titanic quarter-final tie against Brazil.

This was the fourth meeting at a World Cup between these two old enemies.

Robinho opened the scoring in the 10th minute, slotting away a splendid pass from Felipe Melo.

Brazil had chances to double their advantage before half-time but couldn't capitalise.

The Dutch, however, came out for the second half with a different attitude, and in the 53rd minute it paid dividends as Wesley Sneijder's ball into the box was

turned into the Brazilian goal by Melo (the first own goal at a World Cup by Brazil in 97 games).

Holland could smell blood and, 15 minutes later, Sneijder scored to put the Dutch into a deserved lead.

Further misery was compounded on Brazil as Melo's Jekyll and Hyde match was over when he was sent off.

The Dutch had avenged their penalty shoot-out defeat in '98. They advanced to the final, where they lost to Spain in extra-time.

At the time of writing, the qualifying campaigns for both nations for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar have not yet begun.

However, if both nations qualify for the finals then we can only hope that they meet at some stage during the competition.

December 18, 2022 is the date of the final of the World Cup, and as a keen admirer of both the Dutch and Brazilian style of play, it would be a fitting end to the tournament to see these two battle it out for the trophy for the first time.



REWIND back to April 25, 1981 on a warm spring evening at Plainmoor, and a young student helps to chair star striker Derek Spence off the pitch as Southend United clinch promotion, capping a glorious season for the yo-yo Shrimpers.

Some 36 years later that same student calls up Blackpool FC knowing Spence works at the club, and wonders whether the likeable Irishman would meet up with him and his pals in town to help mark the occasion of him reaching at Bloomfield Road that holy grail of groundhoppers – the 92.

Spence obliges, fails to recall the impromptu escort at Torquay, but, over a few beers, agrees to pen the foreword for Andy Leeder's book ('Roots To The 92') he is writing covering the long journey to his ground-collecting goal.

It was the start of a friendship which has led to many new footballing memories being created for a great many people. And Leeder has just helped Spence get his own autobiography "From The Troubles To The Tower" published.

A year after their initial meet-up, Spence came down to Roots Hall with his old mate Keith Mercer.

Leeder arranged the hospitality, and there was a wonderful introduction to the fans on the pitch for the old strike-duo who bagged so many goals for the Shrimpers at the start of the 80s.

It proved a great day for all, meeting up with former team-mates, old fan friends and recalling times gone by.

During the day, conversation turned to the Shrimpers' record appearance holder, Alan Moody, who had at the time recently undergone life-saving surgery resulting in both of his legs having to be amputated. Talking this over with others, Leeder sensed there was a strong feeling amongst Shrimpers fans to do something as a tribute to the club's former skipper, who for ten years from 1972 had giving the club such loyal service.

After a discussion with club chairman Ron Martin, and enlisting the help of the supporters group, the Shrimpers Trust, the 'Moody Blues' campaign was born.

At the start of the 2017/18 season, Shrimpers fans rallied and numerous events led to money being raised to help Moody buy a specially adapted car to



meet his new needs. He then travelled down from his North-East home with his daughter for a presentation and to meet up with a group of former team-mates and friends, many of whom he had not seen in decades.

The event went so well that the Shrimpers Trust viewed they should 'do more of this', and in January 2018 the Southend United Ex-Players Association (SUEPA) was born.

The last two years have been a whirlwind for all involved. Well over 200 former players/coaching staff have joined the association, approaching 20 matchday reunion events have been held and many new memories created.

Leeder views it as a win-win for all, saying: "It creates good PR for the club, the former players get a huge amount out of it and the fans love to catch up with former heroes."

The biggest SUEPA event held to date was last March when Moody and 19 other former players from the Dave Smith managerial era attended a reunion.

"The impromptu standing ovation from

BACK TO THEIR ROOTS

IT'S OFTEN SAID THAT FOOTBALL CLUBS FORGET ABOUT THEIR OLD PLAYERS. THE HEROES WHO ACHIEVED GREAT FEATS AND SPILT BLOOD FOR THE CAUSE. LATE TACKLE REPORTS ON HOW SOUTHEND UNITED ARE ONE CLUB ATTEMPTING TO BUCK THE TREND...



Big reunion: Former Southend players met up last March and, inset, Derek Spence, left, and Andy Leeder

the whole crowd as they all entered the pitch before the PA announcer had even had chance to draw breath was really quite emotional," recalls Leeder.

Next month, in a 1960s themed event, there is one ex-Shrimper coming along who hasn't been back since a bad injury ended his career in a match in 1963.

Leeder feels that former player associations should be encouraged by all clubs.

"A number of clubs do operate them, but not all are perhaps as accessible as they should be, and there are so many good things that these groups can do," he said.

He is currently working with Spence and a fellow enthusiast at the Blackpool Former Players Association to see if the PFA can be encouraged to promote their development.

"In these days of high-tech, high-finance organisations, it is wonderful to see clubs, fans and players coming together in a basic but common sense way for the good of all involved," added Leeder. "It just needs a bit of energy and enthusiasm to make it all work."

■ For more on SUEPA, check out: <https://www.facebook.com/SUEPAAssoc/> and <https://twitter.com/SUEPAAssoc>



GORDON ASTALL ENGLAND'S OLDEST

BIRMINGHAM CITY FAN KEITH DIXON REFLECTS ON THE CAREER OF A BLUES HERO

WHEN Ivor Broadis died in April last year, the accolade of being the oldest living England International footballer fell to Gordon Astall, who played for Plymouth Argyle, Birmingham City and Torquay United.

At the age of 92, he, sadly, suffers from dementia. He still lives in Chelston, Torquay, where he finished his playing career during season 1962-63.

Astall was born in Horwich, near Bolton, on September 22, 1927, and had an unsuccessful trial with local club Bolton before he joined the Royal Marines near the end of the war.

Fortunately, his unit was based in Plymouth and he was spotted playing as a right winger for the Marines football team in local league football.

He was also playing amateur football for Southampton when in November 1947, at the age of 20, he was offered a professional contract by Argyle manager Jimmy Rae.

He had developed a physique through his Marines training which gave him both speed and power. This allowed him to push the ball past a defender then race past him to deliver a pinpoint cross.

The owner of a ferocious shot, he was nicknamed 'Cannonball' by the Argyle fans. He also possessed an upper body strength which enabled him to put a throw-in into the opposition penalty area – which made him one of the first long throw specialists.

He made his first team debut on February 14, 1948 in a 3-1 defeat at home to Luton. After becoming a first team regular, in 1952 Argyle won the Third Division (South) title, beating Reading

to promotion by five points and scoring a club-equalling record of 107 goals.

Even though he was playing in the Third Division, he received international recognition by being selected for the England B side to play France B on May 22, 1952 at Le Havre.

Only 7,000 fans turned up for the game, which saw the French take a half-time lead of 3-0.

West Brom's Ray Barlow scored after 60 minutes to make it 3-1 but four goals in the final half an hour left England humiliated 7-1.

In October 1953, he signed for Second Division rivals Birmingham City for a fee of £14,000, which resulted in the Blues having ex-Plymouth wingers on both flanks – Astall on the right and Alex Govan on the left.

His arrival at St Andrew's saw him become part of one of the most successful periods for the West Midlands side.

His first team debut was away at Bristol Rovers on October 17, which resulted in a 1-1 draw, replacing the injury-prone Jackie Stewart.

In 1955, he was a member of the Division Two championship side which gained promotion by having a better goal average than Luton Town and Rotherham United, who also ended the season on 54 points.

Astall played in 33 matches, scoring 11 goals, as part of a forward line which included Noel Kinsey (35 games, 13 goals) Eddie Brown (28 games, 14 goals) Peter Murphy (37 games, 20 goals) and Alex Govan (37 games, 15 goals). Oh for a forward line like that today!

On May 5, 1956, Birmingham played in the FA Cup final at Wembley. Strangely, the Blues hadn't played a tie at home,



scoring 19 goals and conceding five.

Birmingham were overwhelming favourites to beat Manchester City, but they ended up being beaten 3-1 in a game in which opposing keeper Bert Trautmann broke his neck, the referee Alf Bond only had one arm and Manchester City created the 'Revie Plan'.

Astall recalled: "The way that Don Revie played that day took us by surprise. We expected him to play right up top but he kept sitting back and we were not prepared.

"That's not an excuse, though, we deserved to lose that day. We just stuck with what we knew best, which was to go out there and help one another.

"There was no chopping and changing formations back then, we just got on with what we knew best. We played with two full-backs, three half-backs and five forwards.

"Eddy Brown was our speed mer-

Shooting star:
Birmingham City's
Gordon Astall fires in
a shot against Arsenal
in 1956



■ Gordon Astall played 456 league games and scored 111 goals, which is an impressive statistic for a winger:

1947-53: Plymouth Argyle, 188 games, 42 goals

1953-61: Birmingham City, 235 games, 59 goals

1961-63: Torquay United, 33 games, 10 goals

chant and Peter Murphy got the goals for us. Me and Alex Govan played as wingers.

"But on the day it just didn't happen for us. We let everyone down. It was really disappointing. We tried to make up for it the next season but failed in the semis."

His performances that season earned Astall two full international caps:

May 20, 1956 - Helsinki

FINLAND (Forsgren) 1 ENGLAND (Lofthouse 2, Wilshaw, Haynes, Astall) 5

England: Wood (Manchester United), Hall (Birmingham City), Byrne (Manchester United), Clayton (Blackburn Rovers), Wright (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Edwards (Manchester United), Astall (Birmingham City), Haynes (Fulham), Taylor (Manchester United), Wilshaw (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Grainger (Sheffield United)

May 26, 1956 - Berlin

GERMANY (Walter) 1 ENGLAND (Edwards, Grainger, Haynes) 3

England: Matthews (Coventry City), Hall (Birmingham City), Byrne (Manchester United), Clayton (Blackburn Rovers), Wright (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Edwards (Manchester United), Astall (Birmingham City), Haynes (Fulham), Taylor (Manchester United), Wilshaw (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Grainger (Sheffield United).

The fact that he was limited to two appearances had something to do with the fact that he had competition for the Number 7 shirt in the form of Bryan Douglas (Blackburn Rovers), Tom Finney (Preston North End) and a certain Stanley Matthews, of Blackpool!

On September 19, 1956, he was selected for the Football League representative side which played the League of Ireland in Dublin. Around 32,000 fans saw the match drawn 3-3, with Albert



Pain: FA Cup final defeat in 1956

Quixall, Dennis Viollet and Tommy Taylor scoring for the League.

In the late 50s and early 60s, Birmingham were pioneers in European football.

In the 1955-58 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, Blues succumbed at the semi-final stage, losing out after a two-legged tie and a play-off on neutral ground to Barcelona - Astall played in all three semi-final games and against Inter Milan in the Group B stages.

Blues reached the final in 1960, losing again on aggregate to Barcelona. Astall played in both legs of the final. He was also involved in the 1960-61 tournament, which again saw Blues lose in the final, this time to AS Roma on aggregate.

At the end of 1960-61 season, he moved to Torquay United on a free transfer. He made his debut on August 19, 1961 at home to Crystal Palace. He went on to score ten goals in 27 league games in a season that saw Torquay relegated back to the Fourth Division.

He played only six times the following season before retiring from the professional game, remaining in the Torbay area working in insurance, coaching local club Upton Vale and playing golf.

The Birmingham City Former Players' Association is currently arranging for Astall to appear as one of its 'Match Day Stars', which normally involves an interview on the pitch at half-time and a visit to the corporate areas before and after the game.

For Astall, the association feels he has sufficient 'star quality' to just be there and witness the affection from the Blues-noses. It will certainly be well deserved.



IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

CHRIS SERGEANT EXAMINES
HOW SHIRT NUMBERS
HAVE CHANGED BEYOND
ALL RECOGNITION...

THE allocation of shirt numbers can be a source of consternation among footballing purists.

Traditionally, goalkeepers were No.1, full-backs No.2 and No.3 (right and left-back in that order) and your centre-backs No.4 and No.5.

The deeper-lying, defensive midfielder wore No.6, while the more progressive, box-to-box midfielder sported the No.8.

Further forward, the No.7 and No.11 filled the wide slots, with the target man wearing the No.9, supported by the playmaker, and often talisman, at No.10.

The reality nowadays is that although a player's style can still be categorised by such numerical form, their positions on the pitch have no real bearing on their actual squad number.

Take the Premier League – we've seen strikers Clint Dempsey and Wilfried Bony sporting the No.2 shirt, while Asamoah Gyan illuminated the Stadium of Light wearing No.3.

Defenders have been just as bad. Centre-back Khalid Boulahrouz arrived during Jose Mourinho's Chelsea revolution, with his new boss speaking in glowing terms about his ability to provide cover across the back four. So, naturally, he was handed the No.9 shirt. Equally as bizarre was Arsenal's choice of successor to Dennis Bergkamp's No.10 jersey – William Gallas.

The reasoning behind squad number selections may vary, but the most obvious often relates to a number already being occupied, with the most

famous case involving Inter striker Ivan Zamorano.

While famed for many things, guiding Real Madrid to the 1994-95 La Liga title as top scorer or his patriotic renditions of the Chilean national anthem, one of the most enduring images of his career is of him in the black and blue of the Nerazzurri.

After the France '98 World Cup, Inter owner Massimo Moratti secured a huge coup in bringing Roberto Baggio to the club. Upon his arrival, the Divine Ponytail requested the No.10 shirt, already occupied by Ronaldo.

Fine said El Fenomeno, but I want the No.9 instead then. Well, that was taken by Zamorano, but as good as he was, there was a clear pecking order developing. So, with the No.9 relinquished, he had a think and got creative. A quick glance and you'd think Zamorano was wearing the No.18, but upon closer

inspection, a crafty + had been inserted between the two numbers – 1+8 equalled a satisfied Chilean.

Like Baggio, when West Ham signed Paulo Futre in 1996, he had a clear preference for the No.10 shirt, but despite wearing it throughout pre-season, come the opening game against Arsenal, John Moncur wore the No.10 and Futre was given the No.16 instead.

To say the news went down badly would be an understatement. He stormed out of the stadium, only returning when Moncur agreed to swap, on the understanding he would have free use of Futre's Algarve villa in return. Unfortunately for Moncur, Futre only managed nine games for the club.

The most unusual number involved ex-Ipswich midfielder Tommy Oar. Back in 2010, on his international debut for Australia, he found his favoured No.11 already pre-assigned.

"If I can't have No.11, then why not have No.11?" thought Oar. Cue one confused kitman come matchday, as he unfolded a Socceroos kit only to be confronted with No.121 on the reverse.

In other cases, players may have a personal connection with certain numbers. You would be hard pushed to determine which position Hicham Zerouali played for Aberdeen in the early 2000s.

Nicknamed "Zero", he opted to honour this by wearing the No.0 shirt, an unconventional choice and one that was consequently banned for future seasons. French World Cup winning ►



Jeepers keepers:
Jorge Campos
wearing number
nine for Mexico



What were the odds on that? Wayne Rooney wearing number 32 for Derby this season and, inset, West Ham's Paulo Futre





left-back Bixente Lizarazu adopted the No.69 in his final years at Bayern, as this was his year of birth and supposedly his weight in kilos too.

Sometimes, players just like to be different. Take Jonathan de Guzman, a key figure in Swansea's 2013 Capital One Cup triumph all while donning the No.20 shirt.

However, fast-forward two years and the Dutchman stepped out into Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi in the yellow and blue of Chievo instead, only this time sporting the No.1 shirt. Penny for the thoughts of first-choice keeper Walter Bressan, relegated to No.32 instead.

Edgar Davids did the same in his ill-fated player/manager role at Barnet. After relegation to the Conference, Davids declared that he wanted to set a precedent, so assigned himself the captain's armband and No.1 jersey, before promptly accumulating three red cards in five appearances. Not the best example to set to your players.

With outfield players infringing on their sacred squad number, it's hardly surprising that goalkeepers have gone for some left-field choices too.

The Mexican Jorge Campos wore the No.9 at times in his career, partly because he was previously a striker and partly because he was Jorge Campos.

Rui Patrício currently wears the No.11 at Wolves, out of respect for previous stopper Carl Ikeme, who retired after winning his battle with Leukaemia.

On the continent, the tendency is to go higher. Much higher. Gigi Buffon chose the No.77 on his return to Juventus, while Simon Mignolet sports the No.88 at Club Brugge. AC Milan's Gigi Donnarumma opted to copy trailblazer Vitor Baia, plumping for the "coveted" No.99 shirt, worn by the Portuguese keeper in Porto's 2003 Champions League victory.

Perhaps nobody thought to tell him, or his brother and team-mate Antonio, who wears No.90, that the No.1 jersey was vacant.

On occasion, the players simply don't get a say. Wayne Rooney's much-heralded return to the UK with Derby County was accompanied by photos of him holding aloft the No.32 shirt.

This was England's record goalscorer, playing in the Championship, so surely there could be few arguments against him selecting whichever shirt number



Rock on, Tommy:
Tommy Oar –
Ipswich's No.15
– and Australia's
No.121!

took his fancy? But, given that Derby are sponsored by gambling firm 32Red, whose record sponsorship package helped broker the Rooney deal, the marketing team made the decision for him.

All of this is a far cry from the Sunday league slog, where your kit number often still defines your position on the pitch.

Younger fans might think designated squad numbers have been around since football began, but it wasn't until the 1993-94 season that Premier League clubs assigned players individual numbers.

This transitional roll-out was confined to top-flight football and remained optional for Football



It all adds up:
Inter Milan's
Ivan Zamorano

League clubs until 1999-00.

Until this point, for players with defined positions it made little difference, but for the more versatile members of the squad, they could go through more numbers than a bingo caller.

But when it comes to combining versatility and squad numbers, one man stands head and shoulders above the competition. Steve Palmer signed for Division One side Watford in 1995 after a successful stint as captain of league rivals Ipswich, but fast forward to the start of the 1997-98 season and Palmer and Watford found themselves starting a second consecutive spell in what is now League One. But they now had Graham Taylor back at the helm.



Number one:
Barnet
player-manager
Edgar Davids

A central defender by trade, Palmer's versatility had been duly noted by the ex-England boss, and while he started the season coming off the bench, Taylor began turning to him as a first-team regular as the season progressed.

As a starter, Palmer wore No.5, but as games passed, the adaptable nature of



King of
numbers:
Watford's
versatile
Steve Palmer

his game came to the fore, and he filled in across the team, ticking off squad numbers as he went. With two games to go, it was crunch time for Watford's push for the title, and promotion back to the second tier of English football.

It was also around this time that Palmer realised that his utility meant that he had worn 12 of the 14 match-day kits – clubs in the Football League were still only permitted three substitutes at this point.

No professional footballer had ever worn the full set in a single season, so this was his chance to claim that record. The No.9 shirt was achiev-

able, but the other missing from his collection was the No.1.

The pressure was firmly on the club and Taylor to secure Division One football, but also on Palmer if he wanted the individual accolade. So, between them, they hatched a plan.

As Watford took to the field in the penultimate game against Bournemouth, an unfamiliar figure emerged from the tunnel wearing the goalkeeper's jersey.

The fans didn't have to wait long to find out the mystery keeper's identity as minutes later the team-sheets were read over the tannoy – "In goal, No.1 Steve Palmer".

Disbelief spread throughout the Hornets fans. "I know he's versatile but, Christ, what a game to make your goal-keeping debut!"

Numbers 2-7 were a blur with the panic setting in, until "No.8 Alec Chamberlain" came through the speakers. Surely this was some kind of wind up? But, as the teams lined up for kick-off, Palmer was still in goal and Chamberlain was still lining up outfield.

If Watford fans were confused, spare a thought for Bournemouth – no amount of pre-match planning can account for the opposition starting their keeper in central midfield.

As Watford kicked off, the plan became more evident.

Rather than play backwards, Watford proceeded to leather the ball directly into the stands and, as the ball-boys scrambled to retrieve it, Palmer jogged

off his goal-line and switched shirts with Chamberlain –

Palmer was back in the No.8 shirt and normality was resumed.

The ruse worked, as Watford emerged as 2-1 winners on the day, before following it up with victory over Fulham by the same scoreline to secure the title on the last day of the season. You can guess what shirt number Palmer wore that day.



Are you sure?!
William Gallas
wearing the
No.10 of
Arsenal



THE TEAM BEHIND THE TEAM

EXPERIENCED NON-LEAGUE PHYSIO GAVIN BLACKWELL
CONSIDERS THE IMPORTANCE OF BACKROOM STAFF AND
THE UNCERTAINTY THEY SOMETIMES FACE...

HAVING been involved in football for many years, I have worked for a number of managers and in many backroom teams.

At professional level at least, the latter now consists of assistant managers, coaches, a goalkeeper coach, physios, doctors and sport scientists, analysts and fitness coaches.

As with a football team on the field, one member who doesn't perform effectively can undermine the entire group.

The backroom team members not only have specific tasks, but also play a part in creating the right atmosphere around the team.

Former Arsenal and England physio Fred Street described working for a football club in whatever capacity as not so much a job but rather a way of life.

Your title or job description defines a very narrow view of your function and being a member of the staff team is probably more accurate, as it covers the multitude of small day-to-day problems that crop up when dealing with around 40 people.

There will be problems with any large group of people, but this is often exacerbated with a group of footballers and their peculiar situation in a world of changing values, uncertainty and the daily assessment of their abilities.

Staff in whatever capacity or level at the club must be available at all times to

listen, help if possible, advise, correct and guide, and keep their finger on the 'pulse' of players' problems, real or imaginary.

The title of utility man is probably more accurate.

Arguably English football's greatest manager, Bob Paisley, preferred the word staff rather than individual titles when referring to his backroom team.

At all levels, one of the most precarious aspects of the game is when a board loses faith with the main man – the manager.

A question that often gets asked when a manager departs a club, no matter what football club or part of the country, is 'what about the backroom staff?'

It brings uncertainty for the supporting cast, the players and even the owners of the club or managers looking to take over.

When Bill Shankly arrived at Anfield in 1950, he opted to release two dozen players but retain all the backroom staff, a rarity in today's game.

One Liverpool staff man Ronnie Moran became the perfect lieutenant and foil for not only Shankly, but Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan, Kenny Dalglish, Graeme Souness and Roy Evans. Yet he always feared the

worst when a manager was appointed.

When a new boss arrives, their first act is usually to sack the backroom staff except the youth team manager and the physio.

The physio is normally safe at first because the manager needs fit players and nobody knows them better than the physio.

Good physios are hard to find and tend to stay at clubs for a long time.

But the rest of the staff often get culled like cubs by a new lion because they may not be loyal to the new gaffer and have lofty ambitions themselves.

The manager does this because he feels that he can trust his own team of staff who have been with him before and are ready instantly to put into practice what he wants.

When he later gets sacked, the



Staying power:
Former Wolves fitness
coach Tony Daley



Top class: Gary Lewin on England duty and, inset left, treating Arsenal's Robin van Persie and, inset right, England captain Bryan Robson is put through his paces by physio Fred Street



backroom staff usually go the same way and just accept it until they get another chance.

Over the years, many high profile and good club men have been shown the door or been marginalised into a lesser role following the appointment of a new manager.

Nowadays, culls don't just stop at coaching staff. It more often than not affects doctors and physios - in the last three years half of the Premier League clubs have either changed doctor or physio following the appointment of a new manager.

When Neil Warnock was appointed the Plymouth Argyle manager in the close season of 1995, he immediately made a couple of player signings.

But his next import was not a player but Norman

Medhurst, the Torquay United physiotherapist who struck up a friendship with Warnock when the manager had a brief spell as a consultant to the south-west club.

Warnock said at the time: "I'm delighted to get someone of his calibre. You want your own men. I was always impressed with Norman during my time at Torquay. I have explained to Paul (the outgoing physio) - that's football I'm afraid."

Street described the physio who has been a more than able lieutenant for a number of managers as being a bit like a civil servant who carries on regardless of who is in charge.

After the appointment of Nuno Espirito Santo at Wolves, fitness coach Tony Daley was quoted as saying surviving five managers is an achievement in itself.

There are many more worthy examples of these men, like Gary Lewin who succeeded

Street with Arsenal and who also served England.

He tells the story of how he feared Arsene Wenger was going to bring all his own staff in.

In the end, the Frenchman did bring Boro Primorac in but kept all the original staff on.

Lewin said: "His words to us were 'You are good at what you do otherwise you wouldn't be here. All I want you to do is listen to how I work and what I want and we will evolve together'."

There is certainly an argument that there is no point in suddenly changing routines that players are comfortable with - it can be counterproductive, sap morale and may immediately provoke players to question the new man's motives.

A leader who arrives in a big club setting or inherits a big club role needs to curb his impulse to display his manhood.

Often backroom staff tend to get a feel for what's going to happen regarding the manager's position long before they do themselves.

Former Everton manager Sam Allardyce sums this up perfectly. He said: "I knew I was leaving two months before I left. I am too old and wise not to know what was going on behind the scenes."

"If they thought they could keep it quiet, they don't know how many people I know."

"They should have just said 'Look, Sam, fantastic job but we are going to move in another direction next season'. Just come out and say it. I can take it - I am big man."



Liverpool stalwart: Ronnie Moran

THE PRIDE OF THE

MAT GUY REPORTS ON A TEAM PREPARING FOR THE WORLD CUP – AND THEIR WIDER GOALS

THE 3G pitch at Broadfield Stadium, Crawley, is teeming. Beneath the arc of the floodlights, myriad games and training sessions jostle against one another, occasionally spilling over as a wayward ball threatens the equilibrium.

An under 11s team wearing oversized bibs dribble about chaotically, being tackled by the cones they were attempting to weave between. Little legs flail in the air as they tumble like skittles.

Their manager patiently encourages their endeavour, fighting a losing battle in righting each obstacle, only for another to fall.

Next door a five-a-side match is halted when one of the lads attempts a trick he no doubt saw on Match of the Day. He slips on the ball, face-plants the freezing astro turf with a thud and remains motionless on the ground. It's not through injury, but humiliation as his team-mates fall about laughing, throwing water bottles at him.

Beyond, a semi-professional outfit run through set-pieces like a well-oiled machine. The manager barks orders as one-twos are finished off by clinically drilling the ball into the net.

It is a familiar scene the length and breadth of the country. Football playing itself out until late in the evening; the breath from every player trailing up into this arctic February night like a cluster of bumper cars on some ethereal fairground dodgem ride.

Or it would be a familiar scene, if it weren't for the national team in the far corner preparing for a World Cup...

Jimmy Ferrar, manager of the Chagos Islands national football team, gees up his players before their session, instilling in them how important this otherwise nondescript Thursday evening is.

"Every session is vital," he insists.



"We need to focus. Give our all. If you want to be on that plane to the World Cup, then you need to give 100 per cent right from the off. Full intensity."

Players nod as they change out of their tracksuits and into their training gear at the side of the pitch, chatting

and joking to one another in their native Mauritian creole tongue as another couple of players wheel their push-bikes around the pitch to join them.

There are no Ferraris parked up waiting for this team. And that isn't the only thing that separates this Chagos side from other national teams.

The Chagos Islands is a British Indian Ocean Territory located south of the Maldives and east of Mauritius. But unlike the tropical paradises surrounding it, the story of this archipelago is nothing short of hellish.

Inhabited peacefully for centuries, the lives of the Chagossians were to change forever when the British Government leased the islands to the US in 1967 to create a strategic base in the region.

Using a series of tactics as nefarious as refusing islanders passage back to the islands after receiving medical treat-



Graft: Players in training

CHAGOS ISLANDS



Proud: The Chagos Islands squad are preparing for a big adventure

ment on Mauritius, to outright forced expulsions, Britain cleared the islands of its population in six years.

Since then, only US service personnel inhabit Chagos and its capital Diego Garcia.

Many of the Chagossians found themselves housed in shanty communities on Mauritius, while others were rehomed in Sussex – a far cry from their Indian ocean idyll.

As countless legal battles rumbled on in the decades since their expulsion, successive British Governments have ignored the pleas for the beleaguered Chagossians to return, with the Mauritian Prime Minister calling their stance a crime against humanity.

Despite these seemingly insurmountable odds, the people of the Chagos Islands have refused to simply disappear into the history books as a tragic footnote. Those who were rehomed in

the UK maintain their identity through regular cultural events and speak to one another in their mother tongue.

They continue to assert their right to return home. And in MarieSabrina Jean, the community have a figurehead who will not rest until dream becomes reality.

It was MarieSabrina who formed the Chagos Islands national football team as an outlet for her community, using football as a tool to bring a people together, and create something positive that all Chagossians could be proud of.

And as with every training session, every match, MarieSabrina watches on as the team began its warm-up.

The Chagos Islands joined CONIFA (The Confederation of Independent Football Associations) in 2014. It was a perfect fit.

An organisation whose membership stretches around the globe, CONIFA brings together communities, identities

and disputed territories that don't fit the prescribed notion of nationhood as recognised by the United Nations or FIFA.

Tales as tragic as The Chagos Islands litter the CONIFA roll-call: from the exiled Tibetans who fled Chinese invasion, to the Tamil communities of Sri Lanka escaping a genocidal war in their homeland, these peoples without a home mingle with nations unrecognised by the world's governing bodies.

Nagorno Karabakh and Northern Cyprus – nations that don't exist in international law – rub shoulders in CONIFA with the Sapmi – a minority group from Lapland, and Szekeley Land – an ethnic subgroup of Hungarian people living in Eastern Transylvania, Romania.

Add into the mix teams representing Yorkshire, the Isle of Man, Panjab, the Pacific North-West in the United States, and a further 47 teams from across the globe representing cultures, histories and ideas, and you get a heady mix of diversity and identity.

And every two years, the CONIFA World Football Cup brings it all together in a great festival of football.

This summer Skopje in North Macedonia will host the latest edition, and the Chagos Islands will be there, taking on Kurdistan, Panjab, and Parishes of Jersey in the group stages.

As she watches the team of 2020 starting in on some brutal running drills, MarieSabrina remembered their previous World Cup appearance in Abkhazia (a region of the Caucasus that is, in the eyes of international law, a part of Georgia, but exists as an independent state in an uneasy standoff supported by Russia) in 2016.

"Abkhazia was a great experience for me," she said as her team thundered past, lungs bursting. "For the first time the boys played in international football and met some great people.

"Seeing the boys out on the field, seeing how proud they were, playing with ►



all their heart to represent the country that their family came from...," she trailed away, the sentence didn't need finishing. The emotion of everything the Chagossians had been through was palpable in the freezing air.

Defeats in the group stages to Abkhazia and Western Armenia by nine and twelve goals respectively was offset by a narrow defeat to Somaliland by the odd goal in five and a penalty shoot-out defeat to Raetia after a thrilling three-all draw in the placement rounds.

"My hope and expectation for Skopje is that my boys will do very good," she said. "Since we have Jimmy as manager, I can assure you my boys are getting better and better. Let's see what will happen..."

Clearly, though, results on the pitch are far from the only factor.

"The importance of this team is to bring the Chagos community together," she explained. "It makes them proud that Chagos is being represented, not forgotten.

"It helps to keep the Chagos culture alive. As a second generation Chagossian (after the expulsions), I will always be proud of the country where my family came from. Especially my dad."

Beneath her Chagos FA beanie hat, her eyes sparkle with fire. This is not a woman about to give up on her country or her people. The fight to return home will not end. It is a powerful motivating tool, and one that boss Ferrar hopes to harness into a formidable team.

From a playing career in the Southern Combination League, a division at the fifth tier of Non-League football, Ferrar went into management at local sides Oakwood and Alford. After successful spells at both came the call from international football.

"I've played and managed all over Sussex," he said as he watched his charges begin some passing and shooting drills, "and it is truly surreal to now be preparing for a World Cup!

"I'm fully aware of what people think of the Chagos team - people think they will come and beat us easily. After all, we have by far the smallest pool of players to pick from of all the teams that will be in Skopje. We've never won a competitive match at a World Cup.

"But since I've got to know the boys and Sabrina on a personal level, I truly see this as a project where I can implement some great changes and profes-



Team effort:
Founder



Marie Sabrina
Jean on the
touchline at
training, above,
and a player
gets ready

sionalise them year on year - to make this Chagos team a team to be reckoned with in African and world football.

"My aim for this summer is to win two games and to get out of the group. If we do that then I will re-evaluate."

Optimism is infectious beneath the freezing skies of Crawley. And while there is hope (the Mauritian Government has vowed to fight the Chagossian fight on the international stage - calling for their return home), while Marie Sabrina, Jimmy and the frozen Chagos team fight on - despite all the odds stacked

up - I still wouldn't bet against them.

"We want to compete, score goals," concluded Marie Sabrina, "but, equally, we want to get our name out there. Let the world know we are still here. That we are still trying to get home. And like our football team, we Chagossians will keep going."

■ The CONIFA World Football Cup starts on May 31 in Skopje and runs until June 7. You can help The Chagos Islands get there by donating to their JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/chagos-island>

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During that same time frame, no fewer than five players have joined the exalted ranks of centurions by winning their 100th cap. Only two managed to accomplish the same feat in the first 100 years of the England national team (Billy Wright and Bobby Charlton), and only two players joined

them before the century was out (Bobby Moore and the all-time record holder, Peter Shilton).

In a five-year spell between 2009 and 2014, they were joined by David Beckham, Steven Gerrard, Wayne Rooney, Ashley Cole and Frank Lampard. Rooney also passed Bobby Charlton's tally of England goals but his record-breaking feats ended with his international retirement in August 2017.

Also included in the book are those whose England careers were significantly shorter than the centurions, eg. Martin Kelly

who came on for the final two minutes of a friendly against Norway in 2012, thus wresting the previously held record of shortest performance of eight minutes from Peter Ward and Jim Barrett.

In addition to the newly-capped players, extensive research over the last decade by author and archivist Graham Betts has confirmed once and for all the identities of some of the previously obscure England players. This is a definitive and comprehensive compilation of England Players' Records that no true fan will want to miss.

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