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FOUR TWO ZLAN TIAN

**“STEVEN GERRARD
TAPPED ME UP!”
JERMAINE PENNANT ON
SIGNING FOR LIVERPOOL**

**“I JOINED TO
PLAY FOR JOSE”
MAN UTD’S FRED COMES
OUT SWINGING FOR MOU**

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Editorial

Editor-in-chief **Hitesh Ratna**
Deputy editor **James Maw**
Art editor **Anthony Moore**
Staff writer **Andrew Murray**
Staff writer **Chris Flanagan**
Chief sub editor **Gregg Davies**
UK digital editor **Joe Brewin**
Social media apprentice **Hunter Godson**

Contributors

Huw Davies, Brendan Hannan, Chris Hybl, Barbara Maningat,
Vicky Mercado, Robert Penner, Holger Tromp, Matt Gharakhanian (Fever),
Sophie Lioe, Hope Harding (Exposure), Safraz Ali, Rebekah Smith (Nike),
Thomas Gray (Adidas)

Photography

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FourFourTwo Management

Senior direct marketing executive **Faith Wardle**
Global partnerships director **Ian Porter**
Managing director, Hobbies **Alastair Lewis**

Advertising

Media packs are available on request
Partnerships & advertising director **Kevin O'Byrne**
kevin.obyrne@futurenet.com

International

FourFourTwo is available for licensing. Contact the International
department to discuss partnership opportunities
International licensing director **Matt Ellis**
matt.ellis@futurenet.com

Subscriptions

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Group marketing director, magazines & memberships **Sharon Todd**

Circulation

Head of newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production

Head of production **Mark Constance**
Production project manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising production manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital editions controller **Jason Hudson**
Production manager **Vivienne Calvert**

Group Management

Brand director **Matthew Pierce**
Chief content officer **Aaron Asadi**
Group content director **Paul Newman**
Commercial finance director **Dan Jotcham**

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EDITOR'S LETTER



@FourFourTwoEd

Even for *FFT*, flying to Los Angeles to interview Zlatan Ibrahimovic was a pretty big deal. For staff writer Chris Flanagan, this epic encounter came a

few days after a draining 18-hour round

trip to the Scottish Highlands to watch Britain's worst team, Fort William. So it probably makes sense for him to tell you about this month's issue and his week of two halves...

Chris, what was it like coming face to face with Zlatan?

Entertaining. He was unleashing classic Zlatanisms even before the interview began, and his eyes lit up when I said I was from near Manchester. "Red or blue?" he asked, ready to make a quip. He was disappointed when I said Bolton.

How did LA and Fort William compare?

I went straight to the airport after returning from Scotland, and I've learned a lesson: never visit the Highlands with clothes only for California. Fort William was freezing!

What did you discuss with Zlatan?

Fish and chips, lions and robots taking over the world – thankfully he didn't look at me like I was a madman.

Finally, with Christmas coming, why not give the gift of Zlatan and *FFT* this season (p32).

It's what Ibra would want!

Hitesh Ratna
Editor-in-chief

PLAYED A BLINDER



Gavin McBain

The artist illustrated this month's *Between The Lines* with Bruce Grobbelaar. "It was fun to illustrate a character like Bruce, who I'm old enough to have seen play.

I even included a few homages to my favourite Vietnam war movies."



Jon Shard

The ace lensman snapped Ibra for our cover. "Zlatan was a dream to work with - he had the presence of a friendly giant.

We had a good old natter, comparing the weather in LA with Manchester. He certainly isn't missing the rain back in England, that's for sure!"



Hunter Godson

The youngest (and therefore 'hippest') member of the *FFT* team oversaw the first outing of our shiny new gear section, *The Mixer*. "It may have taken a few thousand emails to pull this section together, but it was definitely worth it. There's some fresh kit in there."

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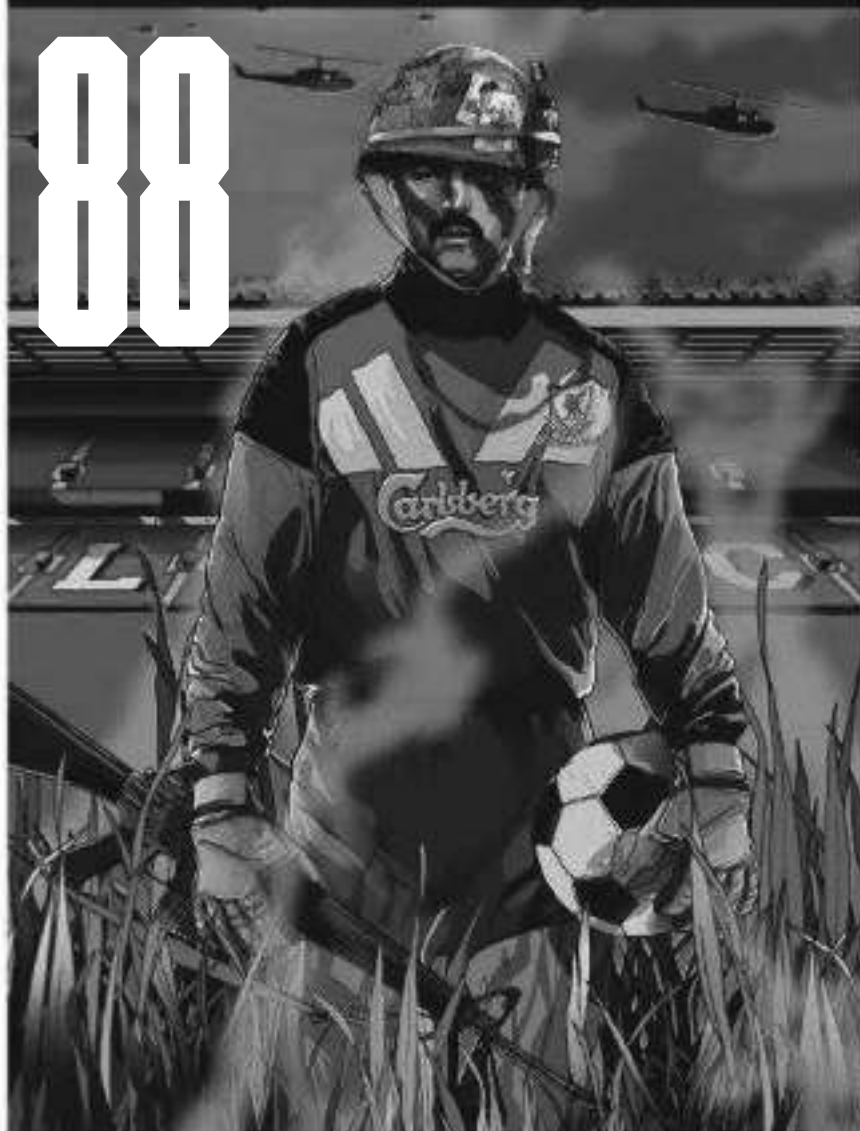


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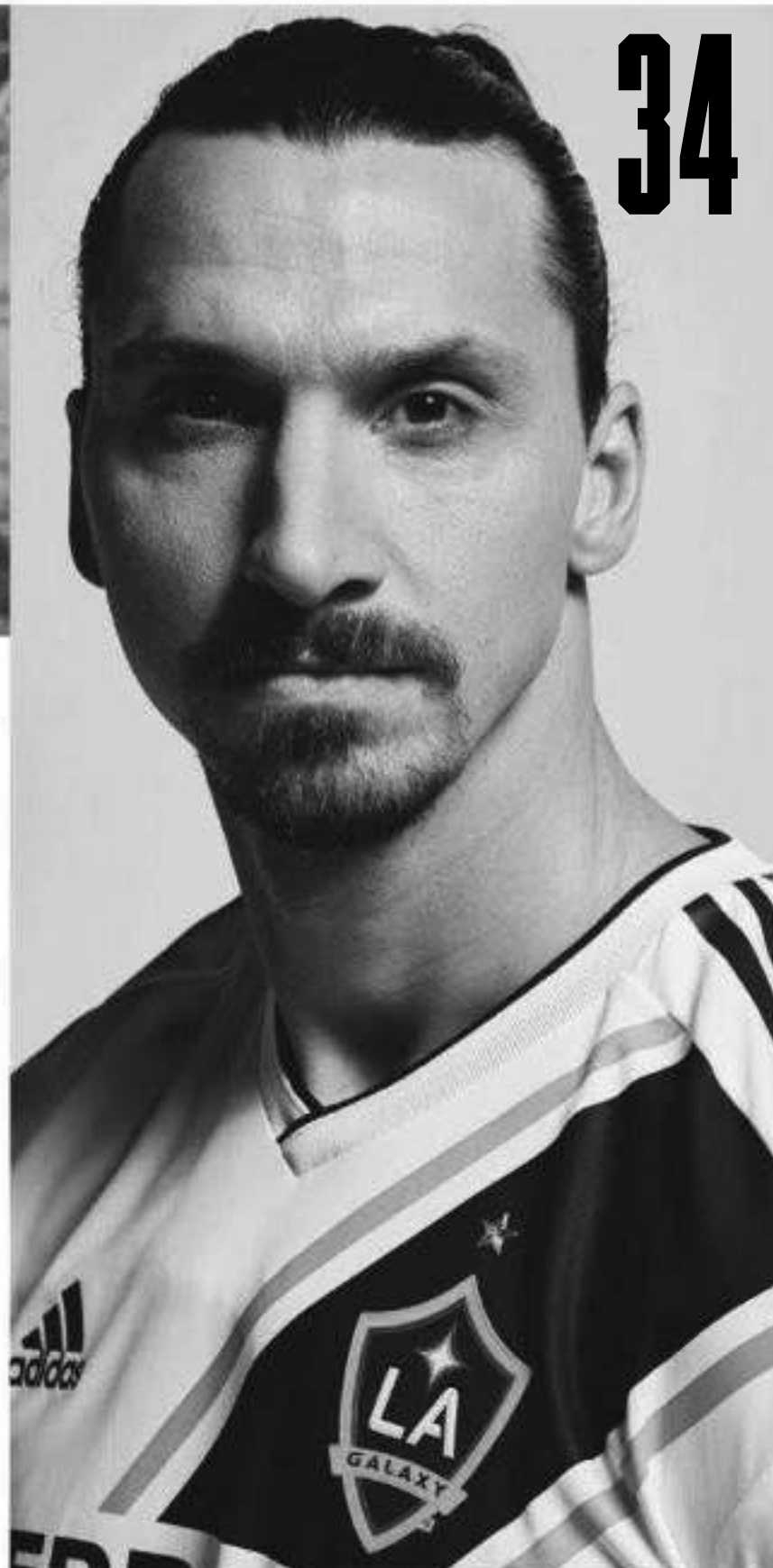
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THE BEAUTIFUL GAME





A BIT OF BRAZILIAN FLARE

The Mineirao in Belo Horizonte holds a unique place in the hearts of Brazilian football supporters as the setting of *that* 7-1 World Cup semi-final defeat to Germany in 2014. For Cruzeiro fans, however, it still just feels like home. Before *A Raposa's* (the Fox's) Copa do Brasil final first leg against Corinthians, the hosts' team bus received quite the welcome from a flare-heavy throng. An inspired Thiago Neves' goal in a 1-0 win set Cruzeiro on course to the title.

Picture Douglas Magno/AFP/Getty

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME





HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID

Synchronised swimming has long fascinated us at *FFT*. Has anyone ever really been so happy upside down underwater that they've felt the need to gurn their nut off for minutes on end? It's strictly doggy paddle in the shallow end for us. In Everton's 2-0 home victory over Crystal Palace in October, the Toffees' Brazilian forward Richarlison and the Eagles' centre-back James Tomkins put together an impeccable synchro audition tape for the next Olympics. Bravo, lads!

Picture Mike Egerton/PA



INSECT INVASION Manchester United defender Phil Jones had to call in pest control as his house was overrun by STD-riddled ladybirds – this exclusive photo shows his reaction to the news

UPFRONT



Alex Scott reveals her terrible fear of feet **p20**

Beware the murderous orange of Ehime **p23**

David Villa on his most spectacular goal **p29**



ONE-ON-ONE JERMAINE PENNANT

Interview Sam Pilger Photography Richard Cannon

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR A FOOTBALLER IN PRISON? HOW CLOSE WAS HE TO JOINING REAL MADRID? AND, COME ON: IS HE *REALLY* A PORN STAR?

“I have had a good career – I’m not unhappy – but I could’ve done more, I know that. I could have made more of myself and my ability.” This is what Jermaine Pennant allows himself to think in his more reflective moments.

But he is also very grateful to have enjoyed the career he did, after growing up amid gang wars on a Nottingham council estate with a father he says was a heroin addict and a mother who abandoned him when he was three.

Having survived this scarred start to life, he became Britain’s most expensive teenage footballer in 1999 when Arsene Wenger paid £2 million to take a 15-year-old Pennant to Arsenal.

The young winger would go on to become one of the Premier League’s most exciting, but frustrating, players.

He scored a hat-trick on his first start for the Gunners, starred for Liverpool in the 2007 Champions League Final and played for 13 other sides, too, including Leeds, Birmingham, Portsmouth, Stoke, plus clubs in Spain, India and Singapore.

Now he’s sitting down in London with *FourFourTwo* – and Pennant, 35, doesn’t hold back as he answers your candid questions about being hungover for his big Arsenal break, playing prison football and being tapped up by Steven Gerrard.

What was it like, growing up amid the gang wars on Nottingham’s Meadows estate? Did you fear for your safety?

Zeeshan Hamed, Birmingham

Late one night I walked out of my house, thinking I could hear my dad’s friends on my doorstep. There was a bit

of a commotion, so I thought there was a party happening. I walked outside in just a pair of shorts, but then I saw someone shooting at the house opposite – continuous gunshots going off, like fireworks. Car windows were also being smashed in. I was a boy, just a teenager, but in that moment I was scared they could mistake me for an adult and attack me in my house; drag me into the street. That’s probably the scariest moment I had on the Meadows.

Is it true that you were questioned by the police as part of a murder investigation when you were only 14?

Amy Walters, Sheffield

Yes, that is true. I was outside a KFC with some friends, in an area of Nottingham called Radford, when another group from a different area suddenly appeared and shot at us. Someone was shot, two people were stabbed and someone’s head was opened up with a baseball bat. I dived into the KFC and hid behind the counter. When I came back out, everyone had vanished. My friend came to pick me up about 20 minutes later, and soon we learned that a member of the other gang had died, so the police came to question me about that. They came to my house and were a little surprised to find out I was actually still at school.

How did you cope with being sold to Arsenal for £2m, being only 15 then?

Freddie Lamb, London

It was a bit of shock, but it literally happened overnight and I had no say in

whether I wanted to go or stay. No one asked me my thoughts. My dad just arrived at my house with an agent, put me in the back of a Range Rover and drove me down the M1 to London. It was a bit scary, because I was only 15. Apparently there was an offer from Tottenham, too, but my dad didn’t like George Graham. At the start I was really homesick, I was so young, and so I went back and forth to Nottingham. It was difficult – I had no friends down there. It was strange to get a lot of attention. I just wanted to be normal, but I would get into trouble.

How did it feel to score a hat-trick in your first league start for Arsenal?

Alan Roberts, Swindon

[Laughs] I had been out the night before and had a big night, because I really didn’t think I would be playing, never mind starting the game. I’d never started a game for Arsenal and I didn’t think that’d change, especially as Robert Pires, Freddie Ljungberg and Ray Parlour were all in the squad. I was guaranteed to be on the bench. I thought, ‘Sod it’, and the night before the game I went out with my friends to an *FHM* party and got home at around 6am. I couldn’t believe it when I saw my name in the starting line-up! I was still so hungover when I was playing; I just did everything in my power not to embarrass myself. I can’t believe I actually scored. It was just a huge relief – I thought, ‘OK, you can take me off now! Please, Arsenal!’ I felt so sick and I could feel the vodka still bouncing around in my stomach. ▶



CLUBS

1998-99 Notts County

1999-2005 Arsenal

2002-03 Watford (loan)

2003-04 Leeds United (loan)

2005-06 Birmingham City

2006-09 Liverpool

2009 Portsmouth (loan)

2009-10 Real Zaragoza

2010-14 Stoke City

2012-13 Wolves (loan)

2014 Pune City

2015 Wigan Athletic

2016 Tampines Rovers

2017 Bury

2017 Billericay Town

"I FELT THE VODKA BOUNCING AROUND IN MY STOMACH AND YOU COULD SMELL IT ON MY BREATH... I DID OK TO SCORE A HAT-TRICK"

You could smell it on my breath, too! I did OK to score a hat-trick: it shows I had talent, though it helps when you're playing with Thierry Henry and Patrick Vieira. That was the first game of Arsenal's 49-game unbeaten run.

Why do you think it didn't work out for you at Arsenal, especially with Arsene Wenger as your manager?

Dave Shute, London

I think I got too frustrated when I didn't play. I had arrived there when I was 15 and I was labelled a wonder kid because of the huge fee. I did well in the youth teams: we won back-to-back FA Youth Cups and I was one of the best players. I was ready. But I had to bide my time for so long, and that was tough. My focus began to wobble, and because I wasn't playing in the first team I would think, 'What is the point?' Of course, I let myself down a bit, too. I remember arriving at training once still dressed from the night before, and I could see Arsene looking out the window of his office as I got out of a car with two birds from that night [laughs]. I definitely didn't help myself! But as I wasn't playing, I thought I might as well just enjoy my life. I didn't go about it the right way. I think I moved to Arsenal too early, and in that era it was difficult for young players to break through. If it was now, it'd be different.

Arsene Wenger's assistant at Arsenal, Pat Rice, told you that you weren't good enough and wouldn't make it. How much did that motivate you?

Ralph Goodman, via Twitter

He didn't say that directly to me, but he said it to my agent because of my attitude. We never really got on, even though I always tried to be polite to him. But I remember that when I went to Birmingham and Liverpool and had success there, I said to my agent, "I wonder what Pat Rice is thinking now?" A few years later, I scored for Stoke against Arsenal in a 3-1 win and as I walked past the bench I sneaked a look at Pat, but he had his head down.

How do you look back at your 30 days in prison? What was the scariest part, and what did you learn about yourself in your time there?

Graeme Ainsworth, via Twitter

The scariest part was being driven to the prison in the back of a van, because I had no idea what to expect. My only ideas were all from films. It wasn't a nice place, but once I was there it wasn't as scary as I had expected. It was more about the boredom, and how you filled your time. I had a lot of time to think about my sins.



Did you play for the prison football team while you were inside?

Patrick Dorsey, via Facebook

Yes, I played for them once in a match and it was carnage! It was on AstroTurf, but the really old one that's more like a carpet. I skipped past a few players, and they were all diving in on me like they were playing on ice. They had no care in the world and I was worried that one of them was going to take me out. I would have been left with no legs! There were a few who just wanted to foul me, so I was like Colin Jackson doing the hurdles. I was on set-pieces, and I think I scored a couple of goals.

What was it like, playing with an electronic tag? Was it uncomfortable? How did you play in those games?

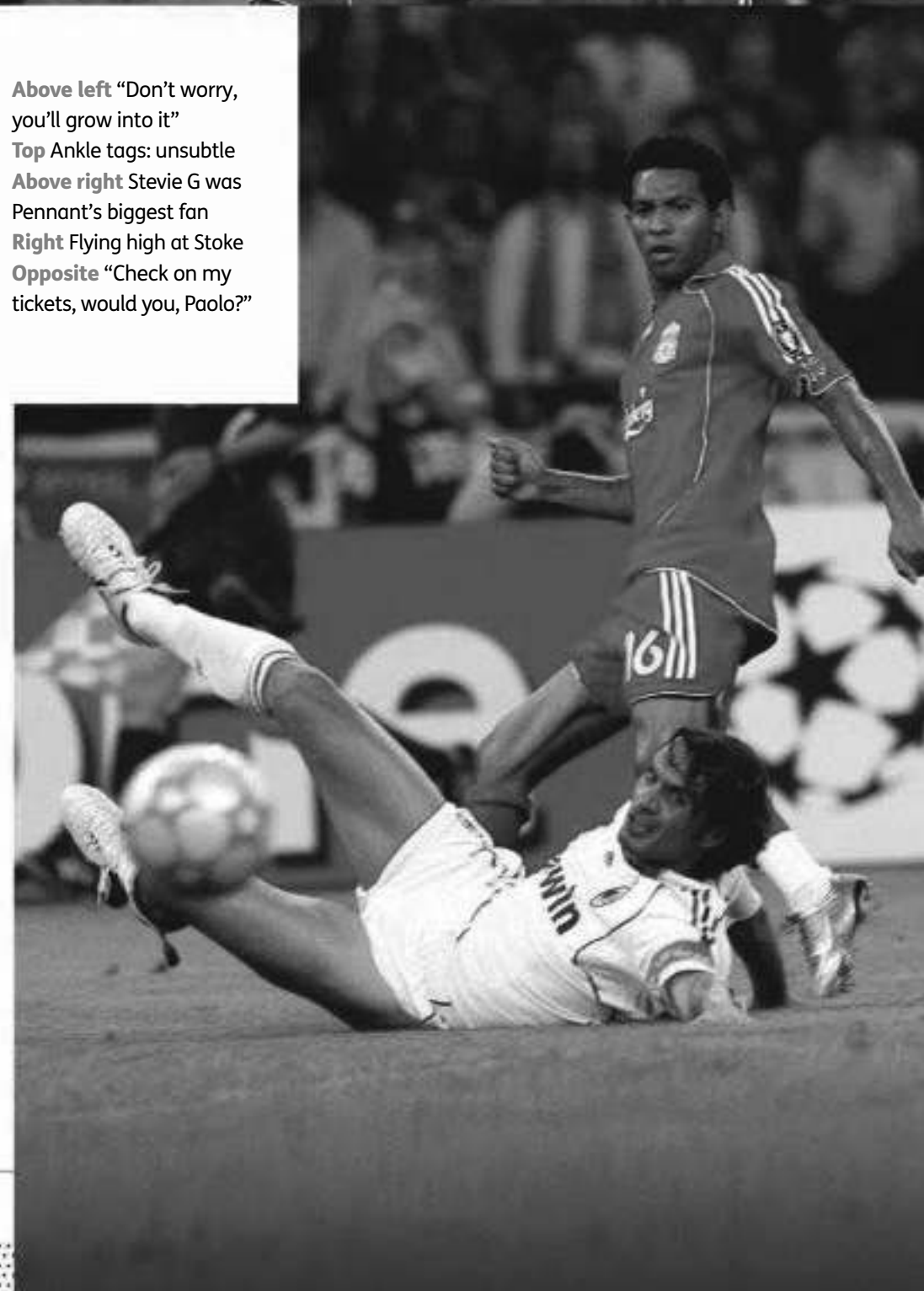
Barney Avon, via email

I just ignored it. To be honest, I couldn't feel it at all, because we covered it in padding. It was a bit hard to ignore, though, when I'd look down at my ankle and it was twice the size of the other one! The fans were giving me stick, too, but it was all OK.

Is it true Steven Gerrard tapped you up to sign for Liverpool while you were playing in a game against him?

Tony Mulrone, via Twitter

Yes, that's absolutely true. I was playing for Birmingham against Liverpool at



Above left "Don't worry, you'll grow into it"

Top Ankle tags: unsubtle

Above right Stevie G was Pennant's biggest fan

Right Flying high at Stoke

Opposite "Check on my tickets, would you, Paolo?"



"I MADE MISTAKES AND I HAVE TO LIVE WITH SEEING PLAYERS I WAS BETTER THAN PLAY FOR ENGLAND"

St Andrew's and Gerrard said to me, "Who is your agent?" while the game was going on. I said, "Sky Andrew – do you know him?" He said, "No, but I'll find out." I was trying to focus on the game! Straight after the game, I told Sky about it. Obviously a move to Liverpool eventually came about.

During the 2007 Champions League Final there was a PA announcement asking you to come to reception to sort out some tickets – but you were on the pitch! What was that about?!

Jack Davidson, via Facebook
I had left tickets at reception for some members of my family, but before they turned up, some Scouser picked them up by pretending they were for him. It was a bit of hustle. Then, in the first half, I was playing and I heard an announcement on the Tannoy: "Can Pennant come to reception please?" I was really confused – did they actually mean me? It meant that my family flew to Greece but never got into the ground, and I fell out with them as they accused me of forgetting to leave the tickets.

I heard you passed out on a flight from Spain only a few days after the Champions League final. Is that true?
Matty Balgowan, Eastbourne
[Laughs] We had gone to Marbella and Ibiza, and you only go there to party.

The flight home was at 10am, so we went out for the whole night, finished at 8am and went straight to the airport. I felt so rough. I got onto the plane and I knew I was going to be sick. I started getting the cold sweats, so I tried to go to the toilet. The next thing I knew, I was on all fours in the aisle.

Did you really turn your garage into a mini-nightclub while at Liverpool?
Steve Overton, via Twitter

My driveway was so big that you could park 11 cars on it, and I had a little arch there with a roof on it, which is where I set up a nightclub. I had a sign above the door saying 'Players' Lounge', and a DJ booth and a bar. We always went back there after a night out in Liverpool.

How did you get on with Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher? Did they rule the Liverpool dressing room?

Geoff Barnes, Kirkby
They ruled the dressing room and the club. I got along with them fine – they knew I was a bit crazy. We weren't best pals, but we got along and I respected them. We were just team-mates.

Why do you think you were never picked to play for England?
Adam Blandford, via Twitter
I think it was the drink-driving incident. To play for your country, you must have

a good image, and after that my image was tainted – it didn't matter how good I was on the pitch. It might be a bit different now. It has been frustrating seeing players I was better than play for England, but I have to live with that. I know I made some mistakes.

Is it true that Real Madrid made a bid for you? Why didn't the move happen?
Simon Blake, via email

Real Madrid wanted to sign me when the former Spurs manager, Juande Ramos, was in charge there. The board wanted to do the deal as they wanted a right-winger. On transfer deadline day I got a call from my agent, saying, "You could be going to Madrid – keep your phone on." But the board had gone over the manager's head, so he started to get upset, and to placate him they pulled the plug on the deal. The club wanted me; the manager didn't.

What was it like living and playing in Spain for Real Zaragoza, and why didn't it work out for you there?

Duncan Kingham, via email
The football was good. I loved how technical all the teams were, even the ones down at the bottom. The weather was nice. The pitches were immaculate. But Zaragoza was a bit difficult to live in as it was traditional Spain – it wasn't very multicultural. On days off, I would

go to Madrid or Barcelona for a good time. Once, I went to Barcelona for a night out and then got the train back on the morning of training, but I felt so bad that I couldn't go in, so I told them I wasn't well. The club doctor came to my house to check on me, but I didn't answer the door. I think they knew!

Did you really forget that you'd left your Porsche in Spain when you came back to play in England?

Jordan Potter, via email
I didn't forget it, but I did kind of abandon it. I always knew where it was. I signed for Stoke City on deadline day and had to get over there fast, so I left my car at the train station. It was in the station car park for three months, so I asked my friend to collect it. While it was there, though, the security were getting suspicious. When they ran the number plate it came back to me, and so stories began to leak about it, and it did look a bit bad.

Do you think you made the most of your career and your ability?

Jason Nolan, via Twitter
Considering where I came from, I did well, but I could have done better if I didn't make certain mistakes. But that all comes from my upbringing, where I didn't have the guidance I might have had. From a young age, I didn't



have the discipline. If you think about where I came from as a kid, and that I played in a Champions League final, that means I had a good career, I think.

Is it true that an anonymous person used to email clubs to try to stop them from signing you?

Stuart Northam, Kent

That is true. I was baffled, because I would go to a team, shine in training for two weeks and expect to get a deal. The manager would be delighted with me. But then, when it came to talking about a contract, they'd suddenly tell me they didn't have the budget. I didn't understand it, because it happened with several teams. My agent was tipped off by a board member at a club about an email they were anonymously sent about me, which said I was into drugs, that I had abandoned my child and that I was always out, and so they couldn't take a risk on me. I have since found out who sent them, but I haven't talked to them. They were just bitter. They know that I know now, too.

After turning out for Arsenal and Liverpool, what was it like to play in non-league for Billericay Town last season? Did other players want to kick you and prove themselves?

Alfie Battison, Ipswich

I was definitely targeted in that league. I played with a good bunch of lads, but it was a bit of a circus down there with the owner [Glenn Tamplin] and the staff. It was crazy – an eye-opener – and I couldn't stay there any longer. But it was interesting while it lasted. We would get changed in sheds. I was used to immaculate surfaces, and suddenly I was playing on a cow field in front of 100 people. It was a fun experience, but one that I'm glad didn't last forever!

Do you regret being so critical of Loris Karius on Twitter after Liverpool lost the 2018 Champions League Final?

Connor Shields, Southend

I don't know if I really regret it. I was just being light-hearted, having a bit of



"PRISON FOOTBALL WAS CARNAGE. SOME DIVED IN JUST WANTING TO FOUL ME. I WAS LIKE COLIN JACKSON DOING THE HURDLES"



Left Jermaine is greeted by an unfortunate mental image of his boss

Below Fun with two of his dream five-a-side team

Bottom Billericay Town, where dreams go to die



but it turned out not to be. They had found a picture of me in a bag with a gun in it. The police came from Nottingham to Arsenal's training ground in order to warn me. It transpired that a friend had hidden a gun in a bag without knowing that there was a picture of me already in it.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time? Ideally, what would you like to be doing?

Gary Peyton, Essex

I would like to get myself on television, whether that is in punditry or on shows.

I'd like to get back into football and become a coach.

I think I would really get along with my players.

I always said, "If I become a manager, I am going to be totally different." I would tell my players that if they put in a shift for me, they would get some holidays. That motivates players. When I played, if a manager said they would give you Sunday and Monday off if you got a win, that would really help you. You need to get away. I think my players would like me. I need to start doing the badges in Wales or Ireland. But I am not going to play again – that's me done with that.

Looking back, do you regret the Monopoly game that you describe in your book, where you would rate girls from Old Kent Road up to Mayfair and receive 'rent' if one of your mates slept with them after you?

George Crepton, via email

No, I don't regret it – it was just banter with the boys. We didn't disrespect anyone.

I put it in the book as something funny for people to read. The girls had no respect for themselves anyway – it's not as if I'm taking a lovely girl and exploiting and exposing her. They knew what they were getting involved in; they just

wanted to have some fun. Every lad of that age goes out and sleeps with birds. I'm sure there are plenty of WhatsApp groups with people saying, "I done this with that bird." I was still learning: I was just a teenager, and then in my early twenties. I don't regret it. But I wouldn't act like that now.

If you were sent back in time, what would you do differently?

Goal Scorer, via Twitter

I would stay longer at Notts County, because I was playing in their first team when I was 15. If I had stayed,

I would have played more, and it was under Sam Allardyce, who I got on with. It would have boosted my value to the club, but also I would've improved as a player. That would have done me good in the long run.

Did you enjoy your time spent playing for Pune City in the Indian Super League?

Aadil Kiaan, Mumbai

It was hot out there, and a little bit different, but I enjoyed it. They really love their football – there were 60,000 in the stadiums for

some games. Obviously the football wasn't great, but I enjoyed exploring a different country and culture.

What was the best moment of your career; the best goal you scored; and the best five-a-side team you can name from players you played with?

Charlie Ellis, via Instagram

The best moment was playing in the Champions League Final for Liverpool in 2007, without a shadow of a doubt. The best goal I scored was for Liverpool against Chelsea, because I did it at Anfield against my good mate Ashley [Cole] and a great keeper in Petr Cech. And my five-a-side team from former team-mates would be Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp, Steven Gerrard, Ashley Cole and David Seaman.

'Mental' by Jermaine Pennant is published by John Blake and out now

banter. He made a big mistake – we've all done that. I've made mistakes and people are quick to let me know. Being an ex-pro doesn't mean I can't have an opinion. I hope he bounces back. I was just saying what everyone was thinking.

Who got the best out of you: Arsene Wenger, Rafa Benitez or Steve Bruce?

Barry Stevenson, London

Steve Bruce at Birmingham, because no matter what I did off the pitch, he knew I'd always give him 100 per cent on it. And my form at Birmingham earned me a move to Liverpool.

What was it like to play for Tony Pulis at Stoke? Is he a scary character?

Chris Pawlton, Bexhill

He's a lovely guy: when you come into training, he'll always ask you about your family. But there's a dark side to him,

too; he can be scary. There's the famous story about him going to headbutt James Beattie naked in the dressing room. Players had that in the back of their minds and knew not to cross him!

How did you react to being outed as a porn star on the front page of *The Sun* earlier this year?

David Larsen, Brighton

I just laughed! I was a porn star! I wasn't bothered – I've had a lot worse, trust me – but my family were a bit upset. Of course I'm not a porn star; it was all exaggerated.

There are rumours that you were once at the centre of a kidnap plot – are they true?

Fraser Sprackling, via email

The police thought at first that it was a kidnap plot,





BAD HABIT A Barcelona-supporting nun (not pictured) took to Twitter to troll Real Madrid over their goal drought, saying, "I activated notifications for Madrid goals, but got nothing?"

AROUND THE WORLD IN 12 STORIES

Things we've learned this month: seagulls despise Iker Casillas, Paul Pogba really will dab in any situation, and never allow Mario Balotelli onto an Algerian team bus

1 "HELLO, IS THIS ED WOODWARD?" England London

He's one of history's greatest footballers and won the Champions League three times in two and a half years as a coach – but Zinedine Zidane showed on a trip to London that he loves a tourist cliché.

While speculation was rife about Jose Mourinho's Manchester United future, an unemployed Zizou entered a classic red phone box and pretended to make a call, to the delight of football's gossip columnists. The Frenchman did ignore their requests for him to lurk ominously behind Jose Mourinho's waxwork at Madame Tussaud's, however. Spoilsport.

2 THE VEINS IN SPAIN... Spain Zamora

Say what you like about lower-league Spanish side Zamora, but they always show heart. That's because Los Viriatos have unveiled a new Kappa kit showing the human circulatory system, albeit with the heart and their crest entwined.

Sadly, the club have been marooned in the fourth tier since their most recent relegation in 2015. When your kit shows your veins but your team's on the wane, that's Zamora...

3 WILD BOARS 1 ELON MUSK 0 Argentina Buenos Aires

The rescue of 12 Thai footballers from a flooded cave made headlines across the world this summer – and the Wild Boars team were promptly invited to the Youth Olympics, where they played a friendly against River Plate.

There's believed to be no truth in the rumour that Elon Musk turned up just before kick-off to say he had designed a special ball-kicking contraption, before getting upset when no one used it.

4 TOON ARMY France Paris

There was nothing Mickey Mouse about Les Bleus this summer, and the cartoon legend was on hand to greet members of France's World Cup-winning squad when they visited Disneyland Paris.

Paul Pogba, Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele and Antoine Griezmann all met Mickey (presumably N'Golo Kante was too busy, running 10 marathons or something). The quartet were also pictured taking a ride on the Tower of Terror, Mbappe looking terrified while Pogba was dabbing – because he's Paul Pogba and that's what he does.

5 HALF MAN, HALF BISCUIT England Grantham

Grantham were the club that gave Martin O'Neill his managerial break, and his early days as a boss must have been powered by a diet of pure gingerbread.

As Grantham claims to be the spiritual home of the biscuit, the Evo-Stik League club are nicknamed The Gingerbreads and their mascot is a gingerbread man, who gave away 400 of the treats to spectators on Non-League Day. The afternoon ended in defeat to Lancaster as, fittingly, the Gingerbreads crumbled.

6 CANTONA FOILED Portugal Lisbon

Newsflash: Eric Cantona has done something weird on Instagram again.

This time, the Manchester United legend covered his entire head in tinfoil, posted the picture and captioned it 'Reflecting Memory'. No, we've no idea. It divided opinion. "So conceptual," one follower replied. "It's this s**t that makes you not want to follow him for very long," said another. Some people will never appreciate true art.

7 SLABHEAD RIDES AGAIN England Leicester

When the Bank of England announced a new £50 note, football fans knew what they wanted to see on it: Harry Maguire riding an inflatable unicorn.

An artist's impression was mocked up by Twitter funnyman Jonny Sharples, and his petition soon racked up 15,000 signatures. Maguire represented "core British values of bravery, strength and a big head", said Sharples. Why stop with the £50 note? Slabhead for Prime Minister – the campaign starts here.

8 CASILLAS vs SEAGULL Portugal Porto

Glenn Murray told you all in the last issue of *FFT* to beware seagulls stealing your lunch – now Iker Casillas has fallen victim to the bothersome birds.

The Spaniard was enjoying a meal by the River Douro when a gull wrapped its beak around a piece of cheese, hanging around long enough for Casillas to get a picture. Flapping uncontrollably before dropping the clumsily-claimed item, the goalkeeper joined Porto in 2015 after making several errors for Real Madrid.

9 "WHEN WE SAID 'FIRE THE COACH', WE DIDN'T MEAN..." Algeria Akbou

There were mixed fortunes for Algerian side Setif in the quarter-finals of the African Champions League: they went to Morocco to knock out holders Wydad but their bus caught fire en route home.

Thankfully no one was injured – *FFT* probably wouldn't have included it in this light-hearted round-up if they had been. That's the last time they invite Mario Balotelli onto the coach for a post-match fireworks celebration...

10 PICTURE PERFECT France Paris

Such is the ease with which PSG are dispatching their Ligue 1 rivals, it isn't so surprising that Neymar decided to try a new hobby after the final whistle blew in their 5-0 thrashing of Lyon.

The Brazilian grabbed a camera and started snapping away, although things turned out badly when the flash caught Neymar by surprise and he went down, clutching his eye and demanding that the device be sent off immediately.

11 DON'T MESS WITH THE PORTUGUESE MASCOT UNION Portugal Lisbon

Portuguese mascots are a militant bunch, so they were none too pleased after Sporting's Jubas The Lion was fined €479 for "embracing a player during an interview, obstructing the advertising background". Yes, really.

Rivals soon posed with their mouths taped shut in protest, while Vitoria Guimaraes' Super Afonso held up a sign that read, 'Free the mascots. We are all Jubas. Mascots without colour'. Football uniting people once again – in a strange way, it's really rather beautiful. No? OK.

12 LUIZ SHOWS HIS BOTTLE UAE Dubai

David Luiz had some time on his hands during the recent international break, so the Chelsea defender headed to the Middle East in order to feed some milk to bears and white tigers.

Luiz had to show real bottle to control a fearsome animal who could lash out at any moment, bringing back fond memories of the days when he had to mark Diego Costa in training.

SIX OF THE BEST FIXTURES

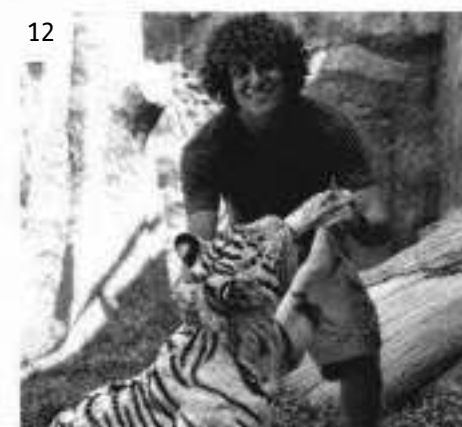
➤ **Dortmund v Bayern** November 10
With BVB flying out of the traps and Niko Kovac enduring early wobbles, Bayern face a tough trip

➤ **Man City vs Man Utd** November 11
Can United shock their rivals at the Etihad again, after coming back from 2-0 down to win in April?

➤ **England vs Croatia** November 18
Croatia. At home. In the last game of the group. Gareth, you'd be wise to leave the broly at home



3 “YOU AGAIN?” Ivan Juric has been appointed Genoa boss for the third time in 18 months: hired in February 2017, he was sacked two days later, reappointed in April and fired again in November that year



Germany vs Netherlands November 19
Die Mannschaft could be relegated in the Nations League. What's the German for Schadenfreude?

PSG vs Liverpool November 28
Neymar, Mbappe, Cavani, Choupo-Moting – it will be a tough test in France for Klopp and his men

Sheffield United vs Leeds December 1
A Yorkshire derby; when Marcelo Bielsa was coach of Argentina, Chris Wilder was managing Alfreton



ASK A SILLY QUESTION

ALEX 'FEET FEARER' SCOTT

Forget the apocalypse: what the ex-England star dreads is someone waving a giant instep in her face

Interview Nick Moore Illustration Bill McConkey

Hi Alex. You won Bear Grylls' show, *Mission Survive*. Does Bear drink his own urine as frequently off-camera as he does on it?

Hi. Yeah, he doesn't seem to care about stuff like that. It's so blasé and natural, just part of his day-to-day life. He thinks we're the weird ones for questioning it. That was a great experience, though. I had never even been camping before, let alone trying to survive in the wild.

Do you now feel well-prepared for the impending apocalypse?

Oh no, absolutely not at all. I suppose I have discovered that I've got the ability to get into survival mode. It's all instinct. But at heart I don't really like camping, nor being outside in the freezing cold and pouring rain.

Well, that's why mankind invented the indoors, right?

Yeah. I'm a girl who likes her home comforts, really. I don't think we'll have an apocalypse any time soon, anyway. I'm staying optimistic on that one.

What are your top tips for surviving if we do, however?

It's all about surrounding yourself with the right people. You're going to need a good group in order to survive. You need to be positive, so it's not all doom and gloom. I got on really well with Samantha Barks, and that helped me when times were hard. You need to laugh about it all, and bounce off each other. Helping each other out is important, too. I tried to do that – it's the captain in me. Team first.

If you could have an animal for a first name, à la Bear Grylls, what animal would you go for?

Oof... how about Lion Scott? That's a good one. I liked the Lioness in *The Lion King*. Or Lioness Scott – then I've got the England angle covered. Lioness Scott would be fun, bubbly and outgoing, but still a strong woman. She would get stuff done.



Excellent. Now, what is the silliest question you've ever been asked about being a female footballer?

It's quite sweet, really: a little kid asked me, "Do you live in a mansion?" People assume that if you're a footballer, you automatically live in a mansion. I had to explain it was a normal house. And I'm looking to move back to London, so I'll probably be in a box room soon...

Do you ever pick up things with your feet if you can't be bothered to stoop?

Never. I've got a strange phobia of feet. Growing up, I'd always wear socks to cover up my own feet – I'd hide them away. I'm not so bad now, but picking stuff up with them would be too much.

So, your nightmare would be a giant foot hovering near your face?

Exactly. Ooh, don't. I never liked anyone putting their feet near me. Disgusting.

Let's move on. Do you ever send the crying-with-laughter emoji, even though you didn't cry with laughter?

No. Mine are quite honest, as I'm always smiling. I'm a big emoji user – maybe too much. I like to end a text with one.

The horror comes when people put 10 of the laughing emojis in a row.

Yes. One or two, maximum.

And what emoji would you award to this conversation?

Let's give it a smiling emoji!

Yes! If you could be ambassador to any country, which would you go for?

America. It's a great country that needs shaking up. I'd tell Trump to move aside.

Nice. Who is the best Bible character?

I'm all for female empowerment, so I'll say Mary. Strong woman. Some special reproduction for the whole world, there.

Giving birth to the lad Jesus was certainly a fine achievement. Finally, do you have any memorable dreams?

I'm a bit spiritual, and I think dreams sometimes send us messages. I once had a dream about my mum that prompted me to give her a call. It turned out that she had just been panicking about something and really needed a chat. So, that was good.

"I HAVE A STRANGE PHOBIA OF FEET. AS A KID, I'D WEAR SOCKS JUST TO HIDE THEM"

Follow the FA Cup First Round on the BBC via TV, radio and online, November 9-11

STRIKE IT LUCKY

With its range of expertly crafted footwear and kits, Joma has been helping athletes reach their goals for over 50 years.

When it comes to setting goals and making them a reality, Joma has a faultless track record. When it was formed back in 1965, with a team of just eight employees helping to produce top quality footwear for athletes across Spain, Joma's dream was to do the same for the entire world - and boy has it achieved it.

In 1969 Joma built its first factory and expanded its expert team to 20. In 1980, Joma moved into a whopping 2,000 square metre production plant, along with team of over 70 people. By the end of the decade Joma boots graced the feet of Spanish football's top players, including Emilio Butragueño - a five-time La Liga winner with Real Madrid - and Txiki Begiristain, who would go on to win the 1992 European Cup final with FC Barcelona.

Later that same year, Spain's Fermin Cacho (1500 meters) and Alfonso (men's soccer) both achieved gold medals at the Barcelona Olympics with Joma on their feet. In 2006 and 2007, Sevilla FC made history by winning back-to-back UEFA Cup trophies wearing Joma jerseys. For over 50 years, Joma has provided athletes with the tailor-made tools they need to make history, whatever the sport.

Today, Joma operates in over 110 countries across the globe, continuing the long-standing tradition of providing both professional and amateur athletes with the footwear and kit required to help them achieve sporting greatness.

Joma works with sports teams across a vast variety of disciplines and geographical regions. It provides kit for Spain's national rugby and

handball teams, as well as the handball teams of Croatia and Slovenia. It works with Inter Movistar, which is among the planet's top futsal teams, and the seven Olympic committees and 18 sporting federations that comprise the pinnacle of the sporting world, the Olympic Games. Joma also tailors the jerseys of dozens of top European football teams - including UC Sampdoria of Italy, Toulouse of France, and Espanyol, Getafe and Villarreal of Spain's Primera Liga.



Joma's new goal is to provide athletes of all levels with gear so finely-tuned, it adapts to their specific needs. Take, for example, the Aguila Pro football boot. Crafted with kangaroo leather, the Aguila Pro has been painstakingly engineered to fit like a glove, providing that all-important natural feel when striking the ball.

The Aguila Pro's water-resistant leather repels moisture, maintaining that crucial lightness in wet conditions, while the microfibre heel adds durability. A pre-formed EVA sockliner adjusts to the shape of the foot for maximum comfort and enhanced ball control, which helps players glide across the pitch, play precision passes, and unleash shots with pin-point accuracy.

Now, you can set your goals - whatever your sport - and Joma will help you reach them.

Learn more about the Aguila Pro at joma.com

Joma®

Exercise your freedom



ePROTEST In Switzerland, Young Boys fans hurled PS4 controllers on to the pitch to protest the rise of gaming - they also held aloft a banner saying 'Shit eSports'. Indeed.

REQUIRED READING



Building The Yellow Wall

Uli Hesse (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20)



Hesse's latest tome on German football charts the journey of Borussia Dortmund, a rollercoaster ride featuring dalliances with bankruptcy and a Champions League triumph in 1997, which came 31 years after the club had won West Germany's first European trophy. The reasons for BVB's unique popularity are expertly teased out, including the titular Yellow Wall, a phrase coined as recently as 2005 to describe the Schwarzgelben fans on a 24,000-capacity South Stand terrace, itself a throwback to a bygone age. The club consciously set out to be the polar opposite of corporate behemoths Bayern Munich and employ several supporter liaison officers; the resulting rapport has helped to create the choreography and chanting that gives Dortmund one of the most spine-tingling experiences of any European matchday. This is Hesse at his most informative and fascinating – read it.

ONE QUESTION QUIZ WHO'S THE SUBBUTEO PLAYER?

Name the footballers depicted in these custom-made figures, created by Paul Ridler



Answers 1) Sergio Agüero; 2) Ryan Giggs; 3) James McClean; 4) Martin Keown & Ruud van Nistelrooy; 5) Robbie Fowler; 6) Cyrille Regis; 7) Ossie Ardiles; 8) Roger Milla; 9) Cristiano Ronaldo; 10) Teddy Sheringham & Paul Gascoigne; 11) Nikola Žigic & Obafemi Martins; 12) Tony Yeboah; 13) Lionel Messi; 14) Thierry Henry; 15) Eric Cantona; 16) Emre Can; 17) Harry Kane; 18) Brian Deane; 19) Jermaine Beckford; 20) Jürgen Klinsmann

To see more of Paul Rider's creations, follow @subbuteolegends on Twitter



QUOTE OF THE MONTH "It was as heavy as a brick. When it hit the floor, you felt the thud" A photographer describes the cabbage thrown at now-departed Aston Villa boss Steve Bruce



FALSE ALARM

Accrington Stanley's 2018 has been jaw-dropping, with promotion from League Two quickly followed by a great start to life in the third tier. And one Accy fan still needs to pick their jaw off the floor, because a set of false teeth have been found at the Wham Stadium.

When mysterious gnashers were found under a seat after Stanley's win over AFC Wimbledon, the club shared the news on social media.

"We put out an appeal for the teeth to be returned to their owner, and we were surprised by the attention it got," a club spokesperson tells *FFT*. "We got all the jokes: Stanley having bite, not being toothless... if you'll pardon the pun, we were sick to the back teeth of it in the end."

But before the fangless fan could lay claim to his treasure, Accrington publicly admitted that they had misplaced the dentures themselves somewhere in the office. Never before have a set of teeth had such wanderlust. Maybe they set off on a molar expedition.

Accrington words Chris Evans



Spain's mascot for the 1982 World Cup was a friendly, smiling orange called Naranjito. Now it seems his murderous cousin has come out of hiding in Japan.

J2 League club Ehime are based in a citrus-growing region on the island of Shikoku, and they clearly wanted to terrify local children when devising their mascot: an emoji-like orange with a menacing stare that would send Roy Keane running for the hills.

And if Ore-kun wasn't intimidating enough, he has a sidekick. Iyokanta, a goalkeeping orange inspired by Oliver Kahn (can you see the resemblance?), shares the German's mood swings, fluctuating between severely

ORE-KUN

If Ehime's psychopathic orange doesn't get you, his goalkeeping sidekick will. Naranjito wouldn't last two minutes...

annoyed and absolutely furious. Helpfully, Iyokanta's goalkeeping gloves ensure fingerprints can't be traced.

The pair are joined at home games by a relatively mild-mannered female orange, as well as regional mascot Ippei-kun, an accident-prone frog who falls over more than Miranda Hart and, in a well-honed skit, ends most games being carried off on a stretcher, lying gormlessly on his back with his mouth wide open.

The quartet have even formed a punk band and play gigs in local shopping centres (just like real punks do). There's no word on whether the shows end with smashed guitars, trashed hotel rooms and Ore-kun and Iyokanta chucking Ippei-kun out of a window.



THE WORLD OF WEIRD BADGES

PYRAMIDS FC

When Cairo's Al Assiouty Sport were taken over by a Saudi investor in June, they were renamed, with a giant sphinx stuck on their crest – but their search for a coach hit a snag as King Tut refused to come out of retirement.



SERGIO RAMOS' MONTH IN MUSIC

England
PJ Harvey

Possession
Sarah McLachlan

Going Nowhere
Oasis

Looking For Eric
George Fenton

Watch Out!
Lovex

The Barber of Seville
Gioachino Rossini

Ouch
N-Dubz

Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?
Culture Club

Halftime
Amy Winehouse

Three Nil
Slipknot

I Wish I Could
TOKiMONSTA feat. Selah Sue

Throw Sum Mo
Rae Sremmurd feat. Nicki Minaj & Young Thug

GAMES THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

SAM ALLARDYCE



Notts County 1 L Orient 0
March 28, 1998 Division Three

“Winning the league so early helped to establish me as a manager – I think it’s the quickest anyone’s won it since the war. Mark Robson scored the winner. Although we had record-breaking runs, it was probably the only time Meadow Lane was packed to the rafters.”

Bolton 3 Preston 0
May 28, 2001 First Division play-off final

“I started my playing career at Bolton as a 15-year-old, so becoming manager, getting to the play-offs and beating Preston in Cardiff was special. We didn’t think we’d do it that season because we had sold some of our best players in Eidur Gudjohnsen, Claus Jensen and Mark Fish. But we pulled together loan players and players who had fallen out with other clubs, and got promoted.”

Sunderland 3 Everton 0
May 11, 2016 Premier League

“Sunderland had three points from eight games when I took over. They needed new players and I managed to get some in; not long after that we beat Manchester United, then in May we beat Chelsea 3-2, but beating Everton next to stay up was the big one. It was a relief, achieving what I was brought in to do.”

Slovakia 0 England 1
September 4, 2016 World Cup qualifier

“I have to choose the one win I had with England in... Latvia? Lithuania? [FFT: Slovakia] Slovakia, yeah. It was a great pleasure to work with those players for that short period and get so much out of them in that game – even though we missed chances and should’ve won about 4-0. I was thinking we’d be criticised if we didn’t win, but Adam Lallana scored – it was a great feeling.”

Allardyce was representing William Hill



“WINNING THE LEAGUE WITH NOTTS COUNTY AS EARLY AS MARCH HELPED TO ESTABLISH ME AS A MANAGER”



ENGLAND



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2PM

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CROATIA





"YOU RUN A SKIP COMPANY, DON'T YOU?" BBC Radio Cornwall invited Torquay boss Gary Johnson on air and began quizzing him on skips, having confused him for another guest

ARSENE WENGER: HAIKU MASTER

It's the book everyone has been waiting for – Japanese poetry from the mind of Arsenal's philosophical ex-coach

Arsene Wenger has earned several nicknames: **Le Professeur**, **Inspector Clouseau** – that was Ray Parlour's – and plenty from rival fans that we'll steer well clear of here. 'Le Prof' has stuck, though, and now pearls of the former Arsenal gaffer's intellect have been immortalised for poetic posterity in *Arsene Wenger Haiku*.

"Wenger creates really striking visual pictures; he's the master of metaphor," says the book's author, Nathan Joyce, who goes by the pen name 'Gunnar Sorrsars' (get it?). He transforms Le Prof's memorable emissions into the classic Japanese three-line poem. Short, quick and clever: if haikus were players, Wenger would have bought too many of them from about 2005 onwards.

"There are genuine nuggets of wisdom here," says Joyce. "The reason the haiku works as a concept is because Wenger is perceived as a philosopher and he had that spell in Japan, which really changed his life. His approaches to man-management, diet – a lot of it was inspired by his time in Japan."

Now, let's be honest: this book is destined to sit near a lot of Gooners' lavatories after Christmas, to be dipped into at leisure. But haikus are so short that you could whizz through his whole Arsenal career in a couple of lengthier bathroom breaks. They're presented season-by-season and also feature some spicy quotes from Alex Ferguson, Tony Pulis – even Piers Morgan. And the final tiny-poems are almost poignant.

"It's a bit of fun, but you do go on a journey with him," says Joyce. "In his valedictory speech at the Emirates, he was asked what he'll do in the future. As a haiku it's: 'I'll buy a ticket. Watch the games in red and white. Hope Arsenal win.' It's moving."

As 'Caviar and Sausages' (right) shows, *Arsene Wenger Haiku* often defies haiku structure, which dictates a line of five syllables, then seven, then five, but let's say it becomes a best-seller – who in football could Joyce haiku-up next?

"I'm thinking about Eric Cantona," he says. "He'd talk of nature and seagulls – you can see it working. It's people who think of themselves as philosophers."

But beware, there's a fine line between Confucius and confused.

DR ADAMS

A doctor of defence
He is simply outstanding:
Mr Arsenal

PIZZA-FACE

Pizza all over me
Worst thing I've seen in this sport
They got off scot-free

MYOPIA

Sometimes I see it
But I say that I didn't
To protect my team

DENNIS BERGKAMP

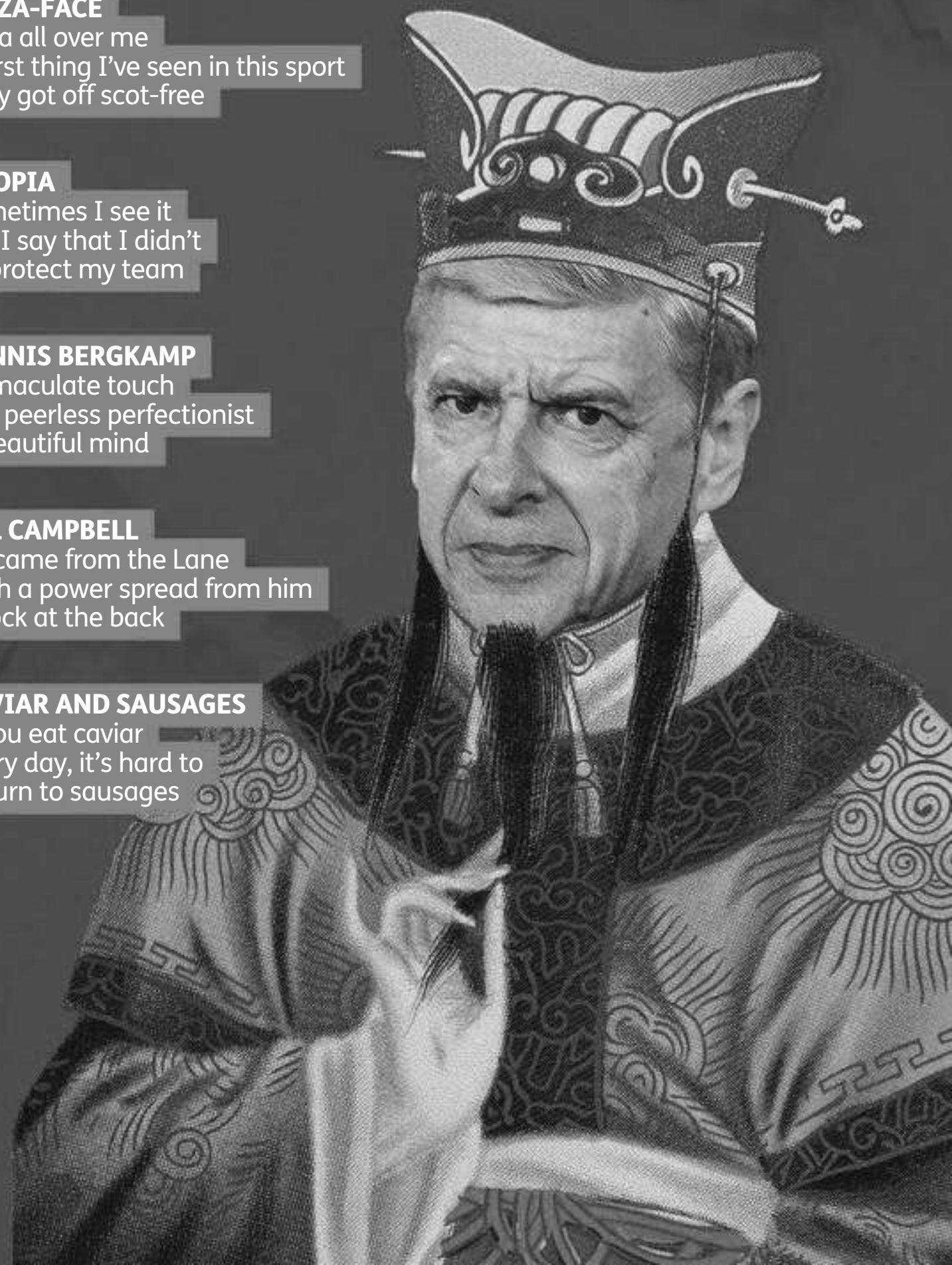
Immaculate touch
The peerless perfectionist
A beautiful mind

SOL CAMPBELL

He came from the Lane
Such a power spread from him
A rock at the back

CAVIAR AND SAUSAGES

If you eat caviar
Every day, it's hard to
Return to sausages





"CAN WE BORROW A YOUTH TEAM?"

When Ynysddu Welfare were drawn away to Briton Ferry in the first round of the Welsh Youth Cup, eyebrows were raised, not least at the club itself. "We don't have a youth team – God knows how that happened!" tweeted a confused Welfare.

Manager/secretary Ben Murphy tells FFT: "That tweet got lots of interest. I thought, 'Let's have a go'." As a team was hurriedly scabbled together, including some who Murphy says "hadn't played for two years", he secretly feared humiliation. "Briton are a good standard," he explains. "They had six boys who were in Swansea's academy two years ago. I think they had four chances in the first five minutes..."

His ragtag XI soon went behind but they settled, equalised, scored in extra time, tired badly, conceded again, then struggled their way to penalties ("which was torture!") and eventually triumphed. Bedlam.

Ynysddu Welfare were even offered the national team's coach for the next round at Llanelli. The bus, that is. Ryan Giggs wasn't needed.

TALENTSPOTTER FRENKIE DE JONG



CLUB AJAX POSITION MIDFIELDER

VALUE	FOOT	HEIGHT	NATION	AGE
£65m	R	1.80m	NED	21

THE STORY SO FAR: Another young De Jong at Ajax, Frenkie was at the Willem II academy for over 10 years before making his Eredivisie debut in 2015 and joining Ajax a few months later. The stylish midfielder was an Ajax regular in 2017-18, acting as a ball-playing centre-back next to fellow hotshot Matthijs de Ligt; now he's thriving further forward, having moved to accommodate a returning Daley Blind. De Jong also started in the Dutch midfield in a 3-0 win over Germany, superb balance allowing him to control the ball on the half-turn and seek a forward pass.

THEY SAID: "He's a beastly talent," is Xavi's take. "He looks like Sergio Busquets in his playing style. He's exactly what Barça need: technically very strong, hard-working and with a lot of talent."

LINKED WITH: Spurs, Barcelona and both Manchester clubs, because clearly City and Barça don't have enough highly technical midfielders.

IDOLISED: "I'd really like to play with Messi, but he's already 31, so I must hurry." Since when is 31 old?

HE SAID: "It was fun and flattering at first but the Barcelona stories got annoying. I'm with Ajax for at least another year, maybe two or three."

COMPARED TO: "You might laugh, but he's a better version of Franz Beckenbauer [above]" – high praise indeed from Ajax legend Arie Haan.



WOULD YOU BUY THIS?

COLOGNE'S GOAT BOXER SHORTS

If you're searching for a stylish addition to your underwear drawer, take a look at Cologne's online store, because nothing is more on-trend right now than boxers bearing the face of a goat. The animal concerned – and 'concerned' is the word – is mascot Hennes, with a certain sadness in his eyes following Cologne's relegation. Buy now for just €19.95.



INTERVIEW

JO

The striker is big in Japan, having given up partying and learned from his ill-fated spell in England

How are things going at Nagoya Grampus?

Much better now. *[Smiles]* It wasn't easy at first: we lost some games in a row and I had never gone through that before. But after the World Cup, some experienced players arrived and helped me to get 12 goals in seven games, including two hat-tricks.

What differences have you noticed in Japan?

Fans in Brazil and even Europe are more emotional and sometimes cross limits. The Japanese are very different: when we lose, they aren't happy, but they won't whistle you or insult you in front of your wife. I can take her anywhere and not worry about someone coming after me.

What is it like to be one of the J-League's stars?

Recently I was at an event and I had the chance to meet Fernando Torres. Lukas Podolski was around, too, and there was also Andres Iniesta. I realised that now I'm in their league! *[Laughs]* It's very nice to have recognition. I played in a World Cup in 2014 and they always highlight that here.

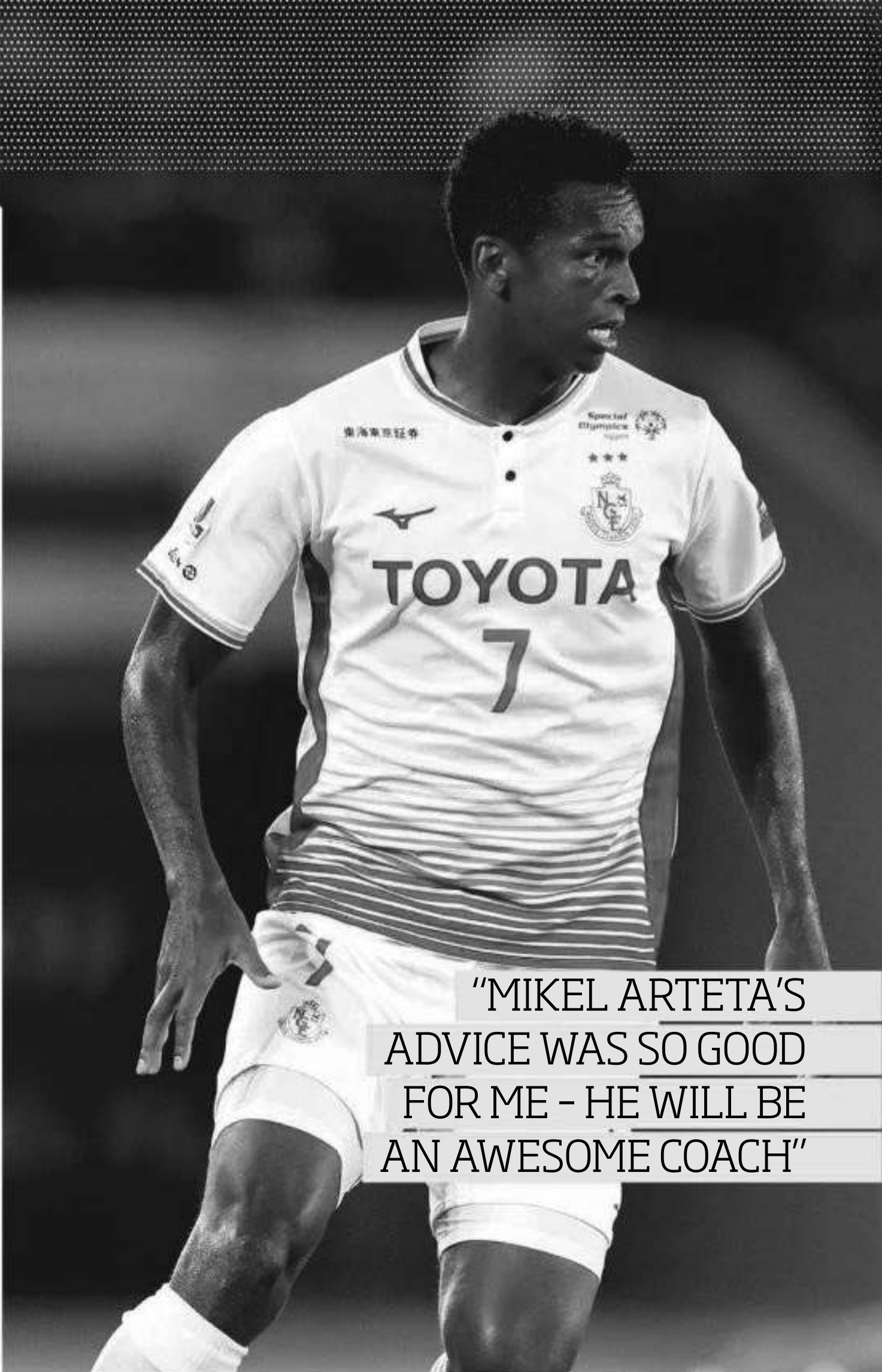
Do they still talk about Gary Lineker in Nagoya?

I've heard a thing or two, but not as much as I have heard about an Australian forward called Joshua Kennedy. I suppose he did better here than Lineker did. It impressed me how crazy they are about Brazilians, too – it's probably because Zico did so well in Japan in the past.

You've played in Japan, China, the UAE, Turkey, Russia and England – which was your favourite?

My top three would be England, Dubai and Nagoya. I've loved all of them.

Interview Marcus Alves



"MIKEL ARTETA'S
ADVICE WAS SO GOOD
FOR ME - HE WILL BE
AN AWESOME COACH"

3 CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**Record breaker**

Hits 44 goals in just 77 games for CSKA Moscow to earn a 2008 move to Manchester City, aged 21; the £19m fee is a club record until Robinho arrives a month later.

**Annus mirabilis**

Scores all five of his career goals for Brazil in 2013 as they lift the Confederations Cup, and thrives alongside Ronaldinho as Atletico Mineiro win the Copa Libertadores.

**The best in Brazil**

Wins the Brazilian league's Player of the Year award as top scorer while Corinthians win the 2017 title, helped by his goal-getting return to his boyhood club.



51

BABY BOOMER A baby craze has been credited to James Milner: 51 babies were called James in Liverpool last year, making it the area's most popular name (Loris, less so)

Did English football see the real Jo?

When I look back, I know I could have done better, but I was young and still learning. I'd had an excellent season at CSKA Moscow, became Manchester City's most expensive player, and I really wanted to establish myself as a world-class striker. I wouldn't say it was a bad experience, but it certainly wasn't one of the best in my life. In Manchester it rains a lot and there's not much to do – there are two or three shopping malls, but life isn't only about going shopping. I can't blame the city, though, because other young players go there and do well. If I'd had the experience I have now, it would have been different.

Should City have given you longer?

I was frustrated when I was loaned to Everton after a few months. Why had they paid so much, to discard me so easily? But it was nice to spend time in a different atmosphere. David Moyes cared about me and I had amazing support from the players.

Who in particular helped you?

When I arrived at Everton, I'd speak Portuguese mixed with Spanish with Mikel Arteta, Segundo Castillo and Nuno Valente. One day, Mikel pulled me aside and said, "Jo, I've been in the UK for eight years and if you don't start practising English, you'll always hang out with the same group and it won't be good for your career. From now on, you're not going to speak Portuguese or Spanish." That was so good for me, man. Arteta is perhaps the best foreign athlete I played with – I think he'll be an awesome coach.

What's changed for you since then?

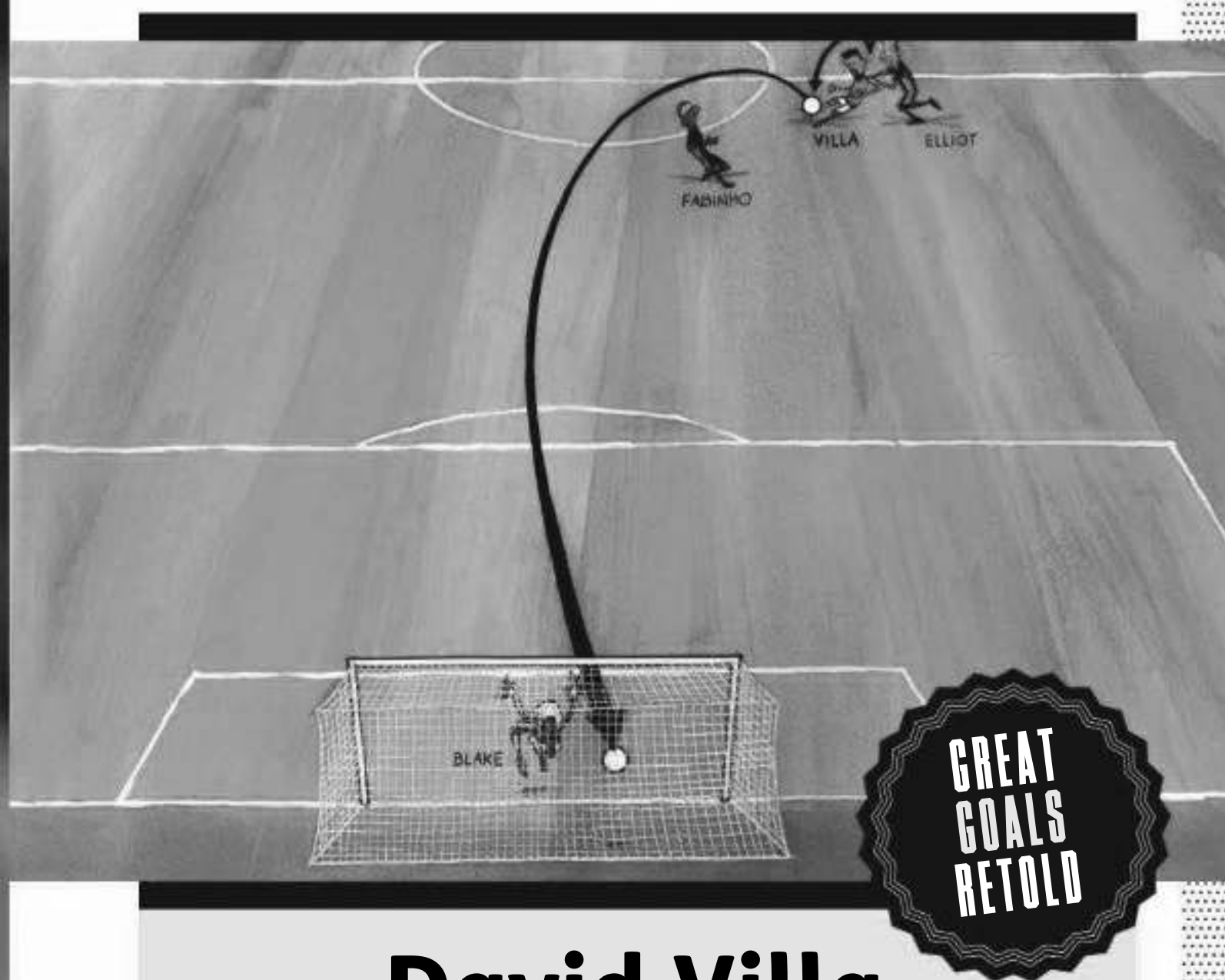
I stopped going to sleep late, drinking heavily and failing to take care of my body. Now that I've stopped drinking and don't spend the night partying, my game has completely changed. I'm not the same Jo I used to be.

Would you ever return to England?

Actually, last year I got a call from Crystal Palace, but the talks didn't go much further. If they had done, I'd have been happy to have gone there.

Were you disappointed not to make Brazil's squad for Russia 2018?

Tite even mentioned before the World Cup that he was after a striker that played like me, but I didn't make the final list. I still think about returning to the squad. I'm 31; I can dream. I'm in good form. I just have to keep working.



David Villa

vs Philadelphia Union, MLS, 2017

David Villa won it all in his days with Barcelona and Spain, but the most spectacular goal of his career has come since he crossed the Atlantic. The 36-year-old has netted more than 75 goals for New York City FC following his MLS bow in 2015, and a strike against Philadelphia Union was undoubtedly the most remarkable.

Patrick Vieira's side were 1-0 up at Talen Energy Stadium when Villa chased a ball from 5ft 2in midfielder Maxi Moralez, then sealed the win with a stunning hit from just inside Union's half. "It was in the final minutes of the game," Villa recalls to FFT. "I received the ball from Maxi in between two players. I felt that with two Philadelphia players there, it was too difficult to run to the penalty box and get close to goal – plus, it was the 90th minute and I felt very tired! So, I tried to shoot from distance. I didn't see it clearly, but I felt that the goalkeeper was probably out of his goal, so I hit it."

Hit it he did, from fully 50 yards, sending the ball high into the air. Jamaican international Andre Blake backpedalled furiously, but the shot was perfect, landing just beyond the goalkeeper's grasp and inches beneath the crossbar.

"It is very difficult to score a goal like that,"

Villa tells FFT. "You could try it many times and still fail to score – but fortunately this time I got it right!"

"I don't think it is the best goal that I have ever scored, because it wasn't too important to the result – we were up 1-0 in the 90th minute.

My favourite goal is still the one that I scored in the final of the Champions League against Manchester United at

Wembley [in 2011]: that was the most beautiful, because of what was at stake. But the goal against Philadelphia

was one of the most difficult I have ever scored, and of course it was the most spectacular."



DER KOLUMNIST

LOTHAR MATTHÄUS

Zlatan is only the latest European great to taste life across the pond – *FFT*'s columnist also had a spell in MLS. He explains why things didn't go to plan, but insists he didn't go to Saint-Tropez without his club's knowledge...

I had just played a friendly for Germany against the USA when I was offered the chance to play in MLS. Bora Milutinovic was the coach of the MetroStars, and he came up to me after the game. We'd known each other for years, and were having a little chat, and he said, "Hey, Lothar – you're not interested in playing for my team in New York, are you?"

I was surprised. I said, "You need a player like me, at 38 years old?! Can't you find better?" But he told me, "Lothar, I need a player like you." It was 1999 and my time with Bayern Munich was coming to an end; I thought to myself, 'If I want to do something more in my career, this is the last chance'. And it was New York, a beautiful city. Franz Beckenbauer had talked many times about America and his time with the New York Cosmos. I said, "OK, why not? I'll do it." I had to talk to Bayern, because I still had a contract, but they said, "Lothar, you've done a lot for our club – if you think this a chance to do something new, we'll allow you to go."

I thought about it and agreed to join the MetroStars for the start of 2000 – but two weeks after I signed my contract, Milutinovic was fired. I was shocked. I had a good relationship with Bora and the general manager, Charlie Stillitano, but when I arrived they had both gone. A young coach from Ecuador came in, and so did a new general manager. I didn't have the same relationship with them. It wasn't what I had planned.

But New York is one of the most interesting cities in the world. I lived in a beautiful apartment in Trump International Tower by Central Park, and I met Donald Trump once when he was sat near me in an Italian restaurant. He was a famous guy and I knew who he was, although maybe he didn't know me. I was recognised less in New York than in Germany, but many people – often South Americans or Europeans – would still ask for a picture or an autograph. I didn't feel alone in New York City!

Back then, the standard of MLS was like the second or third division in Germany. Clubs didn't have the budgets that they have now, and some American players



"IN MY YEAR IN NEW YORK, I WOULD WALK THROUGH CENTRAL PARK AND NOT SEE ANYONE PLAYING FOOTBALL. THINGS HAVE CHANGED A LOT IN RECENT TIMES"

were playing for a monthly salary of only \$5,000. It wasn't as professional as it had been in Europe: when we played away, it was a sightseeing tour to the centre of Washington or Chicago, and in the evening, players could go to dinner wherever they wanted – they weren't obliged to eat with the team. It was all very different.

But we won the Eastern Conference that year and reached the semi-finals of the play-offs. The players were young, so it was the maximum result with the quality we had.

I had a back injury at one point, so I went to Europe to see a doctor I trusted. The club were always informed about my treatment and where I was, but the newspapers wrote things that were not true – that I'd gone to Europe and to Saint-Tropez without the club knowing. Somebody at the club was doing something against me. They'd given wrong info to a newspaper, and I was upset about that. With Bora and Charlie Stillitano, I felt safer. The new people working at the club weren't behind me, so my time there didn't turn out to be as excellent as I had believed it would be. At the end of that year, I was nearly 40 and I was tired. I didn't want to join another new club, so I retired.

Great players such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Wayne Rooney and Bastian Schweinsteiger still go to MLS, and part of the reason is the American lifestyle. Rooney could have gone to China and made more money. Those players still want to win, too. Like me, they've been among the best players in the world, but you want to finish your career with the same passion and the same results as you've always had.

As the years have gone on, football has grown in America. In my year there, I would sometimes walk or jog through Central Park, and I didn't see anyone playing football. That wasn't a big surprise; what was more surprising was going back five or 10 years later and seeing that kids were playing football there now. Things have changed a lot in recent times, and you can see that in the quality of MLS today. Over the last 20 or 30 years, football has really arrived in the US.



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*STAR LETTER

FABINHO CAN STAR

Your big feature about Liverpool's redemption under Klopp [FFT 292] helped me to answer a question I have been pondering: why has Fabinho [above right] found it hard to get into the starting XI? Reading the interview with Andy Robertson, it's clear that initial patience can pay dividends, even if game time seems a long way away at first. Fabinho will have an important role to play and may even help the Reds to win their first trophy since 2012.

Joe Scargill, Wakefield



POGBA IS EMBARRASSING

The superb article about Paul Pogba in FFT 293 was insightful and portrays the World Cup-winning midfielder as someone who clearly enjoys his life as a footballer – but that should not excuse his recent behaviour at Old Trafford. His public fall-out with manager Jose Mourinho was nothing short of embarrassing. He has acted with a large dose of immaturity and arrogance, when his inconsistent performances at United have been nowhere near the necessary standard. On his day, Pogba is a fine footballer, but I'm sorry: his off-field antics leave a lot to be desired for a top professional.

Robert J Wilson, via email

GIVE ENGLAND A REST

Reading '22 Things England Need To Do To Win In 2022' in FFT 292, I can't quite believe it's started already. Just months after they got to the semi-final of a major tournament, the pressure is

already being put on for 2022, detailing what needs to be done to win it. This is the biggest problem for your national team: nothing is ever good enough. You should be revelling in the journey that the players took you on in the summer. Lower your expectations – you might enjoy yourselves a little bit more.

Bobby Vaughan, Wales

A-LEAGUE ON THE RISE

I'm a 13-year-old Australian and I think the A-League is given a bad rep. Lots of people overseas – and in Australia – think it's a scrappy, physical league, but that isn't the case. Despite the fact there are only 10 teams in the division, there were 422 goals and over 119,000 passes across 135 games last season. There are good players, like Keisuke Honda, Ola Toivonen, Siem de Jong and Adam Le Fondre. I hope that with more star names, the A-League can shake off its undeserved bad reputation.

Allan Riley, via email

TWEETS

@RichardOsman

Theresa May getting tough reminds me so much of Kevin Keegan getting tough.

@MylesBurrell

My word. A kid has just taken a penalty at half-time, missed, been asked to retake it, and Gunnersaurus has saved the retake. Unreal scenes. What a club.

@archiert1

My hero of the weekend – this Fortuna Dusseldorf fan. Carrying at least seven beers *and* a bratwurst. #ImpossibleIsNothing



@jimdalyscomedy

At Dulwich v Palace and the most non-league thing has just happened. The guy over the tannoy read out the registration of a car that was being towed. The Dulwich keeper suddenly started frantically calling to someone in the crowd. It's his car.

@kylewalker2

UEFA Nations is coming home.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND THIS MONTH?



MONEY MONEY MONEY

The gulf in the top flight is too big – nearly every Manchester City player is worth more individually than Cardiff's whole side.

Tim Banks



ALEXIS NOT ON FIRE

The decision to hold Copas America in both 2015 and 2016 has hit Alexis Sanchez's career – he looks burnt out.

Steven Blake



GIVE ALEX A CHANCE

How can people talk about sacking Alex McLeish as Scotland boss? He's only been in charge for nine months.

Ronnie Stewart



GIBRALTAR ROCKED

Winning back-to-back Nations League games was an amazing feat for Gibraltar; it'd be great to see them at Euro 2020.

Sian Towell



BENZ OUT OF SHAPE

Why didn't Real Madrid sign a top striker when Cristiano Ronaldo left? Karim Benzema's goal record isn't good enough.

Pablo Lopez



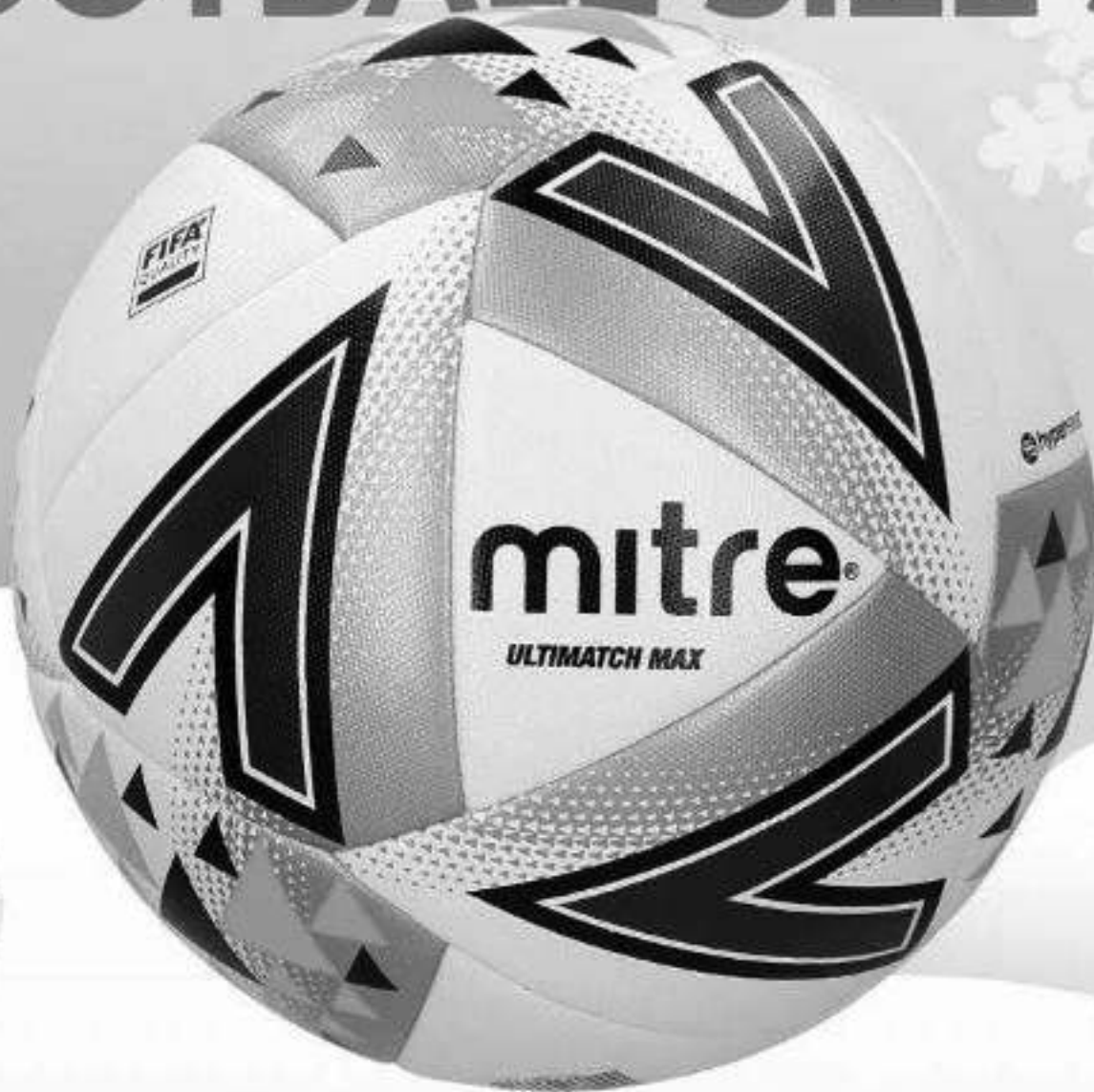
LAST MONTH'S SPINE LINE: "20.57 CET - October 19, 1993" refers to when Jeremy Goss scored past Raimond Aumann in a shock 2-1 win for plucky underdogs Norwich City at Bayern Munich," says Stuart Woithe, via Twitter. Correct! You've won some Trusox. **Entering Spine Line via Twitter this month? Include #FFTSpineLine**

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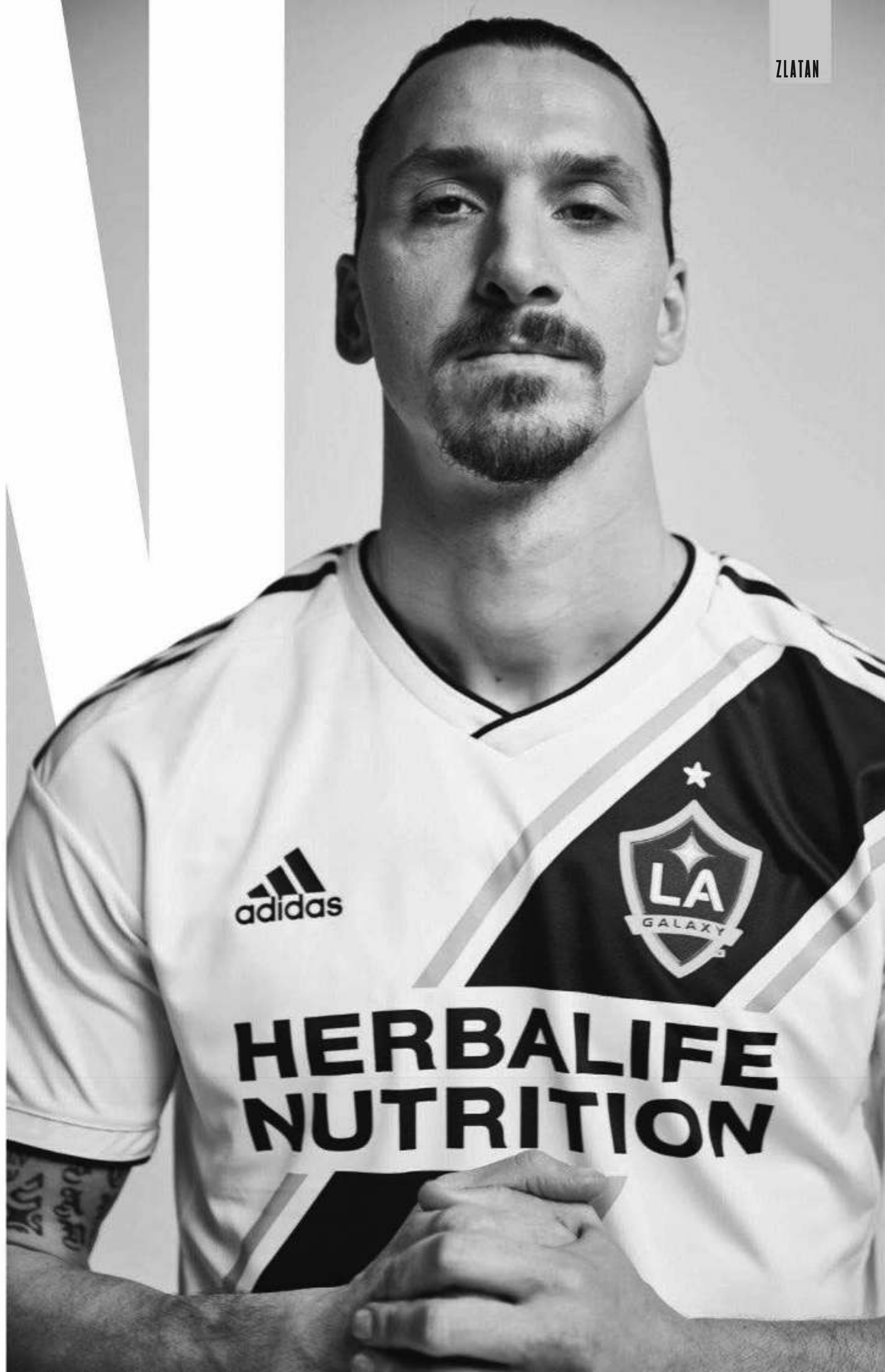
THE WORLD STILL NEEDS

So says the man himself, and *FourFourTwo* agrees. That's why we flew to LA to catch up with the game's most outspoken superstar as he lets rip at Paul Pogba's critics, shrugs off Ballon d'Or snubs and reveals the true story behind his Galaxy-sized ego

Words Chris Flanagan

Potraits Jon Shard

ZLATAN



adidas



**HERBALIFE
NUTRITION**



“S

shall we do the interview like this?”

As Zlatan Ibrahimovic walks into the room to greet *FourFourTwo*, he immediately takes off his shirt, revealing his smorgasbord of tattoos.

His request for a topless interview briefly takes us by surprise. “What can we attach the microphone to?” asks our videographer for the day.

“You can put it on my nose,” Zlatan responds. “No, I’m joking...”

We’re in the basement at Los Angeles Galaxy’s StubHub Center. After flying in from England, *FFT* have taken the metro from the city centre, through the neighbourhoods of South LA and Compton, all while trying to fend off a middle-aged woman determined to relay the full story of how God miraculously healed her rheumatoid arthritis. Eventually we reach the pleasant municipality of Carson, home to gated communities and a branch of the California State University, just a stone’s throw from the smart 27,000-capacity arena where Galaxy have played since 2003.

The squad spent the morning on the training field that adjoins the StubHub Center. It’s a balmy 25 on the Celsius scale, but Zlatan has nonetheless come straight here – he’s actually early, which is unheard of in the world of interviewing footballers – and so it is understandable that he’s keen to rid himself of his sweat-drenched training top.

Having headed back to the dressing room in order to find a new shirt, the Swede has returned fully clothed, no nose microphones required. “This interview is for the cover, isn’t it?” he double-checks. “If it’s not the cover, you can go back where you came from...”

Zlatan knows his own worth. Indeed, he’s only the second Major League Soccer player ever to be on the cover of *FourFourTwo*, after David Beckham in 2008. “If you want new followers or readers, you bring me,” he adds with his trademark deadpan delivery, before breaking into a smile. The interview hasn’t even started yet and he’s already in full Zlatan mode. We wouldn’t want it any other way. “Do I look sharp?” he asks as he sits in front of the camera, taking a moment to enquire where we have travelled from, and then we’re ready to begin.

“I GAVE LOS ANGELES THE BEST GIFT THEY’VE EVER HAD: ME”

We meet three days after Galaxy romped to a 3-0 victory over Vancouver Whitecaps at the StubHub, featuring two goals from Zlatan himself – one a penalty, one a thunderous strike from the edge of the box into the roof of the net. It was an impressive goal, we remark, as we get the conversation underway. “I know – I didn’t need you to



tell me,” he replies instantly, with a smile. It took his goal tally to 20 in just 24 matches since he joined MLS in March, following the serious knee injury that brought an end to his time at Manchester United.

“The most important thing is that my knee feels good and physically I feel good,” Zlatan explains. “I’ve been training hard – I think I didn’t miss one training session nor one game that I was able to play. The setup is good here and I keep doing what I have been doing for all of my career: playing well, scoring goals and helping my team-mates. The goals speak for themselves.”

No goal said more than the spectacular strike Ibrahimovic delivered on his debut for LA Galaxy, in a match that undoubtedly represents one of the most memorable moments of an already stellar career.

Just a week earlier, Ibrahimovic had completed his transfer to the California club on a two-year deal. He had taken out a full-page ad in the *Los Angeles Times*. It contained nothing but the words, ‘Dear Los Angeles, you’re welcome’, accompanied by his signature at the bottom of the page.

“I gave Los Angeles the best gift they’ve ever had: me,” he tells *FFT*. Having joked earlier in his career that he’d put the entire country of Sweden on the map, does he feel that he has done the same for LA, a little-known city on the west coast of the United States that until now had gained almost no attention from the world’s media? “Yes,” he says



without hesitation. “The first day I stepped foot in the airport, they had an earthquake. That was what they thought, but it was me stepping in.”

Then came the debut. In the 22-year history of MLS, few matches, if any, have garnered such worldwide attention, so perfect was the storyline. It was Zlatan Ibrahimovic’s first game for LA Galaxy. It was his first match back from a long injury layoff that had prompted many to wonder whether he was finished. And it was the first ever derby between Galaxy and Los Angeles FC, the MLS new boys, centrally located in downtown LA and very serious about attempting to oust their rivals as the city’s main club. During our visit here, *FFT* can’t help but notice that advertising for LAFC adorns a number of metro trains, complete with huge pictures of their star striker, Carlos Vela.

An hour into this first LA derby, Galaxy were facing disaster. In front of a sell-out crowd at Galaxy’s StubHub Center, LAFC led 3-0, with Vela scoring two. In the battle for the hearts and minds of Angelenos, this was looking like the best marketing LAFC could have wished for.

Ibrahimovic watched from the sidelines, horrified, having been named as a substitute as he felt his way back from injury. At 1-0, he’d turned to one of his new team-mates on the bench and said, “It’s OK, we can still do this.” At 2-0, he was starting to have doubts. “I don’t know if Zlatan is enough for this,” he said. At 3-0 his optimism had been extinguished. “This season will be very long...” he said to that same team-mate.

Galaxy had pulled a goal back but still had a mountain to climb when Ibrahimovic was introduced with just 19 minutes of the game remaining. Within two minutes, they’d made it 3-2. Then came the moment: a thumping defensive header led to the ball bouncing high into the air as Ibrahimovic latched onto it, 40 yards out. Few would have dared to take a shot from there, but few are Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Goalkeeper Tyler Miller could only dive in hope, as Ibrahimovic’s first-time volley arrowed over his head and into the net. “Oh, come on!” exclaimed John Strong, the Fox Sports commentator, incredulous at what he had just witnessed. It was just too good.

And Zlatan wasn’t done. In injury time, Ashley Cole crossed from the left and the Swede headed home to give LA Galaxy a remarkable 4-3 victory. “IBRAHIMOVIC, ARE YOU SERIOUS?!” screamed Strong as the StubHub Center erupted, the home fans reaching new decibel levels. Zlatan had arrived in the United States. It will surely be remembered as one of football’s great debuts.

“Before that game, there was a lot of expectation and there were a lot of question marks, as people were asking about my knee,” Ibrahimovic recalls to *FFT*. “After the advertising, people went crazy. Some didn’t know me – they saw the advert and thought, ‘Who is that?’ After the first game, they all knew who I was. I scored a goal that people will remember; that people will take inspiration from, people who don’t watch so much football – and not soccer, football. It opened their eyes to see the sport and see what it’s all about. I bring something new, I bring something different, and for sure they will follow.

“The league is more famous now with me, because my goals are seen all over the world. Before, I don’t know if people saw the goals from MLS or not. Now they see them, for sure.”

At every club, Zlatan makes an impact: Malmö, Ajax, Juventus, Inter, Barcelona, Milan, PSG, Manchester United, LA Galaxy. “I just bring what I’m good at and I keep bringing it wherever I go,” he says, speaking to *FFT* the day before his 37th birthday. “This is my game, this is the way I play and this is what I bring – the whole package. I feel good. Age is just a number. I feel fresh. I feel like a machine – and I am an animal.”

Ibrahimovic’s eyes narrow as he utters those last few words with menacing emphasis. His time at Manchester United was punctuated by several interludes in which he summoned imagery from the animal kingdom, and he wants to make one thing clear: he is still a lion. “Once a lion, always a lion,” he says, retaining that menace in his voice.

It’s a theme he has run with since using the comparison after United’s League Cup final triumph over Southampton in 2017, when Ibrahimovic scored twice. *FFT* asks exactly how this whole lion thing came up in the first place. “It has always been there – it’s just that I kept it for myself,” he explains. “The difference now is that I am sharing it with everybody. Now they know the secret. Now they understand why I’m doing what I’m doing – being the animal on the field.”

“I’M GOOD AT WHAT I DO. NO, I’M FANTASTIC AT WHAT I DO”

Before our meeting with Zlatan, *FFT* headed to Hollywood for a spot of research. We paid a visit to the Walk of Fame, where more than 2,600 celebrities have stars bearing their name embedded into the pavement.

This being Hollywood Boulevard, people dressed as Spiderman, Superman and Mickey Mouse are all wandering around, too. We even get a cheery wave from Chewbacca.

Anyone who’s anyone has a star on the Walk of Fame. Just during our little wander, we see the names of Alfred Hitchcock, Russell Crowe, Mariah Carey, Pharrell Williams and not one but two Harrison Fords, as well as Lassie, Kermit The Frog and Thomas Ince – the ‘Father of the Western’, as opposed to the Stoke City winger. There’s a crowd around Donald Trump’s star: a protestor has scuffed up the letters overnight and rearranged things so that it reads, ‘F**k Donald Trump’.

There’s one star notably missing from the Walk of Fame, however, and we are keen to get Zlatan’s thoughts on it. It has been more than six months since his incredible LA Galaxy debut – is he upset that it’s taking them so long? “No, the best thing is that I don’t have it,” he says. “The other ones that have it are the ones who think they are stars. The real star doesn’t have it. That’s the difference.” Take that, Kermit.

Ibrahimovic has been enjoying life as an LA citizen. He has often been seen out and about in Beverly Hills, as well as rollerblading along Venice Beach and going for motorbike rides up and down the coast. “I always live well and I set it up for my family – if you live well off the field, you feel good on the field,” he tells *FFT*. “We have it good here. The whole family is happy and the club have been fantastic for us: they have done everything they can to help me, and to make me feel welcome and happy. I have no complaints. I appreciate everything.”

A basketball fan, he has visited the Staples Center to watch the Los Angeles Lakers, where he was greeted by NBA legend Shaquille O’Neal. He has appeared on various chat shows, too: *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and *The Late Late Show with James Corden*, where the 6ft 5in striker climbed into a glass machine and pretended to be Zoltar, the robotic fortune teller in classic 1980s movie *Big*. Ibrahimovic explains that his priority, though, is spending time with his two sons.

“I like to hang out with my kids because my kids are my ninjas, they are my stars, they are my everything,” he says. “Whatever they want, whatever they do, I follow them, because I am in the shade of my kids.”

Left He was serious – a stoppage-time goal gives Galaxy a derby win and Zlatan the mother of all debuts



Above And suddenly, Slabhead swore bitter revenge against the nation of Sweden

Below right It comes as no surprise that Muhammad Ali is an inspiration to Zlatan

"We do everything as a normal family here. I'm not trying to live a fancy life; I try to live as normally as possible. We're a normal Swedish family. I don't do anything without my kids. Sometimes we go and watch the basketball – there are other sports I haven't seen yet, but I try to do as much as possible. I try to explore the world for my kids because they are the future, not me."

Are there any celebrities he has been on the lookout for in LA? "Everyone to me is normal – there's nobody that I'm waiting to meet," he says, Zlatanistically. "The only one I would have liked to see, but I cannot, was Muhammad Ali. He was the biggest inspiration for me. But unfortunately he passed away, though his memory lives on."

Players who have moved from the Premier League to MLS have often said how different things are off the field in the US: most of them can walk around unnoticed, which could never happen in England. When you're Zlatan, things are a little different. "This is a different animal," he says. "They have not seen something like this before. The other ones are normal. This is not normal."

Writers for celebrity website TMZ have been known to approach him for interviews while he's walking down the street in Beverly Hills, and he says football-lovers often ask for photos. "They do, but it's OK because if I can make them happy, I will do it – especially for kids," he says. "It's part of my profession. I am the people's champ; I am there for the people; I am not one that hides or avoids the people. I am here because of the people, and if the people want something, then whatever it is, I am there for them. They brought me to where I am: without them, I would not be the one I am, performing as I am. Wherever I go, I'm available. It doesn't matter where I am. I'm not acting big – this isn't me."

Not off the field, at least, and Ibrahimovic sees that as a crucial distinction. It's best explained when we ask him if he ever feels like a Hollywood superhero, or

simply superhuman, when he goes onto the field. "I am a human," he emphasises, just in case clarification was required. "I am as normal as everybody else. But when I step onto the field, I am a different animal. Off the field, I'm just like you and everybody else; on the field, I'm something else."

"I'm not a superhero. Superheroes are the people who save lives. I don't save lives and I don't call myself a hero – I'm just good at what I do. No, I'm fantastic at what I do."

PUTTING THE PREMIER LEAGUE IN A WHEELCHAIR

Ibrahimovic illustrated that during his time in England, scoring 28 goals in his only full season at Manchester United, helping Jose Mourinho's side to win the League Cup and also putting them on the path to lifting the Europa League before his cruciate knee ligament injury in mid-April. Not everyone thought his move to the Premier League was a good idea, the striker arriving from PSG with his 35th birthday fast approaching.

"I'd had a long career before I came – different kinds of countries, different kinds of clubs," he explains. "People said, 'You don't need to go to England, because you'll put all of your career... if you fail in England, people will always say you weren't good enough'. Everybody was against it. And guess what? That made me motivated. That gave me adrenaline. So, I went against everybody and I did it."

"I liked the Premier League. I found it very motivating and very exciting. It gets a lot of attention, although I feel the quality is a little bit overrated – the individual quality, the technical part. But the rhythm is high. Even if you are the best, if you cannot handle the rhythm, the pace, then you will not succeed, because the pace is very high."

"I did it at 35 years old. I'm super proud and super happy that I went to United. It was the right club. We won, and I did what I did before I got injured. I had an excellent time – great memories. I'm attached to United forever. The supporters are amazing: wherever I went, I saw red shirts, which was fantastic. It's a very important moment in my career."

"But as I said when I was in England, you're lucky that I didn't come 10 years ago, because if I did what I did at 35 years old, imagine it if I was 25. Then it would have been a different story. All of them, I would like to hear them talk – and they were talking. I came there and they said I came in a wheelchair. All the people that talked, in the whole Premier League, I put them in a wheelchair. That is what I did."

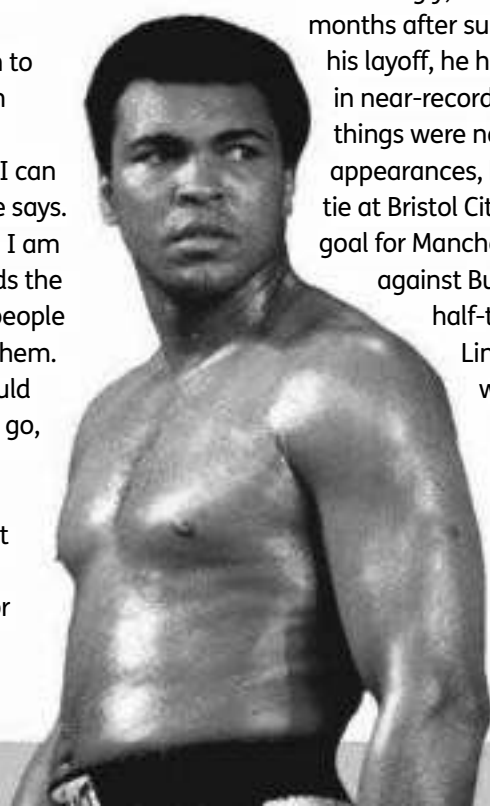
That is, until the fateful day Manchester United faced Anderlecht in the quarter-finals of the Europa League. Ibrahimovic jumped for a high ball and landed in the most awful way possible. His right knee bent backwards, leaving him crumpled in a heap on the floor.

Instantly, it was clear that this was serious. There would be no fairytale appearance in a Europa League final that seemed made for Zlatan: playing against his old club, Ajax, and at the Friends Arena in Stockholm, the stadium he had officially opened in 2012 with four goals against England, including *that* 35-yard overhead kick.

"I didn't feel pain," he says of his injury against Anderlecht. "I felt like I swallowed my tongue when it happened. The first thing I said was *that the only one who can injure Zlatan is Zlatan – nobody else. It was the first time that I got a major injury, and I did it to myself.*"

Astonishingly, Ibrahimovic was back on the field for United just seven months after sustaining this serious ligament damage. Throughout his layoff, he had been determined to prove that he could recover in near-record time. When he did start to play again, however, things were not quite right and he knew it. After five substitute appearances, he returned to the starting line-up in a League Cup tie at Bristol City, scoring in a 2-1 defeat. But that would be his final goal for Manchester United. He started their Premier League fixture against Burnley at Old Trafford six days later, but came off at half-time with United 2-0 down. His replacement, Jesse Lingard, scored both goals as they rallied to draw 2-2, while Ibrahimovic never played for the club again.

He told Mourinho that he needed time away from the field to get his knee back to perfect condition, before coming to the conclusion that the rigours of the Premier League demanded too much. He had been linked with LA Galaxy even before arriving in England; now it was time to cross the Atlantic.





In making his switch to the United States so close to the start of the MLS season, he accepted a substantially reduced wage in order to join Galaxy: official figures put his base salary at \$1.5m a year, less than the sums earned by team-mates Giovanni dos Santos, Jonathan dos Santos and Romain Alessandrini, who were already in situ as the club's three designated players under league rules.

"When I came back at Manchester United, I was not feeling ready; I was not feeling fresh; I was not feeling 100 per cent," he explains to *FFT*. "I didn't want to disappoint anybody, because they saw the Ibrahimovic that they'd had and I didn't want to give them something else. That's why I pulled one step back. I tried to help in a different way and just be there to support my team, the club and the fans. Normally I would like to be on the field to help my team-mates, but I was not feeling ready. When the opportunity came to play in the US with Galaxy, I said that I needed a fresh start. I needed to begin from zero and take it from there."

Ibrahimovic will always appreciate the chance he had to work with Mourinho again; the pair had previously won Serie A together at Inter. "I have a good relationship with Jose," says the striker. "I understand him. I know what he needs, I bring what he needs, and he knows what he gets when he has me. There are no complications."

And what of Paul Pogba, his friend and former team-mate? The pair share an agent in Mino Raiola, who has been vocal in his defence of the Frenchman, hitting back at Paul Scholes on social media earlier in the season after the Manchester United legend was critical of Pogba.

It is clear that Ibrahimovic, too, has been irked by some of the criticism levelled at Pogba, and that he has some things he'd like to get off his chest. As soon as *FFT* mentions Pogba's name, Ibrahimovic launches into a two-and-a-half-minute monologue on the subject.

"I think the thing with Pogba has become an issue that's a little bit ridiculous," he begins. "Everybody hangs up on Pogba. Somebody goes through a red light – it's Pogba's fault. You get a puncture on a tyre – it's Pogba's fault. Something goes wrong – it's Pogba's fault. All these people talk: I think they just want attention, so they talk. They expect miracles every second."

"They have to relax. They have to look at themselves, especially the ex-players, and ask themselves, 'What did I do when I played?' Because they were not much better – that I can tell you now, and I played against them. Some were good; some were less good; someone thought he was good but he was not good. Excuse my words, but they should all shut up and mind their own business. They get paid to talk, they get paid to get attention, but you have to talk with facts."

"I'm not here to defend one or the other, because we are all professional, we should all take responsibility and we should all do what we need to do. When you get to a certain level, there is pressure, there is expectation, and I love this. England: they hated me until I came to England, and then it was a different story. They all started

"THE QUALITY IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE IS A BIT OVERRATED, BUT EVEN IF YOU'RE THE BEST, YOU WON'T SUCCEED IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE PACE"

to love me. That was irritating for me, because my haters became my fans and I prefer to have haters, because then I get motivated.

"Then, I get..." he continues, gritting his teeth to illustrate the emotion he is trying to portray. "I become a different person. And that is what I love, because I will destroy every single human being that talks, just like I've done so far."

"There's nothing left to say about me. But when it comes to Paul, I think it feels personal. They have to be careful, because when it becomes personal, it's not professional. They're two different things. When you get paid to do work, you have to be professional, not personal. You leave personal things at home."

"Thank you," he adds, as if to formally conclude his speech – a speech that we sense he has been wanting to make for some time.

"IT'S NOT JUST MANCHESTER UNITED – THE WHOLE WORLD NEEDS ME"

Ibrahimovic has been a player reborn since moving to the US, showing all the agility of old. The 500th goal of a 19-year professional career was notched in spectacular fashion against Toronto, as he found the net with an unorthodox flying kick over his own shoulder – a taekwondo move that he learned during the martial arts days of his youth.

The milestone was marked by LA Galaxy with a special 'Zlatan: God of Goals' poster that depicted him wearing a cape and with a wrecking ball in his hand. "I wanted it to be more brutal," he said. "I wanted them to show my victims around me, but they didn't let me."

Above Ibrahimovic insists that pundits' criticism of Pogba has become "personal"

"I DON'T NEED AN AWARD IN MY HAND TO PROVE TO MYSELF THAT I'M THE BEST. I JUST KNOW IT"

Right How else was Zlatan Ibrahimovic going to score his 500th career goal?

By his own admission, Zlatan is a man who needs a little bit of anger inside him if he is to perform at his best. Given his form this year, then, what's been making him angry during his time in the US? "No, I am enjoying it now – I don't need to be angry," he replies, smiling. "If you make me angry here, it will be too big a difference.

"I want to make them feel important," he adds, winking at the LA Galaxy press officer across the room to make it clear that he's joking, before turning his attention directly towards *FFT*. "It's just like with you now. I make you important, because nobody would get 20 minutes with me, like you do now..."

The press officer briefly gets to his feet, wondering if that was Ibrahimovic's way of hinting that the interview has gone on long enough, but it's just Zlatan being who he is, mischievously keeping us on our toes in his own inimitable way. He happily talks on for a fair old while – if there's one thing we have learned during his glittering career, it's that Zlatan Ibrahimovic enjoys talking about Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

It hasn't been a perfect year for Galaxy. The game that delivered Ibrahimovic's 500th career goal ended in a 5-3 defeat, just a few days after coach Sigi Schmid resigned following a 6-2 loss to Real Salt Lake. Defence has been an issue. But Zlatan's goals have made them one of the most potent attacking forces in the league, helping the club to move from rock-bottom in 2017 to mid-table in 2018.

So impressive has his form been, in the days after we speak he is linked with a January transfer back to Europe. In Italy there are murmurings of a potential loan return to his former club Milan, during the MLS off-season, which would repeat the move that David Beckham made twice during his time as a Galaxy player. There are even reports that Ibrahimovic could return to Manchester United.

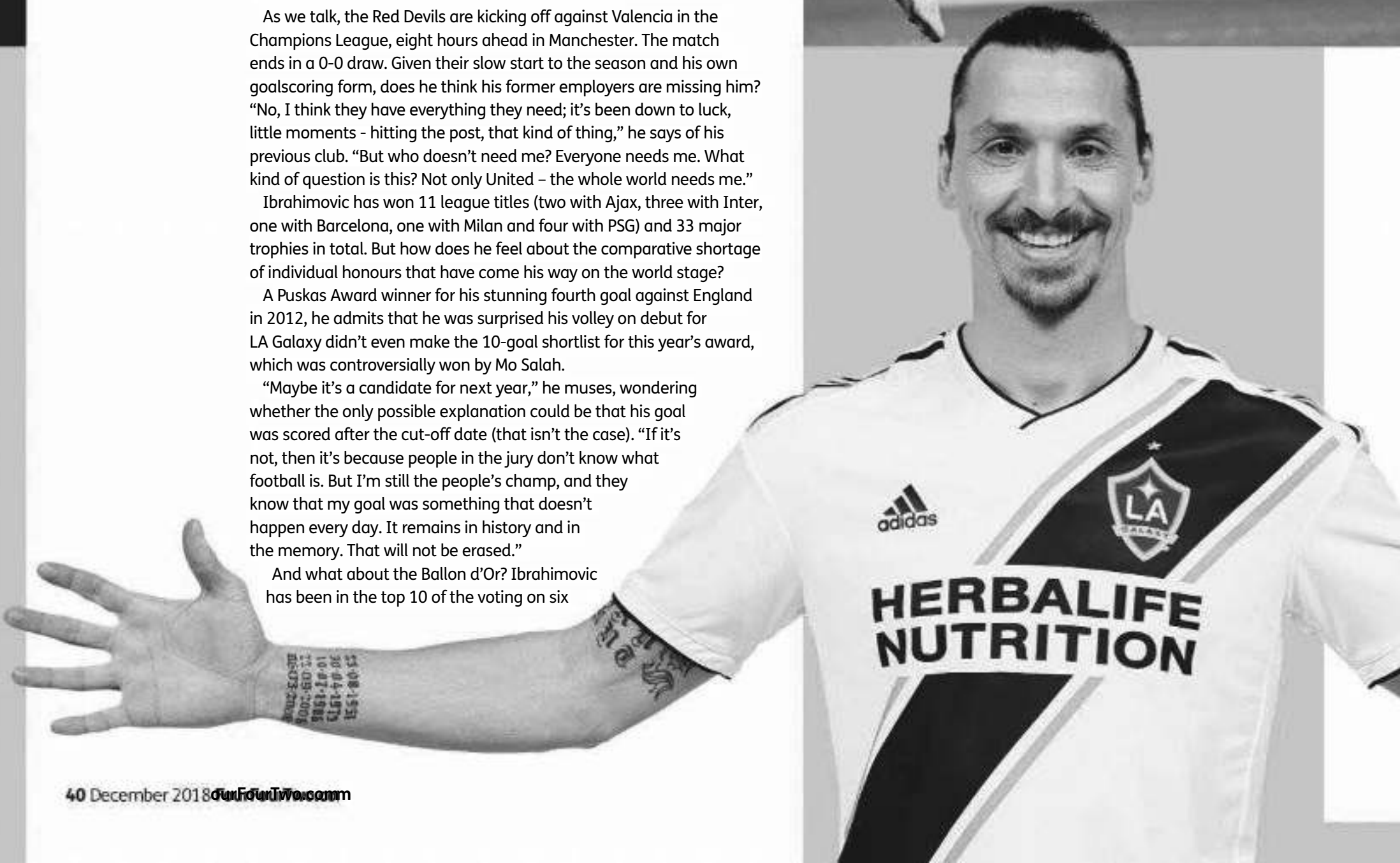
As we talk, the Red Devils are kicking off against Valencia in the Champions League, eight hours ahead in Manchester. The match ends in a 0-0 draw. Given their slow start to the season and his own goalscoring form, does he think his former employers are missing him? "No, I think they have everything they need; it's been down to luck, little moments – hitting the post, that kind of thing," he says of his previous club. "But who doesn't need me? Everyone needs me. What kind of question is this? Not only United – the whole world needs me."

Ibrahimovic has won 11 league titles (two with Ajax, three with Inter, one with Barcelona, one with Milan and four with PSG) and 33 major trophies in total. But how does he feel about the comparative shortage of individual honours that have come his way on the world stage?

A Puskas Award winner for his stunning fourth goal against England in 2012, he admits that he was surprised his volley on debut for LA Galaxy didn't even make the 10-goal shortlist for this year's award, which was controversially won by Mo Salah.

"Maybe it's a candidate for next year," he muses, wondering whether the only possible explanation could be that his goal was scored after the cut-off date (that isn't the case). "If it's not, then it's because people in the jury don't know what football is. But I'm still the people's champ, and they know that my goal was something that doesn't happen every day. It remains in history and in the memory. That will not be erased."

And what about the Ballon d'Or? Ibrahimovic has been in the top 10 of the voting on six





separate occasions, but 2013 was the closest he came to winning the award, when he finished fourth behind Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Franck Ribery. Should he have been given football's ultimate individual honour at some stage during his career?

"I mean, this is material," he says of the award. "I don't need something in my hand to prove to myself that I'm the best – I just know it. Awards are things where other people decide who should win. Who says that these people know everything? So yes, it's a fantastic thing, a great thing, but as a person, I don't need something to tell me who I am. I know who I am."

For 10 years in succession between 2007 and 2016, Ibrahimovic was named as Sweden's player of the year. Does he feel that he was also the best player in the world for the whole of that 10-year period?

"Ten?" he asks, mishearing our question and keen to subtly point out that he actually won the Guldbollen 11 times in total. When we clarify that, yes, we know he also won it in 2005 (Freddie Ljungberg claimed the honour in 2006), he jiggles his eyebrows up and down in deliberately comic fashion, to show he's messing with us and also to illustrate that he's quite proud to have won the award on 11 occasions.

Returning to the question of whether he believes he was the best player in the world during that unbroken 10-year run, he delivers a very definitive answer. "Yes. By far."

Better than Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo? "Yes," he says, following up this pointedly succinct answer with a stare suggesting great certainty.

"But different circumstances mean you have to win this to win that," he explains, acknowledging that never winning the Champions League or an international tournament may have counted against him. "It's OK, though. I see myself as the most complete striker in the world. I don't see other strikers who have my ability, have my height, have my weight and do the things that I do. I don't see it. If you saw somebody, you tell me and I will make the comparison. But so far I haven't seen it."

Does he still feel that he is the best, even now, as he turns 37? "I feel I'm still performing," he replies. "It's not about feeling the best or being the best – it's about performing. But I don't know if it's my birthday tomorrow or not. After my 30th birthday I stopped counting. It didn't look good above 30..."

Ibrahimovic's supreme self-confidence, and his willingness to publicly declare his greatness at any opportunity, have contributed to his popularity the world over. Hundreds of articles can be found online listing Zlatan's greatest quotes, and his number of followers on Instagram has now reached 35 million.

He explains that his incredible self-belief came as a result of his upbringing in one of Malmö's toughest neighbourhoods, and his determination to make it out of there and become a professional footballer. "I think it's because when I was growing up, everybody was against me," he says. "Nobody believed in me and I needed to believe in myself, so it was me against everybody. I needed to prove to everybody who I was."

"When I asked somebody else what they thought I should do, they were like, 'Listen: nobody else has been in your situation, so I don't think anybody can give you any guidance or ideas – you have to manage this yourself.' Then my confidence grew, and everything I did came from me. I needed to believe in it. I needed to believe in myself and keep going."

"Where I come from, you need to survive on your own. It was a rough neighbourhood. It was not easy. I didn't have upper-class parents that brought me to training and got me things I wanted. I needed to fight for everything, ▶

Above Celebrating an incredible start to LA life and a chance to show off his pecs

ZLATAN



and do extra things. Sometimes I didn't go to school, just to make my football happen. I don't say it was cool to do that, but it was survival mode, and that made me stronger. The confidence grew and grew, and it became waterproof. Now, nothing can go through it."

Yet despite that waterproof confidence, Zlatan admits that, yes, sometimes even he gets nervous. In fact, it happens more often than you might think. "I get nervous in the right way," he says. "I get nervous because I know something big will happen. Before every game, I feel that something inside me is pumping, because the game will start and something big will happen. You have to have that feeling. If you don't have it, listen: you're doing the wrong thing."

"But you have to believe in what you're doing. If you don't believe in it, it will be more difficult. To fail is no problem. I'm not afraid to fail, because I just need to succeed once and then I'm done."

IBRAHIMOVIC vs TRUMP?

When his career is over, Ibrahimovic is probably capable of becoming the greatest mind coach in the history of the world – he would undoubtedly tell you so himself. He has other plans, though. First, there is the question of exactly how long he wants to play on for.

"As long as I'm performing," is his answer, "because the day I stop performing, there's no sense in playing on. I will not drag out my name and be that squeezed orange that is still there and doesn't have any juice left in him. But I'll keep going for as long as I can. As long as I perform, I will still play. If I cannot perform, I will not play."

When his career does come to an end, how will football cope without Zlatan? "That is up to others to judge," he says. "I did what I could, I had my story and I made a difference. Then it's time for somebody else to bring it further and make it even better."

Maybe one day, when robots have taken over the world, his footballing legacy will live on. *FFT* spends at least an hour every day pondering the whys and wherefores of football-playing robots, and we have come to a firm conclusion: such is his height, physique and revered technique, they will be modelled on Ibrahimovic. He shakes his head. "It will not be possible. Nobody can be like me, not even a robot."

Despite his attempts to keep a straight face, he can't resist a broad smile at this point, nor a quick glance around the room to check that everyone was amused by his answer. Even for him, that was a new one; we sense that he quite enjoys the challenge of coming up with a classic Zlatan soundbite for whatever weird and unexpected question someone is prepared to throw at him.

Putting the football-playing robots to one side, what will Zlatan do when his playing career is over? "I don't know – let's see what happens," he says. "I have a lot of projects, I'm the kind of person who needs to have challenges in my life. I don't do things because I want to be seen or because I want attention – I don't need that, because it doesn't feel like me. But let's see. Something will pop up and we'll jump on it. I have a lot of opportunities. Ninety five per cent of athletes are not streetwise, but five per cent are, and you have one of those here."

"It will be interesting to see what I will do: maybe acting, maybe controlling a club, being the boss, or maybe FIFA president to make sure everything's in order. I have the potential to do whatever I want to do."

Would he fancy taking on Donald Trump and becoming US president? "If I came here 10 years ago, I would already be president," Ibrahimovic says with typical confidence. "But that is not for me. That is too much politics. I don't like politics." Indeed, since his arrival in LA, he has resisted attempts from the media to reveal his thoughts on Trump and the current political climate in the States.

If he were to become an actor, would he back himself to take over Hollywood? "I already took over Hollywood, so that's an ongoing project," he responds, without a second's hesitation. "But let's see. Making a movie, maybe being that hero you want me to be... or maybe I could be the bad guy. I like both, because I fit with both of them."

When he talks about controlling a club, could we see him taking over a franchise as David Beckham, his friend and former PSG team-mate, has with Inter Miami? "Let's see," he says again. "Offers, we have – that, we don't have to worry about. It has to be the right offer."

Ibrahimovic has already followed in Beckham's footsteps by moving to LA, and for all their fun on social media – Beckham congratulated

"I'M NERVOUS BEFORE GAMES, BECAUSE I KNOW SOMETHING BIG WILL HAPPEN. IF YOU DON'T FEEL THAT, YOU'RE DOING THE WRONG THING"

him on scoring 500 goals by saying "that makes you really, really old" – their mutual respect is such that the Swede resists talk of whether he's outdone his pal in his first season in America. "No, no, Beckham is Beckham and I am the one I am," Zlatan says. "I respect everything he does and I don't like to compare. We all have our own story – he had a fantastic story and I'm still writing mine. We talk often. He gave me good motivation to come to MLS: he said it was the right place and was very positive about it. He's a fantastic guy and he was a fantastic player. He has beautiful kids. He's a role model for every father out there."

Ibrahimovic promises that when the opportunity arises, he will meet Beckham at Wembley for an England match, wearing an England shirt, as part of a bet the pair made before July's World Cup quarter-final between their two nations.

For a long time, there were rumours that Zlatan would feature at the World Cup himself – rumours that the man himself didn't exactly play down during interviews, despite having retired from international football after Euro 2016. He says now, though, that there was never a chance that he would play in Russia. "I stopped two years before the World Cup – I retired," he reminds *FFT*. "It was nice to hear people talking, saying that I should play in the World Cup, that I shouldn't, that I will, that I won't. But the truth is, when the question first came from the federation – 'Do you want to come back or not?' – I said, 'No, I retired two years ago and that's it.' It was never a question of me playing or not. But it was a nice feeling to know that the talk was still there. I had fun. I was teasing."

And so, unlike in that remarkable game at the Friends Arena in 2012, Sweden went into battle against England without him. If the Blagult had won the World Cup quarter-final in Samara, Beckham would have been obliged to buy Zlatan whatever Ikea furniture he desired, as part of their wager. Because the Three Lions triumphed, Zlatan now faces a different forfeit, at Wembley. "A bet is a bet, and I stand behind every bet I make," he says. "I don't know when it will be yet, because I'm here now, but it will happen, don't worry. I stand by my words – everything I have said, it has happened. I owe it to Beckham, and I'll show up."

"Then, as soon as we're there, I will put on an England shirt and I will eat fish and chips!" he adds, immediately bursting into laughter as he outlines the terms of the bet.

We have one final question for Zlatan before it's time to wrap things up. When his playing career is over, how would he like to be remembered? "I don't know," he replies, puffing out his cheeks, thinking carefully about this question before deciding upon his answer. "As the most complete striker that the world has ever seen."

As has often been the case during our interview, the deliberate deadpan delivery soon turns into a smile, before Zlatan rises from his seat and shakes *FFT* by the hand. "Well done," he says warmly, appraising our interview in the same way that Alex Ferguson used to do at the end of every conversation he had with Geoff Shreeves. He adds, "And say hello to everyone in England for me."

Pleasantries exchanged, he departs to finish his duties for the day, before making his way out into the Los Angeles sunshine. It is abundantly clear from our conversation that he's still as serious as ever about scoring goals and still as determined as ever to be the Zlatan that the world knows and loves.

A unique talent and a unique personality, one day he will undoubtedly be missed. As he'll tell you himself, no one can ever be quite like Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Not even a robot.

Below Becks: fantastic guy, fantastic player, fantastic gambler



BRITAIN'S
WORST TEAM

PLAYED 10 LOST 9 SCORED 6 CONCEDED 81
POINTS -8



WHAT NEXT FOR THE WORST TEAM IN BRITAIN?

If you think your team's having a bad season, thank your lucky stars you don't follow Fort William. Having finished bottom of the Highland League 14 times in 20 attempts, they have started this campaign in typically woeful form – but will they ever turn it around?

Words Chris Flanagan **Photography** John Paul Peebles

It's almost as if they knew we were coming. *FourFourTwo* has arrived at Fort William FC's Claggan Park ground, a little jaded after a long drive north, and we've immediately fallen victim to an ambush.

Within a second of our stepping out of the car, there's a squawk as a flock of seagulls swoops down, one winged menace hurling a piece of bread in our direction, almost hitting us in the face. Even the birds are disgruntled around here. And no wonder.

We've travelled deep into the Scottish Highlands to see what some have described as the worst team in Britain, following a nightmare start to 2018-19. Ten games into the Highland League season, one division below the Scottish Professional Football League, Fort William are propping up the table. Again. They have already conceded 81 goals and lost by double figures on five occasions, and their points tally is minus-eight, after a nine-point deduction. Perennial strugglers, they are without a league win since April 2017, having finished rock-bottom in 14 of the last 20 seasons, shipping 1,000 league goals over the past eight years alone.

Yet today, they have the chance to claim that elusive victory and shed the tag of being Britain's most bobbins ballers. Lossiemouth FC roll into town having lost every match this term, even if their unhealthy -47 goal difference is dwarfed by Fort William's figure of -75.

After dodging the missiles hurled from above by incandescent seagulls, *FFT* heads inside a ground that must rate as one of the most scenic around. We are just three or four miles from Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the British Isles – obscured today by the ever-present falling drizzle – with the slightly smaller Meall an t-Suidhe hill looming 2,333 feet over one end of Claggan Park.

In the clubhouse, new secretary Russell MacMorran has a drink in hand as he welcomes us into his office. "It's not vodka – not yet," he laughs. He and his young son, who's opted for an Irn-Bru, are both wearing smart club ties. "It's his first home match today," MacMorran says. "He's here to make sure I'm up to scratch."

The role of secretary has become rather important at Fort William this season. Prior to MacMorran's recent arrival, they inadvertently fielded the ineligible Aiden Taylor in three league games, after a misunderstanding over the regulations. Despite gaining precisely zero points from the three matches concerned, they were deducted nine points by the Highland League.

"I think the results were 11-0, 10-1 and 8-2," says director Mikey Mackinnon. "Could they not have just ▶



BRITAIN'S
WORST TEAM



put us down to 20-0, rather than take points off us? We didn't gain anything – the player involved wasn't that good, trust me! It wasn't intentional, and that's what hurt."

If Fort William were already facing a major struggle to avoid finishing bottom, the punishment has left them with a virtually impossible task. Even getting back above zero will be a tall order: in nine of the last 13 seasons, they haven't made it to 10 points.

Understandably, MacMorran is a little paranoid about the potential for further deductions. "We don't want another one, so player registrations are important for me," he says. "I'm actually a police officer – this isn't full-time, although it could be, I tell you."

Far from throwing in the towel, the club are doing everything they can to turn things around. Another director, Willie Edwards, is toiling away in the kitchen, preparing food for the players, who have arrived three hours before kick-off. Manager Kris Anderson is keen that they prepare properly and spend time with each other to foster team spirit.

A giant of a man, Anderson spent more than a decade in the army and cuts an intimidating figure. He's already got his game face on, his mind whirring with thoughts about the afternoon ahead. "I'll speak to you later – a lot later," he says when *FFT* approach for a chat. "There are too many things going through my head right now."

In his place, 30-year-old long-serving player Scott Hunter tells *FFT*, "I'm Fort William born and bred – I've been in and out of the club since I was 11. It's a great wee club. We get a lot of bad press about the results, but this is one of the best squads I've been involved in. Even though we're getting battered every week, the spirit is phenomenal."

League results, at least, have yet to match last term's 16-0 defeat at Brora Rangers, although they did lose 16-0 to Inverness Caledonian Thistle (of the Championship, three divisions higher) in the North of Scotland Cup in August, when they were still getting a squad together.

"I wouldn't say the season so far has been a disaster, but it has been tough," admits Hunter. "At the start, we had five players and no pre-season. We had to play a goalie at right-back against Caley Thistle, and they brought a few first-team players with them. That was a low point. When the 11th or 12th goal went in, we just had to laugh, because that's all you can do. There's no point beating yourself up about it; we're here to enjoy playing football."

"When it's goal after goal – bang, bang, bang – it's tough. We don't expect to lose, but you do get accustomed to it. Some players say, 'This isn't for me – I can't handle it', but the boys here now want to play at the highest level they can. When we win, that will make up for it all – just see us then. Coming in today is a bit weird, because we've actually got a chance."

Veteran kitman Albert Wardrop, sporting a tremendous Jimmy Greaves moustache, explains that things were once very different. "The '70s, '80s and '90s were the best times," he says. "John McGinlay

scored a lot of goals and we went from the North Caledonian League into the Highland League. But recent years? It's been terrible.

"We don't have the money to get players, which other clubs do, and our gates are pretty low for most games... well, all games. We only get small sponsors. We need one who's going to come in with £100,000 – either that or someone at the club needs to win the lottery! I buy a ticket twice a week, but the most I've ever won is £47."

"THE BOYS ARE SO USED TO JUST RUNNING AND CHASING, I HOPE THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY ACTUALLY GET THE BALL"

Fort William's isolated location in the west of Scotland doesn't help their cause. It's the second-biggest settlement in the Highlands, behind Inverness, but the population numbers only 10,000 and the town's main sport is shinty, a traditional game with some similarities to hockey and Irish hurling. Glasgow means two and a half hours of driving through mountains, while most teams play far away to the north-east. The nearest Highland League club is Clachnacuddin – a 66-mile journey of nearly two hours via the twisty roads surrounding Loch Ness. Attracting players has long proven difficult, especially any capable of playing just one level below Scotland's league outfits.

Results have been on the decline for more than two decades. There was brief hope 10 years ago when an American TV company wanted to create a reality series called *From Worst To First*, importing players from the US to move the club up the table, but the project fell through.

There is no relegation from the Highland League. Instead, the club considered dropping into the amateur ranks of their own volition this summer, when the board stepped down and new directors saved Fort William. "If we hadn't stepped in, the club would've folded," says Colin Wood, who owns a local caravan park. "If the club went, there'd be no football in this area, and even a bad defeat is better than no football."

"The club were going to drop into the North Caledonian League, but there's no promotion into the Highland League, so even if we became competitive in a different league, we wouldn't get back in. There's no reason to assume we suddenly would be competitive, either, and if we struggled in that league as well, we would be finished."

"We have a plan now. We want to have a reserve team in five years' time – there's a youth team, but the jump between under-17s and the Highland League is too big. We pay players £25 per game, up from £15, because playing for us meant they couldn't work on a Saturday and they weren't getting that money back. But teams at the top of the league can pay 10 times more. In the Highland League, the top few push for promotion and the teams at the bottom just try to survive."

"I understand people calling us the worst team in Britain. We have problems. But we're addressing them, and few clubs care as much as us. Our bus broke down going to Cove; the players all went back to Fort William and jumped in their cars. They had to break a few speed limits to get there on time but they all went, even though they knew Cove wanted a record win against us. They could've said, 'You know what? I'm not going,' but they all made the journey because they knew it'd be worse without them. We lost 11-0, but our keeper made a fantastic save. You might think, '11-0, 12-0: does it matter?' It mattered to him."

The financial gap was clear that day. "Cove have spent £2 million on their stadium alone, whereas our whole club budget was £54,000 last year," says fellow director Mackinnon. "Our players are young – when it gets to six and seven, we try to tell them to sit back, but they want to attack. We've got seven upfield and the opposition just kick it over the top, but I admire our boys for still going at it."

"Today, we hope it will be an even match. The boys are so used to just running and chasing, I hope they know what to do when they actually get the ball! We did get one draw against Strathspey Thistle, although our budget is so tight that when we were winning, we were thinking, 'How much is this going to cost us in win bonuses?' But obviously you want to win. We were just so far behind with fitness that we tired at the end, even though Strathspey had 10 men."

"People around town say we're rubbish, but if you come down and get to know the players, you get passionate. Football is coming back to the area, thanks to Ronaldo and Messi. Hey, if one of them wants to come here for a challenge, why not? We might score three, although I don't know how many our opponents would get. Can they defend?"

Clockwise from below

"So, have you come far today...?"; crunching tackles are the order of the day; the visitors prepare for their 'cup final'; Admission: we are not very good at football; Fort William's youth team are also their ultras; The Visual Metaphor Stand; tickets are always available



FORT WILLIAM'S MANAGER IS YELLING FROM THE TOUCHLINE, LOOKING TENSE. EVENTUALLY HE JUST SHOUTS, "FOOTBALL!"

The uncertainty over Fort William's league status hampered their preparations for this campaign: Anderson was brought in as manager shortly before the season began. "He said we'll turn the double-digit defeats into 5-0s and 4-0s, then we'll go for the win," Wood explains. "For the first four games, it was a victory just to put a team out."

The new boss has had to recruit players from as far afield as the Isle of Skye. Anderson and his assistant manager, David McGurk, drive down from Inverness for matches, as well as for training twice a week. "The journey can be a nightmare, especially in summer with all the tourists," McGurk says. "It's a really long way back after a bad result."

The late appointment spared players a gruelling pre-season, at least. "They'd have been up and down Ben Nevis if we had started earlier – it's already been planned for next year!" McGurk laughs. "We haven't told the boys yet. I don't know how they're going to respond. I don't know how I'm going to respond, either, because I'll have to do it, too!"

RONNIE CORBETT, SUPER STRIKER

It's nearly 3pm and the time for talking is over. *FFT* heads out into the rain. The wind is blowing in from Meall an t-Suidhe, now almost completely covered by low cloud, and the temperature has dipped below 10 degrees. The area has tourists aplenty in summer. Not now.

A condemned terrace stands on the far side of the pitch, fenced off for safety reasons. There are around 80 people in today, most of them in two tiny 50-seat stands on the near side. This afternoon it's a choice between a restricted view at the back of the stand or getting soaked at the front, as the rain becomes increasingly horizontal. Fort William's youth-team players often turn up to lend their support, enthusiastically banging a drum as the club's unofficial ultras, but today's weather has kept even them at bay.

"Every single one of us, we need to f**king earn this today!" bellows Lossiemouth's centre-half, determined to motivate his team-mates as the referee gets the game underway. With both sides sensing the rare chance of a result, there's an edge to the match from the start as tackles go flying in, even if quality is lacking from either team.

Nine minutes in, the remarkable happens: Darren Quigg's header puts Fort William in front, to excitable cheers from the home support. The hosts are without their regular keeper, and replacement Callum Ligertwood has a few shaky moments: completely misjudging a deep free-kick in the wind, he watches the ball sail over his head and drop just wide, prompting anxious laughter from the fans. Lossiemouth's Ryan Stuart is denied by the post as Fort William somehow cling onto their lead. It's like watching Atletico Madrid twinned with pure chaos.

Anderson, looking increasingly tense, is yelling from the touchline. Eventually he just shouts, "FOOTBALL!" at his players. It's either the vaguest tactical instruction in history, a tribute to Mitchell & Webb, or – most likely – a demand for his charges to better retain possession.

Eventually, the inevitable equaliser does come, Lossiemouth's Scott Campbell heading home a corner. Frustration grows. "That No.10 is pish," moans one fan, as Fort William forward Michael Corbett loses possession. "We'd be better off with Ronnie Corbett."

But Fort William are soon back in front as Dawid Majewski scores via a deflection. They nearly go 3-1 up when Majewski hits the post just before the interval. Could this be their first league win for 18 months?

As the second half begins, though, supporters are unsurprisingly nervous about the one-goal lead. "Get Ronnie Corbett off!" shouts the No.10's biggest fan once again. He then turns to his young son and calmly clarifies: "Ronnie Corbett's a comedian." A dead comedian.



Another fan shouts only, "C'mon the Fort!" at regular intervals, no matter the circumstances: excitement, anxiety or exasperation.

With 18 minutes to go, it's definitely the latter, as Liam Archibald takes advantage of uncertain defending among the hosts to make it 2-2. "We're sitting too deep," one supporter complains.

Seconds after the restart, there's an audible crunch and a wince from the crowd as Fort William's huge midfielder, Stephen Lopez – well over 6ft tall and carrying his fair share of timber – bodychecks a more nimble opponent on the halfway line. It earns him a red card, to Anderson's ire. "He's just f**king run straight into him, for f**k's sake!" the manager shouts, and fans aren't happy with the decision, either. "You've got to take the size difference into account," says one.

As the clock ticks down, the game seems capable of exploding at any minute. To both sides, this match really matters. Then, with eight minutes remaining, it's the moment Fort William feared. Lossiemouth take the lead. Aaron Hamilton heads home for the visitors and their substitutes charge onto the pitch to celebrate. "Get those stupid f**king c**ts off the pitch!" yells Anderson, before muttering under his breath about the officials and concluding, "F**king shower of pricks."

But the game is not over. In the 89th minute, a Fort William corner is swung in from the right and assistant manager McGurk heads the ball home to make the score 3-3 and spark jubilation among his team-mates. "Come on, don't lose it now," one fan prays anxiously.

Only, Fort William do lose it. In stoppage time, they fail to clear a set-piece and the ball bounces into the path of Hamilton, who lashes home a devastating winner. Lossiemouth's subs charge back onto the pitch. "Seriously, it's their f**king cup final," Anderson spits.

As the final whistle blows and Lossiemouth players leap into the air to celebrate, we're greeted by Fort William's disconsolate director, Sam Lees. "That's the Fort William story, right there," he sighs.

The visitors' manager, Joe Russell, emerges from a dressing room playing music at full blast. "It's such a relief to get the win, but God, we made hard work of it," he says. Lossiemouth finally have their first points of the season. Fort William's wait for a victory goes on.

"It's hard to take – I'd rather get beat 10-0 than 4-3," says midfielder Scott Hunter. "We won't get a better chance of three points for a long time. Lossiemouth away will probably be our next chance."

Anderson takes a few minutes to compose himself before venturing out from the home dressing room. His passion was abundantly clear today and it's hard not to feel for a man who has taken on one of the most difficult jobs in football. "I'm gutted, absolutely gutted," he tells *FFT*. "We deserved something from the game, but that's the way it's been going. It's not so much stress that I feel; it's more anguish that you're trying to get a competitive team on the pitch. Today was the difference between being five points behind and 11 – that has just made it 10 times harder now. But we have to keep going."

And keep going they will. Their pride has been dented and for many they remain Britain's worst team, but anyone would be impressed by the togetherness we've witnessed on our visit. Despite their setbacks, Fort William aren't prepared to give up. If determination and willpower have anything to do with it, one day their fortunes will turn. ●

Above Are Fort William heading in the right direction?

Clockwise from right Darren Quigg hopes the defence can hold out for just 80 more minutes; the visiting fans are also starved of wins; home manager Kris Anderson has an unenviable job; "He's dead"; Lossiemouth players celebrate a rare three points







FRED

FRED THE RED

The Brazilian midfielder's maiden Old Trafford season may have begun with Manchester United in mini-crisis, but when you've fled a war zone and endured a lengthy drugs ban, you'll probably take most things in your stride...

Interview Felipe Rocha

here are a few ways to catch the eye of your new club's fans after making a big-money summer switch: star in a major tournament, score a wonder goal in pre-season, turn up in a flashy motor with an even flashier haircut... but what about sharing a name with the team's mascot?

After completing a £52 million move from Shakhtar Donetsk to Manchester United in late June, Brazilian midfielder Fred was instantly given a new nickname.

"Since I arrived?! No, they were calling me Fred The Red before I even got here," the 25-year-old tells *FourFourTwo* with a smirk. "When the deal was officially announced, thousands of United supporters were sending the words 'Fred The Red' to me all over social media. I have to admit I was a bit confused at first, but soon it was explained to me that Manchester United now have two of us!"

The original Fred – the untypically-gleeful 7ft devil – has been putting smiles on the faces of the Old Trafford crowd (well, the kids at least) with his hijinks since the early-1990s, so his new namesake clearly has a lot to live up to.

Having kicked off his senior career with SC Internacional in his native Brazil – winning two state championships – Fred made his move to Ukraine in 2013, where he helped Shakhtar lift three league titles, three Ukrainian Cups and four Super Cups. This against the backdrop of a bloody civil war, forcing the club to relocate to Kiev.

Now the midfielder faces an altogether different challenge, as the Red Devils attempt to overcome a frustrating start to the season and secure some more trophies of their own.

How are you finding life at Manchester United so far?

So far so good. My family and I are really enjoying life in Manchester. It's definitely a different lifestyle for us, but we are adapting well and quickly. My wife is pregnant with our first son, so life is pretty good for us right now and we're very grateful for everything that's happening. Being here is honestly a dream come true. Manchester United are the biggest club in the world, and I'm enjoying every aspect of being part of this football club. When I was young I used to watch them play, and now I find myself wearing the famous red shirt – it's a special feeling.

What's it like playing at Old Trafford in front of so many fans?

I'll never forget my Premier League debut against Leicester, and was impressed with the atmosphere our fans created. They're amazing and can play a huge part in making us stronger at home. The stadium itself is something incredible – it's a football monument. I've also been chatting with people out and about in Manchester and they've made me very welcome, which is the best feeling ever. I've only just arrived, but I already feel at home here.

How did the move to United come about?

I leave these things to my agent, as I prefer to focus on my duties on the pitch. But I was keen to start a new chapter of my career, to find another challenge. I had quite a few offers, but then suddenly United appeared with a great project. Jose Mourinho talked to me personally and I was convinced it was the right move to make. I'm pleased with my decision and really proud of being part of such a giant club.

Manchester City were one of the other clubs interested. How close were you to going there in January?

That's true, I received an offer from them and even talked to my Brazilian team-mates who play for our neighbours. They were trying to convince me to join them, but in the end it didn't happen. Then it was the summer and, as I said, there were other offers, including from United. I quickly decided that was the right move for me.

Are you looking forward to your first Manchester derby on November 11?

Of course! We must think game by game, but every player wants to be involved when it comes



"OH MY GOD, UKRAINE WAS SO COLD. I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SUSTAIN HUMAN LIFE! MANCHESTER IS MUCH EASIER IN COMPARISON"

to derby day. It's a great feeling when you play against your local rival, especially when we're talking about two of the world's best teams. It will be a quality match, and hopefully one that has a happy ending for the red part of the city.

What's it like working with Mourinho? How does he manage you – does he talk to you individually in Portuguese and encourage you?

He talks to me a lot – it's really helpful to have a Portuguese-speaking manager. Mourinho is a top, top professional and every player likes to work with such a winner. I'm learning things from him, that's for sure. He can be quite strict, but that's part of his job. He's also friendly and funny off the pitch, and jokes with us in the dressing room. Jose was crucial in my decision to join Manchester United and I'm grateful for his interest in my football.

How have you found the Premier League so far – did you need time to adapt to the pace of it?

It's the most competitive league in the world and does have its own characteristics. The game here is more intense and there's no time to breathe. It's completely different to playing in Ukraine or Brazil, but I'm happy with my early steps in England.

Do you enjoy playing with Paul Pogba (left)? You linked up for your first United goal against Wolves, so are you forming a good understanding with him?

He's a great player who's just won the World Cup, so it's a real pleasure to play alongside him. It was a fantastic feeling to score that goal against Wolves, and I'm hoping





to keep replicating that. Hopefully Paul and I can develop an effective partnership in midfield, but I want to create a perfect understanding with every team-mate. We're a team and the individuals will only play well if we play as a team.

Your agent is Gilberto Silva – did he give you some tips about how to adapt to the Premier League? Are you determined to win a title like he did with Arsenal in 2004?

Absolutely! I dream of putting my hands on that trophy like he did. And I'm in the right place to make this dream come true. Manchester United has been a factory of titles and I just want to help them win more. Gilberto Silva is one of my idols and it's a privilege to work with him now. He does give me some advice, but his conduct during his career tells me everything I need to know: be an honest professional and work hard if you want to be rewarded. Gilberto's a lovely guy, too.

You spent five seasons with Shakhtar Donetsk, who are known for developing great Brazilian players. Was it a difficult decision to go there at first? How cold was it?!

Well, it's always tough to leave your own country. But the number of Brazilians at Shakhtar definitely helped me with my decision to move there, and my adaptation to life in Ukraine. Shakhtar have a great eye when it comes to spotting young Brazilian talent, and I was so lucky to be involved in their project. I'm grateful that they opened the door to European football for me, and also for everything I've learnt there. But, oh my God, it's really cold in Ukraine! Have you ever been there? At first, I thought it was impossible to sustain human life in such cold conditions [laughs]. But we adapt and go on – that's life. Manchester is much easier in comparison. Well, actually, we're only in the autumn, so let's see how things go during the winter!

This is the first club you've been at where you're not surrounded by Brazilians. Is it strange?

Not really. There's Andreas Pereira who's been really kind to me. He's always helping with translations as I'm still learning English. There are also several Spanish speakers, which is quite helpful too. And there's obviously Mourinho as well. But, honestly, everyone at the club has been so kind to me. I'm totally settled here.

Above left "Strict" Jose is a joker at training, honest
Above right Opening his Red Devils account in the 1-1 draw against Wolves

You're actually only the seventh Brazilian ever to play for United. Is that an honour given there have been so few before?

True, it's strange to think there haven't been more Brazilian players in United's history. I'm proud of being the seventh Brazilian to wear the red shirt. Everyone respects Manchester United not only in Brazil, but in every country around the world.

How scary was it when the Donbass War began in April 2014, and were there any particularly frightening moments?

There were some very frightening moments. I had never experienced living through a war before, and I hope no one ever has to experience that. We heard bombs exploding, and it's tough to keep calm in such situations. We had to leave Donetsk and go to Kiev where things were calmer. It was a very sad and difficult time for all of us.

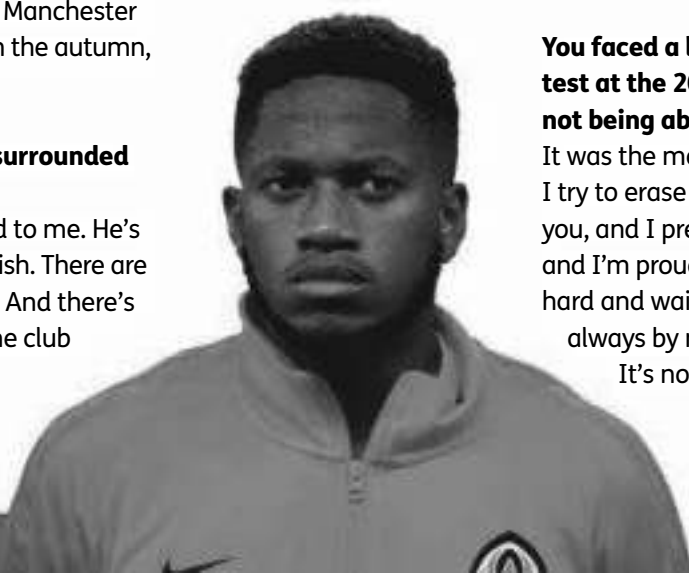
You and several other players initially decided against going back to Donetsk that July – did you fear for your safety?

Exactly. The club kept saying that everything was under control, but we weren't happy to return to Ukraine in that situation. We went to the pre-season camp in Switzerland and were expected to go back to Ukraine afterwards, but we were terrified of the war. You never know what could happen. A few players chose to return to Brazil and I was one of them. We wanted to be with our families and wait until things became a bit safer. When that happened, we went back to Ukraine, though we lived and trained in Kiev. After that, there was no problem. Yes, it was strange to be playing our home games in another part of the country, but it was the only possible option. We just had to adapt.

You faced a lengthy ban a couple of years ago after failing a drugs test at the 2015 Copa America. Was that a stressful time for you, not being able to play? How do you reflect on that period?

It was the most difficult period of my life. I still think it was unfair, but I try to erase it from my mind. It's not good to keep bad feelings with you, and I prefer to look forward. I have learnt from that sad situation and I'm proud to have kept my mind healthy. I used that time to work hard and wait for better days. I'm so thankful to my family who were always by my side, supporting me through such a terrible moment.

It's not easy to be prevented from doing what you love. ●



WHEN BRITISH

Today they're quickly going out of fashion – even at home – but in 1980s Spain, having a Blighty-born 'Mister' was all the rage. Leading the charge halfway through the decade was the man they call 'El Tel'...

Words Andrew Murray



BRITISH
MISTERS

GAFFERS

RULED LA LIGA



TERRY VENABLES

BARCELONA 1984-87

“How do you think you’re going to win the league with this lot?” a teenage Barcelona fan asked the newly-appointed Terry Venables, having watched the Blaugrana lose 2-0 at Real Sociedad on a sultry San Sebastian evening. “If he can’t do it, you won’t either.”

‘He’ was Cesar Luis Menotti, a chain-smoking Argentine who had won the 1978 World Cup and was one of the most respected coaches on the planet. Venables, on the other hand, entered the Camp Nou pressure cooker following a fifth-place finish with Queens Park Rangers.

“Seeing them play,” Venables recalled, “I thought, ‘You may be right’.”

Sure, it was only the Copa de la Liga – a short-lived postscript to the Spanish season, created the previous year in 1983 and ending in 1986 – and Barça had won the first leg 3-0, but the problems ran deeper than this one defeat. Barcelona had finished a distant third in La Liga, they had just lost the Copa del Rey final to Athletic Bilbao, and their best player wanted to leave. “Diego Maradona is already a Napoli player,” said the 23-year-old star’s agent, Jorge Cyterszpiller. “It’s all done.”

Maradona was just as unequivocal. “People have treated me pretty badly, as if I were an enemy,” he woe-is-me’d. “I want to leave Barcelona, simply because I’m not happy.”

Neither were the club. Maradona faced a three-month ban for sparking a riot in that Copa del Rey final defeat after seeking revenge against Andoni Goikoetxea, the Butcher of Bilbao who had broken the playmaker’s ankle earlier in the season. President Josep Lluís Nunez also despised Maradona’s mushrooming extracurricular activities, which, according to one player, “usually ended with players, officials, women and champagne bottles floating in the swimming pool in the early hours”. Nunez and Barcelona had already lined up Atletico Madrid forward Hugo Sanchez as Maradona’s replacement.

But Venables had other ideas. He wanted Steve Archibald. The Scot had an uncanny knack of scoring match-winning goals, something Venables prized highly, and so it was that Sanchez and Archibald were in the same hotel at one point, each negotiating transfers with different members of the Barcelona board. “He was upstairs,” Archibald recalled. “I was downstairs.”

Eventually, Venables got his way, but only when he signed an addendum in which he took full responsibility, in writing, for the deal.

President Nunez relented partly because he felt that Venables – who had been recommended for the job by England boss Bobby Robson, a *de facto* Barça scout since 1980 – needed to catch a break.

“I actually didn’t know what I was doing in such company,” Venables later recalled. Prestigious alternatives such as Michel Hidalgo, fresh from France’s triumph at Euro 84, and Helmut Benthaus, who had just won back-to-back Bundesliga titles with Stuttgart, were better qualified, if more expensive. “Then,” continued Venables, “I discovered they wanted an English guy. They thought the team wasn’t fit and needed hammering, and the English had a reputation for being quite tough.”

He put in the work, too. After the Copa de la Liga horror show against Real Sociedad, Venables talked through the team’s principal failings with Menotti and took home 250 hours’ worth of videos to school himself in all things Barcelona. With La Masia chief Jaume Olivé in favour of his appointment, ‘El Tel’ was quick to mine youth-team talent, promoting forward Juan Carlos Rojo and midfielder Ramon Caldere to the first team.

Referred to as ‘*Meester Ben-ah-bleess*’, the phonetic Spanish pronunciation of his name, Venables was expected to bring

Below “Please do that button back up, Mr Benahbles, you’re scaring the children”
Below right El Tel’s men line up ahead of the 1985-86 season as the title holders



"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING THERE. BUT THEY THOUGHT THE TEAM WASN'T FIT AND NEEDED HAMMERING, AND THE ENGLISH HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING TOUGH"

el estilo ingles – effectively kick-and-rush – to Catalonia. Yet his plan was more nuanced. Yes, the Dagenham native admired the physical strength of centre-back Miqueli, saying the man nicknamed 'Tarzan' was "second only to Tony Adams as the bravest I've known", but he also dispensed with a sweeper and insisted his players press, playing 4-4-2.

Under Menotti, Barça relied on individual brilliance from Maradona and Bernd Schuster. Now, the forwards stayed high, with the midfielders expected to join in.

"I had to drum into them that there are times and places on the football field when passing is more productive than trying to beat people," said Venables. "I worked hard on them to press the ball. If you can win it halfway through their team, you may have only five guys to get past to reach their goal."

His first competitive game was against Real Madrid in the Bernabeu: the opening day of the league season. Barcelona won. 3-0.

"Tonight, Barça were the perfect reflection of the 'English metamorphosis'," wrote Catalan sports daily *Mundo Deportivo*, impressed at the quick assimilation of the new coach's ideas. "It wasn't spectacular, like Maradona's best moments, but the Venables block was infinitely superior. They played football like a spider's web in midfield, imposing a constant 'pressing' upon their opponents, which very few teams will be able to deal with."

Archibald, so derided as the No.10 replacement for Maradona, scored one and made two. The nickname 'Archigoles' was born, and it stuck.

Los Cules lost none of their first 15 league games and by mid-March 1985 needed one more win for a first title since 1974. Many cried foul when a debatable late penalty gave Hercules an unlikely victory, then doubled down a week later when Real Valladolid were awarded another "invented" spot-kick with Barcelona 1-0 up and seconds remaining.

But Urruti, Barça's Basque goalkeeper, saved the penalty. Famously, Radio Catalunya commentator Joaquim-Maria Puyal then screamed: "Urruti, t'estimo! Urruti, t'estimo! Urruti, t'estimo!" ["Urruti, I love you!"]

In his first season, Venables had delivered what no Barcelona coach in post-Francoist Spain could: La Liga. Returning to the Catalan capital, a bus took the players from the airport to Plaça Sant Jaume, the scene of brutal repression and political protests under Franco. The 25-minute

journey took seven hours. Venables later recalled, "People were raising their children to our windows, old ladies were on their knees... It was incredible – as if we were the triumphant army returning after achieving the impossible." They had led the division from the first day to the last.

It wasn't the beginning of the end, but it was the end of the beginning. A slow start to Barça's title defence meant focus turned to lifting a first European Cup, and knocking out the holders, Juventus, raised hopes.

But the talismanic Archibald was increasingly troubled by a hamstring injury, preferring physio to surgery. Barça lost 3-0 to Gothenburg in the first leg of their semi-final, and when popular Pichi Alonso hit a hat-trick in the second-leg turnaround – a game that featured Pep Guardiola as a pitch-invading ballboy – only to be replaced by a half-fit Archibald for the final against Steaua Bucharest, Venables faced a mini-mutiny.

The final was dreadful. True, the Romanians were happy to play for penalties, but Barça were leggy and lacking in ideas. Venables took off Archibald and – more surprisingly – Schuster to inject some dynamism, but this left him with no penalty takers. Barça missed four from four.

Schuster was already on thin ice for breaches of discipline, which included his model wife Gabi steaming through an often-naked dressing room to have slanging matches with Venables. Now, he left the ground and headed for a private jet, not even staying for the final's shootout.

"Like always," fumed a team-mate at full-time, "he's f**ked off and left the rest of us to deal with the consequences." Nunez ordered Venables to never pick Schuster again – and nor did he. Schuster took his own club to court for not playing him, then joined arch-rivals Real Madrid in 1988.

Venables had overseen defeat in the 1986 finals of the European Cup and Copa del Rey, but he retained enough popular support to negotiate a better contract and sign World Cup Golden Boot winner Gary Lineker, as well as Manchester United starlet Mark Hughes. A recently-promoted Olivé could be sold on the former, but not the latter, believing Hughes would struggle to adapt to Spanish football's staccato nature. When he was ultimately proven correct, Olivé began briefing against Venables.

The season unravelled and came to be defined by home and away UEFA Cup defeats to Dundee United in which the squad showed little fight. Venables had also lost the fans' backing, with favourites Urruti, Archibald and Pichi Alonso all marginalised in favour of new signings: Andoni Zubizarreta in goal, plus Hughes and Lineker. The latter's goals – including a hat-trick against Real Madrid – were the only bright spot.

Venables lasted just four games of the following campaign, leaving Barcelona after three seasons that brought league finishes of first, second and second. "I am the kind of person who, when you need to make a decision, doesn't hesitate," said president Nunez, fearing he would be pushed if he didn't find his sacrificial lamb.

Venables, however, wasn't too miffed. As something of a social climber, he had achieved what he'd really wanted from his Catalan adventure: respectability and a top job at Spurs.

And the ripples spread further than his own career. His first two seasons had been so successful that the clamour for British managers at big Spanish clubs would continue for much of the decade... ▶



HOWARD KENDALL

ATHLETIC BILBAO 1987-89

Howard Kendall was never supposed to be Athletic Bilbao manager. Barcelona had persuaded Everton's 1985 Cup Winners' Cup-winning boss to sign a pre-contract agreement in the summer of 1986, while Terry Venables stalled on a new contract, but El Tel's late change of heart meant that Howard's way to Spain had to wait 12 months (allowing him to win a second league title as Toffees manager).

Joining Athletic, whose Basques-only selection policy applies just to its playing staff, Kendall opted against uprooting his young family from Merseyside and instead moved into the club's Lezama training ground in the rolling hills above Bilbao. "I woke up in the morning, had a juice and a coffee, went downstairs and I was on the training ground," he reasoned. It was just as well. He knew so little about Athletic's squad, he asked for a captioned team photo in order to learn his players' faces.

Kendall may have struggled with the language, using an interpreter throughout, who once had to ask him, "Where's the penalty area?", but manager and club alike took each other into their hearts. Kendall frequently went out for meals with janitor and former player Jesus Renteria and family, and he loved a game of Basque card game *Mus*.

"It felt like one big family," said Kendall. Locals attended every training session, offering their opinions before heading off into the afternoon sun. "I ended up feeling we could adopt a similar approach in England."

An English manager for Spain's most Anglophile club worked at first, as they finished fourth in 1987-88. However, Athletic slipped down the table, and in November 1989 both parties thought it best to separate.

Announcing his exit, Kendall said, "If I go to any other club, it will be a step down. This club is the best." There wasn't a dry eye in the house.



JOCK WALLACE

SEVILLA 1986-87

As Sevilla president Gabriel Rojas watched Terry Venables' Barcelona play in the 1986 European Cup Final at his club's Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium, he wanted his own slice of the British pie.

Rangers legend Jock Wallace didn't speak a word of Spanish, but he did have a holiday home on the Costa del Sol. Rojas found an interpreter: a Spanish restaurant owner in Leicester, where Wallace had managed.

Things started badly as Wallace, waiting at traffic lights, was robbed of a book containing 25 years of notes and training session plans. His wife, Daphne, was so spooked that she went home, never to return. Wallace signed Rangers winger Ted McMinn for company as much as anything, especially as the new man promptly injured himself playing squash.

One of the pair's favourite watering holes lay on the other side of the Jardines de Murillo park, a notorious after-dark gay hangout.

"He believed they were less likely to attack couples, so he'd take my hand and mince through as best he could," recalled McMinn, showing all the tact you'd expect from a 1980s footballer. "When we reached the other end, he'd drop it like a stone, hoping no one had seen us."

Sevilla recovered from a slow start to finish ninth, but Wallace was fired five days before 1987-88 began, new president Luis Cuervas citing poor results and "zero progress in learning Spanish". Unofficially, Wallace had fallen out with midfielder Francisco – Sevilla royalty – in pre-season.

Wallace's trust in youth is his greatest legacy. "He put a bit of Scotland into my play," said full-back Manolo Jimenez, who'd ultimately play more than 400 times for the club, "and made me an international footballer."



RON ATKINSON

ATLETICO MADRID 1988-89

COLIN ADDISON

ATLETICO MADRID 1989

Viewers of the European Figure Skating Championships didn't expect this. Up in the posh flower-decked seats, Nick Owen was presenting a *Midweek Sports Special* from Birmingham's NEC in January 1989 when he happened across Ron Atkinson, manager of Atletico Madrid.

Or was he? Reports coming out of Spain suggested that after just nine league games, third-place Atletico had given Big Ron the heave-ho. Sensing a scoop, Owen lured Atkinson in front of the cameras.

"This was your dream job – people are going to say you've really messed it up, aren't they?" pushed the TV-AM presenter.

"No, you're saying I've messed it up, Nick," said Atkinson, pre-echoing his 1996 rant against Richard Keys and his 'silly machines'. "Going from the bottom of the league to third position? If it was anywhere else in the world, I'd be looked upon as something of a useful football manager."

In fact, Atletico had only approached Atkinson while in the relegation zone and were up to ninth by the time he took charge, but he had good reason to be miffed. He'd been replaced by his assistant, Colin Addison.

"Well, Colin rang me on Monday," Atkinson explained, "to tell me he'd been offered my job. I thought, 'Well, there could be a few problems.'"

First among them was president Jesus Gil, nicknamed 'Mad Max' by Atkinson. The building magnate – pardoned by dictator Franco of killing 58 people when one of his complexes, made with no plans, surveys or architects, collapsed because the cement hadn't set – had replaced Vicente Calderon after his death 18 months earlier. Atkinson had been Calderon's preferred candidate but visited Gil's villa with his assistant, Addison (who had briefly managed second-tier Celta Vigo), and made enough of an impression on Gil to take over when Atletico's 1988-89 season began with four straight defeats and a first-round UEFA Cup exit.

Atkinson and Addison wanted to bring stability to a club presided over by an egomaniac who once sacked a coach for not smiling in the squad photo. They did it, too, even eliciting a tune from maverick Portuguese playmaker Futre – Gil's marquee signing – despite the language barrier.

"Most of them were learning English," Atkinson laughed. "I spoke no Spanish. I was having lessons, but I did sessions without an interpreter."

It was the former Manchester United and West Brom coach's regular trips back to Blighty which annoyed Gil most. That January journey to sell his Edgbaston flat – and take in some skating – was the final straw.

"I urged him to see the president before he left," said Addison. "I told [Gil] that I didn't like how he was ringing me and not Ron, and as soon as I put the phone down, I told Ron. He knew what was coming and told me to take the job if I was offered it. There's no animosity." Yet Atkinson wrote furiously in his autobiography about being "stabbed in the back". He also took Gil to court to get his maximum £150,000 payoff.

Staying true to type, Gil informed Addison that in the summer he would either be relieved of his first-team duties or act as assistant to the incoming Javier Clemente. The president forced Addison to tell Clemente his tactics for the Copa del Rey semi-final against Real Madrid. "I've been in the game for 30 years and I don't need tactical help from anyone," Addison huffed. Atletico lost 2-0 and Gil fired him three weeks early.

Addison surely would've agreed when Atkinson later said, "It was like being in a soap opera". However, the two didn't work together again.

With no side likely to reveal the truth any time soon – both coaches too proud, Gil too dead – the final word should go to TV-AM's Nick Owen, using all of his experience to segue effortlessly back to the figure skating.

"With Ron apparently frozen out in Madrid," Owen winked, "let's return to the ice rink here at the NEC." What a pro. ▶



JOHN TOSHACK

REAL SOCIEDAD 1985-89

REAL MADRID 1989-90

Spain first caught 'Toshitis' in 1985. In truth, they've still got it: John Toshack's tortured metaphors are just lying dormant in the Spanish game's subconscious until someone recalls Tosh railing at his side playing "like chickens with no heads", brushing off flak as "water on the back of a duck" or calling La Liga his "pan y mantequilla" (bread and butter). Spaniards don't really eat butter, let alone spread it on bread. So, imagine Mauricio Pochettino confusing journalists with his talk of trainspotting cows and you're somewhere close.

Of course, Toshack's Anglo-Spanish idioms were merely the byproduct of an old-school manager. And this was one old-school manager who Real Sociedad and Real Madrid still recall with the sort of eye-rolling fondness reserved for a gruff uncle who can seldom be reasoned with.

Real Sociedad fell for the Welshman in 1985, after he had led Sporting to second place in Portugal. The Basques had won back-to-back Spanish league titles in 1981 and 1982, only to spend the next three seasons repeatedly falling just short of European qualification, and they wanted Toshack's iron rod to restore the glory days.

The Cardiffian loved San Sebastian life. He still refers to the club as 'my Real Sociedad' and only recently sold his house in the region. The Basque Country is Spain's rainy 'other' in a similar way to how Wales sits within the United Kingdom, and Toshack relished the plucky underdogs tag, especially after losing Spain No.1 goalkeeper Luis Arconada – the team's eyes and best on-field communicator – to a six-month injury in his first game.

"There was so much space between the reserve keeper and the centre-backs and nobody was talking," said Toshack, who resolved to introduce Spain to a back three, much to the chagrin of supporters. "After a few games, I solved the problem by moving my captain, Jon Andoni Larranaga, in between two centre-backs and making it his job to do what Arconada did: shout!"

Pragmatic, logical and successful – it was a very Basque solution. He was tough on his players, too. After a Copa del Rey defeat to Real Oviedo in November 1985, he woke them at 4.30am – two and a half hours after they'd gone to bed – in order to return by bus to San Sebastian, and then made them train as soon as the coach arrived at Zubietta.

Toshack's men finished seventh in his first season and won the following year's Copa del Rey on penalties against Atletico Madrid, thanks to the goalkeeping heroics of a fully-fit Arconada. Toshack, who had won three league titles, two UEFA Cups and the European Cup as a player, later called it "the most memorable night of my career".

La Real were 90 minutes from defending their Copa del Rey crown in 1987-88, winning 4-0 at the Bernabeu en route to the final, and finished second to part-namesakes Madrid in La Liga. With attacking midfielder Jesus Maria Zamora providing the same goal threat he had when firing the club to those earlier titles and a 24-year-old Jose Maria Bakero up front – he'd later be a key cog in Johan Cruyff's European Cup-winning Dream Team with Barcelona – Toshack's 3-5-2 was a match for anyone.

When Leo Beenhakker announced he was to step down in the summer of 1989, Real Madrid talked Tosh. Underpinned by *La Quinta del Buitre* – the so-called 'Vulture Squadron' of youth-team graduates led by Emilio Butragueno – Los Blancos had won four successive league titles and picked 'John Benjamin', the Spanish press mistaking Toshack's middle name for his surname, to deliver a fifth.

He wasn't a particularly popular choice, his Real Sociedad side having become known for their defensive strength and direct tactics. Nor did it help that Toshack brought the back three with him, signing Argentine centre-back Oscar Ruggeri to play as a libero in between Manolo Sanchis and a young Fernando Hierro. For Madrid, such pragmatism wouldn't do.

Toshack didn't court the press, either, and so his malapropisms were now deemed unseemly and unbecoming instead of endearing by a fourth estate starved of access to the country's biggest club. He was soon dubbed '*El Antipatico*' – the obnoxious one.

One particular *faux pas* came when Toshack was asked who would play the following weekend after an insipid draw at Castellon early in his reign. "*Los mismos cabrones de siempre*," he replied. 'The same dickheads as always'. It was a phrase borrowed from Bill Shankly but completely lost on the Spanish.

"I sweat more on the bench than some of the players do on the pitch," Tosh huffed. "He sweats more because it's hot and because he's fat," countered his ostracised right-back, Julio Llorente.

When that goalless stalemate was followed by another at Mallorca, then a European Cup exit to Milan, Toshack was under severe pressure.

"I was heavily criticised," Toshack later recalled. "But we went on to score goals with a formation that's now very fashionable."

Did they ever – a record 107 of them, in fact, and that was just in the league. Hugo Sanchez scored 38 to equal Telmo Zarra's 39-year record for the most goals in a single Liga season, every one of them with just one touch. Madrid went unbeaten from early November until the end of the season and won that fifth consecutive title with five weeks to spare.

"You don't fall out of a tree and just win trophies with this team," Toshack later mused. "I said to myself, 'It is just as well you've won La Liga, because you know who would've got the blame otherwise.'"

Sanchez, meanwhile, commented that Toshack's side "was the best version of a team that marked an era".

But there was trouble brewing.

Below "Look, lads, there's a pig flying over the top of the ground over there!"



OF ALL THE BRITS WHO MANAGED IN SPAIN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE '80S, IT WAS TOSHACK WHO HAD THE GREATEST INFLUENCE

Believing Butragueno's homegrown cabal wielded too much power in the Bernabeu's corridors of power, Toshack wanted to break up what remained of *La Quinta* (Miguel Pardeza was already gone) and refresh his squad. He did bring in Romanian playmaker Gheorghe Hagi, but only Rafael Martin Vazquez left, as president Ramon Mendoza sided with Butragueno, Michel and Sanchis, the squad's most influential members.

When results went south, *La Quinta* began briefing against Toshack, who responded by blowing the lid off their saintly *madridismo* status.

"Sanchis is the worst person it has ever been my misfortune to meet," said the manager in November 1990, after a 2-1 defeat to Valencia. It was his final day in office – Mendoza fired Toshack immediately.

Yet, of all the Brits who followed Venables to Spain in the second half of the 1980s, it was Toshack who had the greatest influence. He returned to his first love, Real Sociedad, for three years from 1991 and then again in 2001, as well as taking charge of Deportivo La Coruna and Real Murcia as a kind of short-term fixer – the Spanish Sam Allardyce.

He even went back to Real Madrid in February 1999, as new president Fernando Sanz was desperate to bring discipline to a squad of egos still

licking itself after winning the previous season's Champions League, the club's first European crown for 32 years. Somewhat awkwardly, Sanchis was still there, and Toshack lasted only until November.

He did, however, have time to deliver one final 'Toshism' – the one with which he will forever be associated in Spain.

After Toshack publicly criticised Albano Bizzarri for the reserve goalkeeper's errors in a come-from-behind 3-2 win at Molde in the Champions League, president Sanz demanded his coach apologise. "*Es mas facil ver un cerdo volando sobre el Bernabeu a que yo rectifique*," said the Welshman in his next press conference. Or: 'You are more likely to see a pig flying over the Bernabeu than get me to apologise.' No, that doesn't make any sense in Spanish, either.

The next day, Madrid-based sports daily *Marca* mocked up a cartoon pig floating over the ground. Sanz, dying of shame, pulled the trigger.

"John Benjamin Toshack," smiled the man himself in an interview last year with the same paper. "*Un libro abierto*."

'An open book'. It took him 32 years, but he had finally found an idiom that works in Spanish and English. ¡Viva Toshitis! ♦



COMMENTATORS



SAY!!!



We're used to hearing commentators soundtrack the game's best (and worst) moments, but how do they avoid fluffing their lines, what's it like going 'up the ladder' and did one of the early pioneers really also manage Arsenal?!



ARSENAL BOSS... AND TV'S FIRST COMMENTATOR

When he wasn't winning trophies, George Allison was acting as a television pioneer

Jonathan Pearce was not in the running to replace Arsene Wenger at Arsenal this summer. Had he been around 84 years earlier, though, the bellowing BBC man may well have been a contender.

Football's first ever TV commentator was a gent named George Allison, a popular radio mic man who just happened to also be Arsenal's manager. Allison began his career as the greyhound racing correspondent for *Sporting Life* but also wrote articles for Arsenal's matchday programme, and his association with the Gunners led the BBC to offer him radio commentaries, for which the Darlington-born Allison adopted a suitably posh accent. Then Herbert Chapman died suddenly in January 1934 and Allison was unexpectedly appointed manager at Highbury. Despite his inexperience, he won the league with Arsenal in 1934, 1935 and 1938, as well as the FA Cup in 1936.

It was while Gunners boss that Allison broke into TV. The BBC had launched its television service in November 1936, but their initial broadcasts could be received only by viewers in close proximity to the transmitter at Alexandra Palace. That tower could be seen from nearby Highbury, and when Arsenal were chosen to host football's first TV broadcast, in September 1937, Allison was an obvious choice behind the microphone. It was only a 15-minute demonstration of Arsenal players performing training drills, but it acted as a useful rehearsal.

Allison was in situ in April 1938: England 0-1 Scotland. The broadcast was called "a triumph", not that anyone more than 30 miles from Alexandra Palace could watch it. As his one commentary covered TV and radio, his wireless-friendly use of Teddy Wakelam's squared diagram (see right) must've baffled viewers.

Three weeks later, he summarised the Preston-Huddersfield FA Cup Final in a broadcast that began with "a description of the assembled crowds, community singing, and the music of the massed bands". It was a success, despite – or due to – a temporary loss of sound during the community singing. "We're doing our best," said an announcer.

Allison called the final's first half, and former Royal Navy officer Thomas Woodrooffe covered the second half and extra time. The BBC had recently suspended Woodrooffe for commentating on a naval ceremony while drunk – or, in his on-air words, "lit up" – and he was in trouble again after the final. With a minute of extra time to play and the score still 0-0, Woodrooffe announced, "If there's a goal scored now, I'll eat my hat!" Preston promptly won a penalty which George Mutch converted; cue Woodrooffe eating a hat-shaped cake.

Allison and Wakelam words Paul Brown

BACK TO SQUARE ONE?

In 1927, BBC radio and a former army captain broadcast the first live football commentary, which delighted the listening fans and possibly gave birth to a famous cliché



Picture @bbcarchive

The first live radio commentary of a football match was broadcast by the BBC on January 22, 1927. It was Arsenal vs Sheffield United at Highbury, and the man on the mic – football’s first commentator – was Captain Henry Blythe Thornhill Wakelam; ‘Teddy’ to his pals.

Wakelam, a former Royal Fusilier and rugby player for Harlequins, admitted to “very natural stage fright”. He’d fight it by pretending he was describing the game to a lone spectator through his commentary box window, rather than to a radio audience through his microphone.

Ahead of the match, Wakelam and his producer came up with the idea of distributing a squared diagram of a football pitch to help listeners follow the action. This diagram was printed in newspapers and the *Radio Times*. It divided the pitch into eight numbered sections, the idea being that Wakelam could advise listeners exactly where the ball was. This squared diagram system is said to be the basis for the phrase ‘back to square one’... although board games such as Snakes & Ladders are much more likely to be the origin.

The match, which finished 1-1, wasn’t a classic, and poor weather conditions made it difficult for Wakelam to distinguish between the players. “It was easier to form an idea of how the game was going by the ebb and flow of the cheers than by the comments of the narrator,” wrote a reporter for the *Sheffield Independent* – who had the unprecedented experience of covering a match that was being played 150 miles away. The reporter thought the squared diagram was a good idea, but said “the ball passed so quickly from section to section that often the narrator had no time to describe the play, and merely called the numbers of the sections”.

Wakelam, with the kind of cut-glass accent that would become ubiquitous on the BBC, wasn’t really much of a football expert, and his commentary (“Those Sheffield United fellows are clever with their heads!”, “Isn’t Green’s backheel play pretty?”, “Well played, Harris!”) was regarded by the *Sheffield Independent* reporter as “really the remarks of one spectator to another”. Wakelam also managed to make one particularly big on-air gaffe. At half-time, believing the microphone to be off, he asked the producer, “What about a beer?” But listeners enjoyed his approach, and praised the broadcast in the letters pages of newspapers, with one saying that it “gave a splendid idea of the atmosphere of a big soccer match”.

Wakelam’s commentaries became hugely popular. As the *Radio Times* commented later in 1927, “Nothing that the BBC has done has aroused more interest and given more pleasure than the series of sporting broadcasts that began this year.” Wakelam covered football, rugby, cricket and tennis through to the start of the Second World War and became regarded as “one of the giants of broadcasting”. In his autobiography he listed his four simple rules for commentary, which still apply 80 years later: be natural; be clear; be fair; and be friendly.

**A
RECORD-BREAKING
GOOOOAL!**

The longest ever shout of ‘goooooal’ was surely made by a South American, right? Wrong. Romanian radio star Ilie Dobre is the undisputed lung-busting champ

Have you always made a point of shouting ‘goooooal’ for as long as is humanly possible?

Until 1990, it was impossible to do it, because we were under communist rule and it wasn’t good to be seen as the expressive type. After 1990 I could really be myself on air; I could put all my passion into what I was doing. In 1992, I commentated on a cup game at a third-tier club. The hosts scored and I screamed ‘goal’ for more than 20 seconds without taking a breath. It was a world record, but I didn’t realise it at the time.

When did you first knowingly break the world record?

The first time I officially set the record was in 2011 at a Europa League qualifying game between a Romanian side, Gaz Metan, and KUPS Kuopio of Finland. I shouted for 27 seconds without pausing to breathe. That first record was a big surprise to me, but after I had set the record, I broke it again and again. I did one that was 31 seconds long in a league game between Vointa and Otelul, and I followed that with my all-time record without taking a breath: 42 seconds, for a goal scored in a game between ASA Targu Mures and Astra. I’ve listened to commentaries in South America and Mexico, and nobody shouts ‘goal’ as well as me. I’ve heard that my records have been debated for weeks on Brazilian TV – they can’t believe my performances are real. I don’t think anyone will ever beat me now. They haven’t even matched my 27 seconds one yet!

What’s the most excited you’ve been in the commentary box?

In a 1993 UEFA Cup game between Inter Milan and Rapid Bucharest, I screamed so loud, the entire stand in front of me turned. Some even applauded. And in a World Cup 2014 qualifier between Romania and Hungary, I screamed for one minute and eight seconds after Ciprian Marica scored early in the game – my longest officially-accepted record, although that one wasn’t all in one breath. It was a fantastic moment: the stadium was full, Romania were winning, and we were all very happy!

Do you have any tips for screaming ‘goal’ for so long?

It’s hard to say. I’ve never practised; I’ve never done it at home. It just comes naturally. I don’t do anything special to prepare for it – I’m just being myself. What I would say is that a very good cardiologist told me that what I’m doing is very dangerous. Your heart can stop beating at any point after 25 seconds!

WORTHY OF NOTE

The gloriously stylised match notes of BBC radio's Nick Barnes have caught the eye of fans and fellow reporters alike. No copying!

When did you start presenting your notes this way?

I started commenting on Carlisle matches in 1992, then Newcastle in 1998, and Sunderland since 2003. At first I just had scribbles on a piece of paper. Soon I made a scrapbook of my notes; newspaper journalists can cut out and keep their match reports, but radio commentary is gone once you've done it, so this was my way of keeping a record of all the matches I had covered. Eventually I laid out pages in a more formal, structured way. Now I've a notebook for every season.

Do your notes turn heads in the commentary box?

Lots of people come up to me at games, saying they've heard about my notes, asking to take a look – generally journalists, but occasionally fans. I guess it is different; most of my colleagues do their notes on a computer.

We notice you hand-draw the club badges...

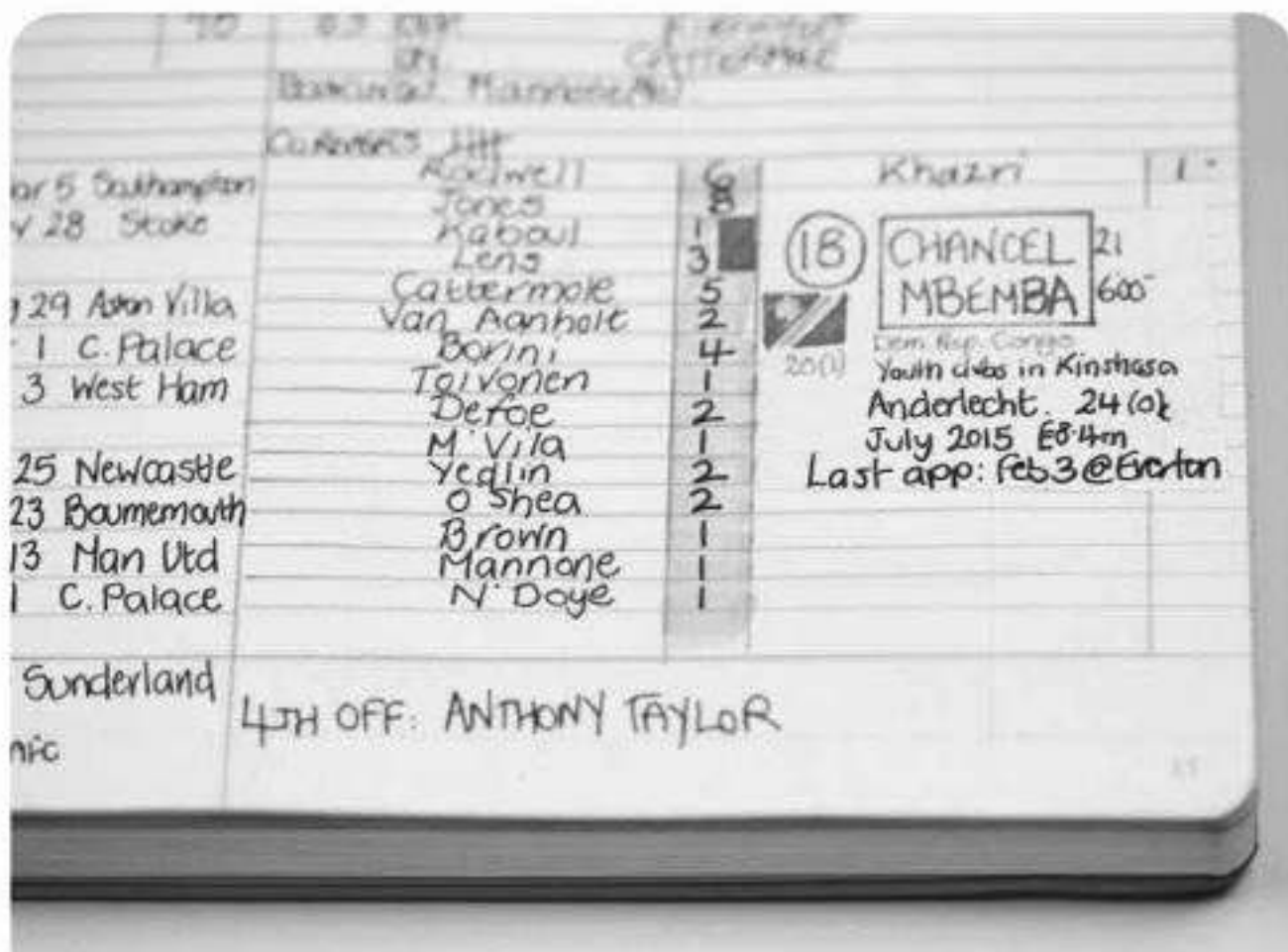
I used to print the crests and stick them into the books, but because everything else was by hand, I set myself the challenge of drawing them, too. The hardest ones have heraldic animals: I always struggle to get the two seahorses on Newcastle's the same size. Wolves, Fulham, Bolton – more graphical ones – are far easier!

What info goes with each opposition player's name?

On the left-hand page is the XI to start the last match, with the substitutes and two or three squad players below that. Confirmed line-ups on the day go on the right-hand page, but the left has a few stats and facts about every opposition player: age, height, nationality, their place of birth if there's some potential relevance, previous clubs and the number of games played, goals scored and cards shown this season. Sometimes there will be a little thing that I think will interest listeners – for example, Fulham left-back Joe Bryan's mum is an economics professor and his father's a heart surgeon.

Have you seen the standard of commentary box slip as Sunderland have stumbled down the leagues?

Most League One clubs either moved to new grounds or were once in the Premier League, so the standard of facilities is far higher now. We don't have to clamber up shaky ladders any more! At Swansea's Vetch Field the commentary box was accessed via a ladder from the stand. Mischiefous home fans shook it as you went up. A Carlisle player doing co-comms with me refused to go down after the game because Swansea's fans were waiting to give him a hard time. I also remember one time at Northampton's old County Ground, where the commentary box was completely open, with no roof, someone had hopped in and crapped on the floor!





Sunderland 3-0 Newcastle
Sunderland 1-0 Newcastle
Newcastle 0-3 Sunderland
Sunderland 2-1 Newcastle
Newcastle 0-3 Sunderland
Sunderland 1-1 Newcastle
Newcastle 1-1 Sunderland
Sunderland 0-1 Newcastle

On 12 Aug 2016, the first home match of the season is on TV 5.

Rafael Benitez 44 years old, Spain
Liverpool 2004-2010, Chelsea 2010-2012, Everton 2012-2013, Aston Villa 2013-2014, Newcastle 2014-2016

Team: Leicester City

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THE MIC MEN'S TOP 5...

In iconic moments, commentary brilliance can mean poetic elan or wild-eyed rants at the vanquished

DID ANYONE SEE WHO SCORED?

Commentators *should* keep their cool in big moments, but it's more endearing when they don't. When Dennis Bergkamp scored his brilliant winner against Argentina at France 98, all Dutchman Jack van Gelder could do was scream 'DENNIS BERGKAMP' eight times, sum up the goal briefly, and scream 'DENNIS BERGKAMP' again.

VICTOR HUGO'S LESS MISERABLE

The reaction to Diego Maradona's display against England at the 1986 World Cup was always going to depend on your stance. After El Diez's solo-supergoal, England heard Barry Davies stoically admitting, "You have to say that's magnificent." Argentine radio had something more lyrical. "Cosmic kite! What planet are you from, to leave in your wake so many Englishmen?" wailed Victor Hugo Morales. "Thank you, God, for soccer, for Maradona, for these tears, for this Argentina 2 England 0." Joke's on him – it finished 2-1.

THAT NIGHT IN BARCELONA

If most famous commentaries are one line, the climax of the 1999 Champions League Final was positively Homeric for Clive Tyldesley. "Can Manchester United score? They *always* score," sticks out, coming seconds before the equaliser, but after Ole Gunnar Solksjaer got the winner he allowed the moment to breathe – then: "Manchester United have reached the promised land."

LORD BEAVERBROOK FINALLY GETS WHAT'S COMING TO HIM

The verbal rampage of Bjorge Lillelien as Norway beat England in 1981 has thousands of imitators, but you can't beat the original. Lillelien ran through an array of quintessentially English figures – and Canada-born newspaper baron Lord Beaverbrook – before settling on one known to all football fans. "Maggie Thatcher, can you hear me? Your boys took a hell of a beating!"

MOORE REACHES FEVER PITCH

The perfect line in the right situation can't be planned – it must be about instinct. That's why Brian Moore was one of the best. You know the story: it's the final game of the 1988-89 league season; Arsenal must beat Liverpool by two goals to win the title; they're 1-0 up in the final seconds. "Thomas, charging THROUGH THE MIDFIELD," he cried, the famous Moore growl kicking in. "Thomas! It's up for grabs noooooow! Thomas! Right at the end!" A bit obvious? Perhaps. But it's also faultless.



...AND 5 TO FORGET

It's a perilous profession, commentary: make a mistake while broadcasting to millions and someone will probably notice

PEARCE GOES PSYCHO

Uncertainty reigned in France's 2014 World Cup clash with Honduras when a Karim Benzema shot hit the post and rebounded to the keeper, who clawed it to safety. Or so Jonathan Pearce thought. Goal-line technology declared the ball hadn't crossed the line when it hit the post, then a second replay confirmed it had briefly been fumbled over the line by Noel Valladares. Goal. But still Pearce lamented, "Which replay are we supposed to believe?" leaving Martin Keown – *Martin Keown* – to patiently explain.

TIM TEMPTS FATE

Bantersaurus Rex Tim Lovejoy was providing an entirely unnecessary celebrity 'Fanzone' live commentary for the 2002 FA Cup Final, linking up with future *Doctor Who* star and ex-footballer Bradley Walsh, when he neatly defined 'hubris' as Arsenal drew near to his beloved Chelsea's goal. "It's all right, it's only Ray Parlour," sniffed Lovejoy (right). Parlour duly found both the top corner, and the title for his autobiography.

A "FINE" PAIR

Commentators often appear very pally – Jon Champion and Ally McCoist were having the time of

their lives at this year's World Cup – but not Mark Lawrenson and Guy Mowbray during the 2010 showpiece in South Africa. Lawro gave short shrift to talk of Paul the Octopus, chided his partner for failing to swiftly agree with a point, then asked if he was all right. "Fine," said Mowbray, with the enthusiasm of a child told to eat cabbage.

KING KEV'S PUT ON THE SPOT

As David Batty began his run-up for what would be the final penalty of England's World Cup last-16 shootout against Argentina in 1998, Brian Moore asked eternal optimist Kevin Keegan, "Do you back him to score? Quickly: yes or no?" Keegan barely had time to say, "Yes" before Batty missed. Moore was apparently mortified that he'd made his friend look foolish.

HAMILTON GETS SAUCY

The double entendre must be a very easy trap to fall into as a commentator, but few managed it quite like RTE's George Hamilton when Ireland faced Spain in a qualifier for Italia 90. "He's pulling him off!" noted Hamilton as La Roja coach Luis Suarez substituted Emilio Butragueno. "The Spanish manager is pulling his captain off!" Special treatment, eh?



BARRY DAVIES'

commentary masterclass

The former BBC mic-legend is widely thought to be the greatest football commentator of all time – so who better to dish out tips on how to bring even the duller of games to life?

1 FIND YOUR OWN STYLE

When I started out as a commentator, I was told I should be more like David Coleman, but I would tell those people that I'd rather be a failure as Barry Davies than a David Coleman No.2. There are a lot of very good commentators around these days, but too many of them are of a similar style, perhaps trying to please everybody. I'd like to see a few more doing things a little differently. Different styles appeal to different people – you have to accept the fact that one man's favourite commentator is another man's irritation.

2 BE IMPARTIAL

Commentary has changed to a great degree down the years, particularly by the time of the London Olympics, when the commentary was somewhat pro-British – at times probably more than it should have been, in my opinion. In football, if you're doing an England match, you're looking at it through English eyes and you're going to give a view on how things are going from their perspective, but that doesn't mean you can't pay due credit to the opposition. For quite a long time in the early part of my career, there were a lot of matches against Scotland, Ireland and Wales – we had one or two Scottish producers, and if I referred to England as 'we',

they would in no uncertain terms ensure I didn't do so again! When I've argued this in the past, people have mentioned the line, "Where were the Germans, and frankly, who cares?", which I used during the hockey final between West Germany and Great Britain at the 1988 Olympics. I suppose I was guilty, but at the time I didn't think about the effect of saying, "Frankly, who cares?"

3 DON'T GET TOO CHATTY WITH YOUR CO-COMMENTATOR

There are many more co-commentators nowadays and there's much more talking on television than there used to be, which, in my opinion, isn't necessarily a good thing. The viewers have their own opinions and need time to mull them over, rather than feeling as if they are party to a conversation between two other people. Down the years, I've said to one or two co-commentators, "If you said half as much, you would actually achieve twice as much, because people would be able to take in all the technical points you are making." That was where Trevor Brooking was so good. Compared to the modern guys – who are all experts on the game, of course – he would say far less. I also enjoyed working with Mark Lawrenson, who had a lot of great one-liners. The thing that disappoints me is that the commentator often feels he has to follow up that line, when he should just let it linger a little longer so that viewers can take it in and appreciate it.

4 TRY TO MIX UP YOUR DESCRIPTIONS

It's good to avoid repeatedly describing things in the same way, but every commentator is guilty of it. I've watched goal compilations and heard myself say, "Oh, I say" three or four times in one sequence. I was always conscious of repeating phrases. I'd tell the producer's assistant, "If I say that again, please scream at me, because I've used that line three times in the last four or five minutes."

5 LET THE DRAMA SPEAK FOR ITSELF

It's important to be able to judge when a moment doesn't need the viewer to know all the facts and stats. For example, when Jamie Vardy scored against Manchester United and broke that record [for scoring in the most consecutive Premier League matches] you needed to say that he had broken the record, but I'm not sure that you need to give all the finer details. All of that can come afterwards, but not the second the ball is in the net.

6 WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

You should definitely avoid eating anything that gives you indigestion, that's for sure. There is a little bit of a footballer's thinking in this: you want to be at your fittest and sharpest for the 90 minutes that matter. That said, I didn't always have much say – *Match of the Day* used to provide lunches, and we weren't exactly presented with a menu beforehand...



STOP

MILKING IT,

LEON!



Leon Bailey has defied the odds to become one of Europe's hottest properties – neither an international dispute, nor kidnapping, have halted his rise. It's not just cattle keeping tabs on the Bayer Leverkusen star's next mooooooooooove...

he sounds and smells of cows grazing in an adjacent field are more than a little distracting, while Leon Bailey takes a moment to reflect on the journey that has carried him from a childhood in the Caribbean to becoming one of Europe's most talked-about young footballers.

"This was the first place we came to," the Jamaican tells *FFT*. He scans the landscape, craning his neck to gaze at the mountains of Kaprun, Austria.

This may seem an unusual location to meet a Kingston-born Bayer Leverkusen starlet, but as well as playing host to the German club's training camp, the scenic spot is also not too far from Bailey's first European home. Of many.

He's still just 21, yet Bailey has already been on a long and winding road to the Bundesliga; a journey that has not only taken in Austria, Belgium, Slovakia and Germany, but has included international disputes, government raids – and even the occasional kidnapping.

His story is complicated, but the goal has always been the opposite: Europe had the clubs that could offer him and adoptive brothers Kyle and Kevaughn environments capable of nurturing their precocious talent through teendom and beyond. Bailey was 12 when adoptive dad (and now agent) Craig Butler took him and his two brothers from Kingston, Jamaica on a globe-trotting adventure. He hasn't looked back since.

It was right here in Austria where they began – Salzburg, precisely, 40 miles away

from the cattle-strewn field in which *FourFourTwo* is photographing Bailey. You'd never know it from the relaxed demeanour of all involved – cows included – but the young prodigy has already been through far more than the average human experiences in a lifetime.

"AT FIRST, I DIDN'T HAVE WARM ENOUGH CLOTHES TO TRAIN IN"

One bag for four people's possessions. A tin of tuna, mayonnaise and bread for dinner, shared. A hostel. A bus. A muddy field. Yet another hostel. Repeat. Over and over.

Salzburg in February wasn't like Kingston, but it was the first stop on Butler and his boys' European tour, the setting for their first taste of rejection after initially begging for a trial at Red Bull Salzburg.

It was freezing cold, and the youngsters weren't prepared for such conditions with little to no warm clothing. It was hardly the start to life in Europe any of them had hoped for.

Butler knew that his boys had talent from his time in charge of the Phoenix All-Star Academy in Jamaica; half amateur football school, half foster home for lads in need of familial support. Bailey had lived with Butler since he was about five, and was one of around 20 kids his father adopted over time.

Just getting to Europe was challenging enough – Butler flogged his home and car to help fund the academy, and relied on a donation of



1 million Jamaican dollars (around £6,000) from a benevolent friend to finance his dream. Despite such generosity, making ends meet in a foreign land was almost impossible at times.

"It was so difficult, that I can tell you – one of the hardest, toughest parts of my life," Bailey tells *FFT*, reflecting on the early stages of his incredible journey. "It taught me so much, and it was the first time I'd really travelled anywhere, especially to a country that was so cold. I'd never experienced anything like that kind of weather before. When we came here it was freezing, and probably the worst time of my life. We had to adapt, and at first we didn't have warm enough clothes to train in. It was a difficult period for us."

But there was still that dream to chase, and the Jamaicans weren't going to leave their unfamiliar climes without making it somewhere. They had a vision, but not a plan: if they had to walk, they would, and if they had to knock on doors to earn a trial, so be it. Bailey didn't see his mother for four years until a paperwork issue forced him to return to his homeland aged 17. But what Leon did have was his brothers; though not related by blood, they stayed fiercely loyal to one another as they pursued their shared ambition.



Clockwise from left Leon has taken his game to the next level at Leverkusen; celebrating his cup winner at Monchengladbach last December; Bayern Munich reportedly tabled a €60m offer for Bailey during the summer; “Not sure about that shirt colour, sorry FFT”

“BAILEY’S ADOPTIVE DAD WAS ROBBED AND HELD CAPTIVE BEFORE BEING RELEASED INTO THE MEXICAN DESERT WITHOUT A PENNY ON HIM – HE WAS MISSING FOR FOUR MONTHS”

“We were living in hotels, motels, at the academies of some teams – various different places,” admits Bailey. “We just had this strong bond with each other; the whole Phoenix family since we were kids. I grew up with all of them in the same house and we shared everything with each other. We did everything together as a family, so that’s why my bond with them remains strong. We always say, ‘blood doesn’t make you family’, because it’s true.”

Although Salzburg decided against signing them, Bailey and his brothers wound up at USK Anif, one of the Austrian side’s feeder clubs. Reports suggest the starlet scored 75 goals in just 16 games for their under-15s in 2011-12.

All the while, the exciting youngster and his siblings were picking up new trials around Austria and beyond. A 2012 YouTube clip shows an angelic, 14-year-old Bailey introducing himself to camera during an invite-only training match for Salzburg’s brightest prospects. He was getting noticed – not only in Austria, but Belgium and the Netherlands too, with Genk and Ajax both monitoring his progress.

In 2012, Genk took up Butler’s offer on his three boys. It was Leon they were really after, but Butler wanted his family to stick together

and insisted the Belgians took them all with his continued supervision. But just as things were starting to look up for the Jamaicans, they quickly took a dark turn for the worst.

Craig had disappeared, so Leon and his adoptive siblings – as well as older brother Travis – were left to fend for themselves in Belgium, with Genk keeping a close eye on their welfare.

Butler had flown to Mexico on business, partly to help finalise some paperwork that would ratify Bailey’s place at Genk (as a 15-year-old, he was unable to legally sign a contract with the club).

In Mexico, however, Butler was attacked, robbed and held captive, before eventually being released into the desert without a penny on his person. Genk, with no idea where he was for four months, quickly stepped in to provide for the boys in their moment of despair.

“It wasn’t a healthy situation, but to prevent them all from walking around on the streets, we made sure that they could go to school and that they could train with us,” Genk’s then-technical director Gunter Jacob said at the time.

“He was walking along with his briefcase like any other businessman, in the wrong place at the wrong time,” explains Bailey, reflecting on a part of his life he would rather not revisit. “It was a while before we realised what had happened to him.

“We actually had a house [in Belgium] by then, and my big brother was taking care of everyone. He’s five years older than me, but it was basically four of us – me, Kyle, Kevauhn and Travis – at home taking care of ourselves. At that point we knew how to look after each other – we were well prepared even before coming to Europe.”

It’s little wonder that Bailey looks back with such pride at what he’s managed to achieve.

“When I reflect on everything I’ve been through, it’s just... wow,” he says, taking a moment to gather his thoughts. “I’ve gone through so much in my life already and deserve to be where I am because of the sacrifices I’ve made. There have been years when I’ve had to be away from my family, just working incredibly hard and trying to become the person I wanted to be.”

By the time Butler returned to Belgium, he was broke. With nowhere else to turn, Genk helped him get a job with one of their sponsors, but his residency was twice rejected by the authorities.

The country’s Labour Ministry caught wind of the potentially shady situation and raided Genk, though Butler had fallen out with the club anyway about the non-existent prospect of a more solidified affiliation with the Phoenix All-Star Academy. Bailey was the commodity they wanted but couldn’t get. The boys left.

Standard Liege pledged the Phoenix partnership that Butler craved, infuriating Genk. Directors of the latter refused to attend a meeting of the G5 – Belgium’s five biggest clubs – and chairman Herbert Houben publicly raged at counterpart Roland Duchatelet. Not that it mattered, as Butler still couldn’t secure his work permit, so the Jamaicans were forced to head home.

By February 2015 they were back in Europe. Bailey was 17 and Ajax were keen to recruit him, but still couldn’t tie him down professionally because of his age. Instead, Leon and Kyle signed for a feeder club – Slovakia’s Trenčín, owned by Tschen La Ling, a former team-mate of Johan Cruyff. They never reached Amsterdam. “We were only at Trenčín for a few months,” says Bailey. “The people at Ajax fell out and it never happened.” Genk swooped in August, Bailey by then 18.

It didn’t take long for Bailey to make a big impression in KRC’s first team. In fact, by the end of his maiden campaign in 2015-16 at the then-named Cristal Arena, he was already something of a cult hero after scoring one of Genk’s most important goals of the season.

Anderlecht’s goalkeeper never saw it coming. Silvio Proto was beaten the moment Genk’s 18-year-old sensation sliced his boot through the ball on the edge of the penalty box, with just a few seconds of the first half remaining. Bailey, by then crowned Belgium’s Young Professional Footballer of the Year, had dragged his team level with a moment of magic – his seventh goal of the season – to keep their Europa League qualification hopes alive.

Drawing 1-1 at the break and trailing 2-1 after an hour, Genk went on to win that game 5-2, Bailey teeing up his side’s second equaliser

“UNITED, CITY, CHELSEA AND LIVERPOOL WERE INTERESTED BUT IT’S IMPORTANT NOT TO RUSH TO THE TOP TOO QUICKLY, SO LEVERKUSEN WAS THE PERFECT MOVE”

for Thomas Buffel and then watching on as De Smurfen took charge. They eventually secured Europa League football for 2016-17, in which group-stage goals against Rapid Vienna, Sassuolo and Athletic Bilbao put Bailey on the map and Genk in the knockout stages. They would go on to reach the last eight, exiting to Celta Vigo.

Tongues across Europe wagged, and not for the first time. When Bailey had finally penned that first professional contract with Genk in August 2015 – crucially, former youth team coach Dimitri de Conde had been promoted as KRC’s technical director this time – they had beaten not only Ajax, but also Chelsea, to recapture the youngster they’d wanted so badly.

“Those rumours are true – Chelsea have been interested in me since I was maybe 14 or 15,” shrugs Bailey. “But as a young player you want to start on a normal level and not just go there because of the name of the club. You want to develop in the right environment; around the right minds and mentality.

“Genk was right for me at that moment – I fitted right into the youth system perfectly. That’s where I wanted to start, so I went for it.

“I didn’t expect to settle so quickly into the first team, though. As a young player coming in you never think you’ll be established so fast. I mean, I never doubted my talent and that was something I always believe in no matter what. I know I have talent and I know what I can do, so whenever I get opportunities I’ll take them.”

Nor were the Blues the last Premier League club whose overtures Bailey has turned down. When the time finally came for the Jamaican to leave Genk in January 2017, following another excellent domestic half-season to go with his Europa League group stage form, he had his pick of Europe’s elite sides. The starlet chose Bayer Leverkusen, who signed him six months earlier than planned, for €20m.

“Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Liverpool – a lot of clubs were interested,” reveals Bailey. “But the most important thing as a pro is taking things a step at a time and not rushing to the top too quickly. Because once you get there, where do you go next?”

“I believe the right timing is important, and it was the right moment to be at Bayer Leverkusen. They are a tremendous club with so much history. A lot of good players have come from there; they can get into the Champions League and are always doing well. So why not them? It was the perfect move for me and I’m happy I made it.”

So happy, in fact, that in August Bailey signed a contract extension through to 2023. “My focus isn’t really on moving anywhere yet,” he insists, despite continued speculation that he could be spirited away to Bayern Munich or from the Bundesliga entirely by England’s bright lights and big bucks. “I’m just about what’s happening right now rather than what could happen in the future. I’m still learning.”

And last season was certainly a learning curve. By his 22nd game of 2017-18, Bailey had scored 11 goals for Die Werkself and laid on five more for this team-mates. They’re impressive figures for a player still getting to grips with top-level football – particularly one who, despite

Clockwise from below
“Unbullievable skills, Jeff”; nine league goals and six assists last season made Bailey a fans favourite at Leverkusen; buddy Bolt is his beach party wingman





wearing the Bundesliga outfit's No.9 shirt, mostly plays on either the left or right flank. By May, however, Bailey had added just once to each tally, having struggled to maintain his stellar early-season form for the duration of the campaign.

"It was probably one of the best seasons I've had since becoming a professional," claims the 21-year-old, despite that drop-off. "It's an accomplishment I've dreamed of, I gained a lot of experience and it's motivated me to achieve more. Now I have to stay focused on doing even better than before."

Luckily, Bailey has some useful role models to keep him grounded – two of Kingston's finest products in eight-time Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt (below) and Manchester City speedster Raheem Sterling, both of whom Bailey calls friends.

"Usain is a very, very good friend," says Bailey, bursting into a huge grin. "We play football together, we go to the beach together, and we hang out and go to parties together. He's a good person – I've known him for a couple of years. The first time I met him was on the football field, actually. He's a good player, honestly! He's tall, he's big, so he's kind of slow on the ball, but he can do his thing."

"Raheem is back in Jamaica regularly; I've known him for about five years, so before I was a pro. I used to look up to him and be like, 'Yeah, he's one of us'. Whenever he was there we used to hang out and chill together, so that's basically how we started."

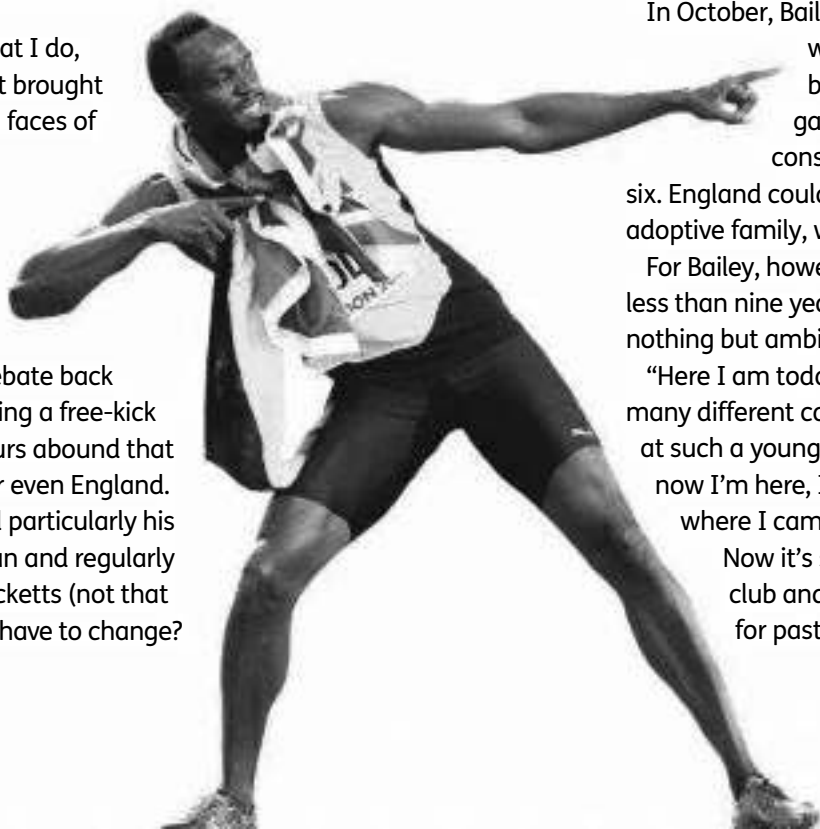
"One of my close friends from childhood brought him to meet me one day, when I was coming back from Phoenix training. From there we became great friends and got so attached because of football. I wanted to learn so much from him."

"Then I went on my path and started doing what I do, so obviously he started to see that I had talent. It brought us even closer together. Now we're the two main faces of Jamaican football, I guess."

JAMAICA? GERMANY? BELGIUM? ENGLAND?!

Bailey's clearly a proud Jamaican, despite not yet representing the country of his birth at international level. The Leverkusen starlet's international future remains a source of fierce debate back home – he played one match for their U23s, scoring a free-kick against the Cayman Islands in 2015 – and rumours abound that he could eventually play for Belgium, Germany or even England.

Jamaica have tried to cap him, but Bailey – and particularly his father Butler, who divides opinion in the Caribbean and regularly butts heads with federation president Michael Ricketts (not that one) – has his issues with the JFF. So what would have to change?



"Everything," he admits glumly. "The thing is, I love my country, but as an individual, my dream is to become one of the best footballers in the world. To do that I need to play at a high international level, and I can't do that by representing Jamaica."

"It means I've got to play for a country that would push my name onto a different platform, so that's why I don't think Jamaica is the best option for me." His situation, however, is constantly changing.

In October, Bailey accepted a Reggae Boyz call-up, only to pull out when the JFF "didn't keep their end" in also selecting brother Kyle. Jamaica may be Bailey's only option: to gain Belgian citizenship, one must reside there for five consecutive years, while in Germany it's a minimum of six. England could be a closed avenue completely: his link comes via adoptive family, which will likely make him ineligible.

For Bailey, however, unusual obstacles are par for the course. It is less than nine years since the 21-year-old left the Caribbean with nothing but ambition to his name. He's right where he wants to be.

"Here I am today as a professional," he states. "I've been across so many different countries and experienced so many different cultures at such a young age. I've had to be strong to go through all of that – now I'm here, I'm really grateful for it. I'm proud of where I started, where I came from and where I'm going."

Now it's simply a case of working out what comes next, with club and country. Will he stick around, or once again head for pastures new? ●

PRO EVOLUTION



For a generation of fans, Adriano's stats on *Pro Evo 6* summed up the limitless potential of Ronaldo's heir. Instead, The Emperor's reign was ended by an incredible cocktail of injury, tragedy and an AK47 made of gold



This time 15 years ago, Adriano Leite Ribeiro was on top of the world. This was a footballer with the exact same awe-inspiring combination of blistering pace, startling power, nimble footwork and *Pro Evo*-approved thunderous shooting as the original Ronaldo, and he was getting a lot of people very excited. His form with Parma in the early stages of the 2003-04 season – eight goals in nine Serie A matches – was enough to earn a big-money move to Inter, where he seemed destined to become one of the biggest stars in the game. It was all but inevitable.

Yet, despite the Nerazzurri winning four Serie A titles during Adriano's stay there, his is another 'what if?' story.

After years of living a lifestyle perhaps not suited to an elite sportsman, he now spends most of his time at home in Barra da Tijuca, an upper-class region to the west of Rio de Janeiro. Sometimes he visits friends in Vila Cruzeiro, the northern Rio favela where he grew up. That's when he looks happiest, riding around on scooters with his friends and handing out free Big Macs to local kids.

Adriano is now 36, but still resembles a child, albeit one who is slightly better behaved than he once was. "There are some parties every now and then, but they're much quieter than they used to be," says engineer Carlos Almeida, one of his neighbours. "They used to get crazy, with dozens of people constantly coming and going, and neighbours complaining to the building manager. He's toned it down. He's a good boy now."

That may not seem like noteworthy personal growth, but it represents quite a gear shift for a player who has been known to drink heavily; who has had more than one run-in with the police; and who was once photographed posing smugly with a gold-plated AK-47.

His friends tell *FFT* that he could yet make a professional comeback – two years after his single outing for lower-league American side Miami United – although it seems that few reputable clubs are as confident. He may have curbed his partying, but the belly he so proudly displays on his Instagram account suggests Adriano isn't massively interested in training hard enough to give his career the spectacular ending that it warrants.

Staying on the straight and narrow long-term will prove tricky for the striker, whose mental state, according to close friends, is a long way from that of the days when he would mercilessly power his way past terrified defenders and blast home long-range scorers. The confidence and power that he displayed so readily during his peak years as a player have been replaced by self-doubt and lethargy.

So where did it all go so wrong for Adriano, a striker so powerful and deadly at his peak that he was nicknamed *L'Imperatore* – The Emperor – by the Italian media and public?

One event more than any other transformed Adriano from the heir to the throne of the great Ronaldo, to a shell of a man who barely kicked a ball after his 30th birthday. It was the death of his father.

In Lima on July 25, 2004, Adriano scored a dramatic stoppage-time equaliser in the Copa America final, with a powerful-yet-precise shot on the turn. Brazil beat Argentina in the subsequent penalty shootout, The Emperor setting the tone by coolly stroking home their first spotkick. There was only one man he wanted to pay tribute to after the match. "This title belongs to my father," he sobbed. "He is my great friend in life; my partner. Without him I am nothing."

His father, Almir, had recently been suffering from ill health. Nine days after his son's moment of glory in Peru, he died of a heart attack, aged 45. It hit the 22-year-old forward like a freight train.

"Adriano had a father who looked after him a lot and kept him in line," former Inter team-mate Javier Zanetti said in an interview last year. "But then something unimaginable happened: he got a call from Brazil and was told that his father had died.

"I saw him cry. He threw the phone down and started screaming. From that day on, [Inter chairman Massimo] Moratti and I decided to take him in like a brother and protect him."

In the immediate aftermath of that final, Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira had seemed shocked by just how brilliantly Adriano had performed. "He will be making history in football,"



Above Adriano was one of the top scorers in the 2005-06 Champions League season, despite this sort of mass-marking **Below** Making his final Brazil appearance in 2010, before his late omission from the World Cup squad **Top right** "No pictures"

said Parreira. "He will play in the next three World Cups, for sure."

Instead, Adriano's career was soon completely derailed. He may have been partying every night, but he didn't have much to celebrate.

"At that time, I only felt happy when I drank," Adriano said in a 2017 interview. "I could only sleep if I drank. My [Inter] coach, Roberto Mancini, and my teammates noticed that I was hungover when I arrived for training. And if I feared arriving too late, so I didn't sleep and went training still drunk. I slept in the medical department and Inter had to tell journalists that I had muscular pain."

Try as they might, his team-mates just couldn't help him to cope.

"He kept playing football, scoring goals and pointing to the sky, dedicating them to his father," said Zanetti. "But after that phone call, nothing was the same. Ivan Cordoba spent one night with him and said, 'Adri, you're a mix of Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Are you aware that you could become the best player ever?' But we didn't ever succeed in pulling him out of depression."

Adriano was still struggling to refocus on his game when the biggest opportunity in his career rolled around two years later.

Just days before Brazil travelled to Germany for the 2006 World Cup – a competition for which they were favourites, thanks to a glittering array of talent that included Ronaldinho, Kaka and Adriano himself – he put on a shindig for his pals. "It was at a club called Quebra Mar, near the future site of Rio's Olympic Park," a longtime friend of his recalls to *FFT*. "We were all excited for Didico [Adriano's nickname among his closest friends] – we expected him to be the top scorer in Germany, win the World Cup and carry the trophy around our favela when he returned home. He was still mostly a shy, quiet boy, but to us he was a hero in the making."

The venue was selected because it was deemed safe for those members of Adriano's inner circle who had criminal records due to drug trafficking. Some were in the Comando Vermelho (Red Command), one of Brazil's biggest criminal gangs. Adriano had known them since childhood, when they'd played football barefoot on the streets of Vila Cruzeiro. But while he'd risen to be Emperor, many of his old friends entered a life of crime, and one particularly close to him was allegedly involved in a fatal police shooting.





Such drama has taken its toll, both psychologically and emotionally. “Depression and alcohol have been part of his life since those days,” continues his childhood friend, who prefers not to be named. “And now he’s more lonely than ever. His Instagram account may show him surrounded by people all of the time, but he is alone. He is mostly quiet. He lost the joy of playing football long ago.”

The 2006 World Cup should have cemented Adriano’s status as one of the game’s greats. Instead, he was a shadow of himself. He found the net twice, against Australia and Ghana, but barely touched the ball in Brazil’s quarter-final defeat to France.

Adriano was just 24 years old, yet he would make only 12 more appearances for his country, and 156 more in competitive club football. It was already the beginning of the end.

Adriano scored only six goals for Inter in 2006-07 and started 2007-08 just as slowly. Sensing the striker needed a change of scenery, Moratti sent him back to Brazil on unpaid leave. He trained with Sao Paulo and eventually agreed to join on loan for the rest of the season: he scored twice on debut, and fans queued around the block to buy replica shirts.

But things went downhill fast. He was sent off for headbutting Santos full-back Domingos, then fined by his club for arriving late to training and getting into a heated exchange with a photographer. He returned to Inter early but was back in Brazil in 2009, though this time with far more success, scoring 19 goals as Flamengo secured a first national title in 17 years. Roma took the bait and lured him back to Europe, only for his spell to last just seven months and eight appearances.

Adriano’s last great moment came with Corinthians in November 2011. He’d actually joined in March, and was seen once again as the heir to Ronaldo, recently retired. Perhaps it was grimly fitting that he immediately faced a lengthy layoff with a ruptured Achilles tendon. And, unable to strike fear into opposition defenders and goalkeepers, Adriano once again sought solace in his other passion: partying.

One friend, nicknamed Alemão, tells *FFT* that this time it was above board... relatively speaking. “Adriano drank mostly beer – alcohol was more than enough,” he says, rejecting claims that drug-taking was rife at these gatherings. “There were all sorts of drinks, women we

had never seen before and a sense that he would still be able to deliver great performances once he got back, even though he was clearly overweight and depressed. Sometimes the parties would be in his apartment, but Corinthians kept an eye on what was happening there, so sometimes we went to nightclubs. One morning, the club had arranged for him to have a physiotherapy session at home, but he missed it because we were still out from the night before.”

And yet, when Adriano finally returned after six months out, he was just in time to score his first Corinthians goal: a stoppage-time winner against Atletico Mineiro that put his club within a whisker of the title.

Played in by Emerson Sheik, the striker appeared to have let the ball run too far as he rapidly approached the goal-line wide of the six-yard box. But, summoning the Adriano of old, he unleashed a left-foot howitzer from an acute angle, cannoning the ball off the far post and into the net. He celebrated by vaulting the advertising hoardings and clumsily removing his shirt to expose a less-than-trim figure.

The strike won over any Corinthians fans still sceptical about his signing. Barely two weeks after the club were crowned champions, however, The Emperor lost his new groove.

Having left a Rio nightclub in the early hours, Adriano was accused by 20-year-old Adriene Pinto of accidentally shooting her in the hand while drunkenly playing with his bodyguard’s gun. A few days later she changed her story, saying it was she who’d pulled the trigger. Regardless, Adriano was back in the headlines for the wrong reasons.

Now, after a couple of years away from the game, is there time for an unlikely last hurrah? Leo Moura, a title-winning team-mate of his at Flamengo, still believes that Adriano could make a comeback with the Rubro-Negro. “I feel that he wants to play again,” Moura tells *FFT*. “He might be a little out of shape, but he has moderated his bad habits and deserves a chance to end his career on a high.”

Brazil coach Tite, however, isn’t so certain that a return to competitive football is the answer. The 57-year-old was Corinthians boss during Adriano’s brief stay at the club and has previously said he feels the centre-forward is unfairly scrutinised by the press, and pressured by those fans who insist he should play again, regardless of his mental state. As such, he is reluctant to talk too extensively about his former charge, telling *FFT* only that, “One of the big frustrations of my career is failing to help Adriano get back to his top performances.”

Adriano’s presence at a Corinthians match in August triggered rumours of a return, but club president Andres Sanchez – who had signed *L’Imperatore* a few years earlier – quickly put out that fire: “He was just being courteous and visiting; he is always welcome here.”

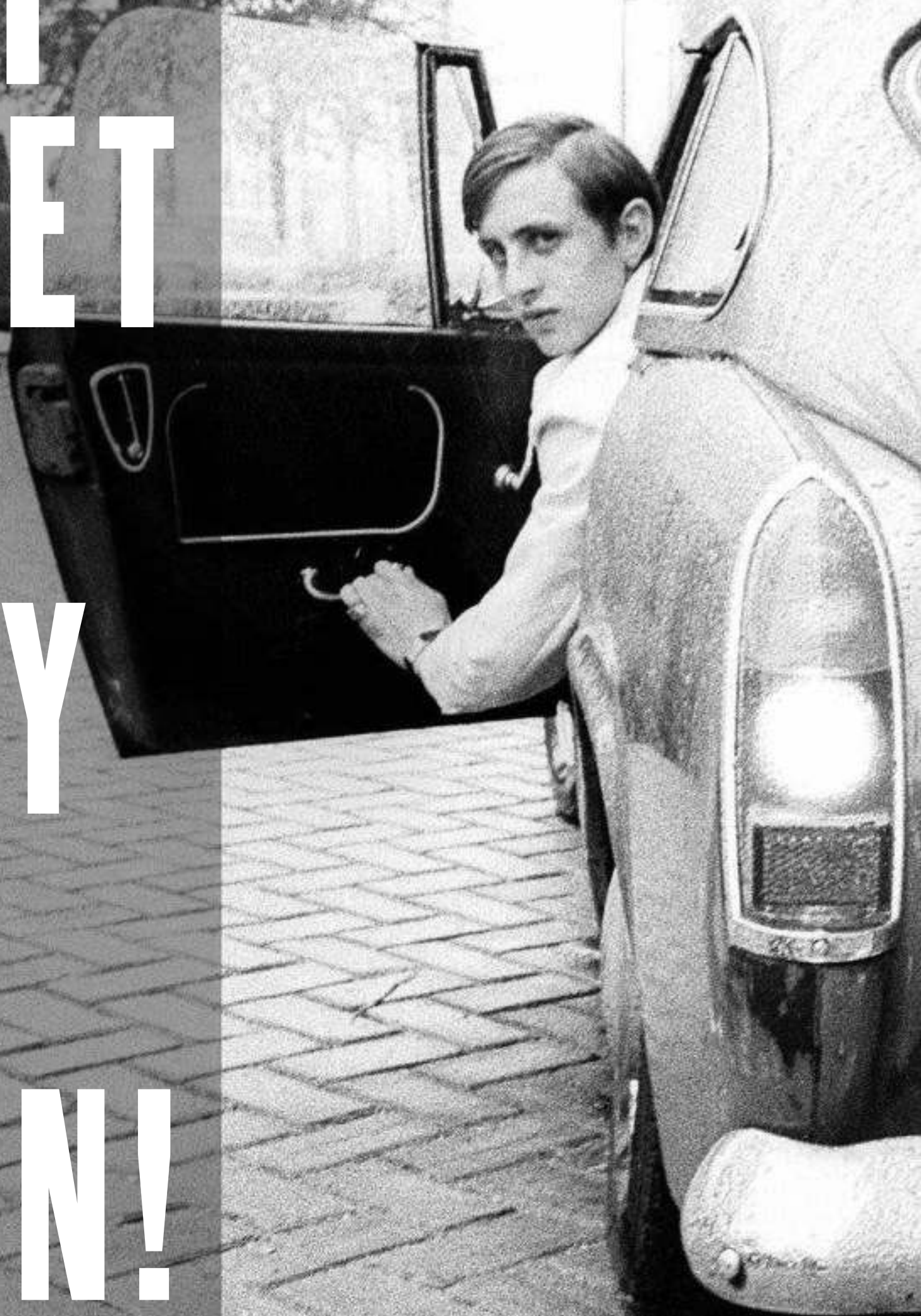
Despite the spurned chances and ‘errors of judgement’, there’s still a lot of love for Adriano in Brazil, and a real will for him to go out on the right note. He couldn’t claim to have been a model professional at all times, but circumstances have worked against him, too. “I have never hurt anyone,” he said in 2017. “The only person I hurt is myself.”

Many argue that Adriano deserves to go out with a bang. And given he’s got a foot like a traction engine, there’s always a chance. ●

PICTURE
SPECIAL

DON'T FORGET THE FURRY DICE, JOHAN!

From Cruyff's Alfa Romeo to Jimmy Greaves' Jag, via a whole lot of Mercs, *FFT* revisits the glory days of footballers in classic cars. We bet Becks' Rolls Royce Phantom doesn't have a record player in it...





Right George Best, one of the few Mercedes-Benz drivers not to be compensating for anything
Below PFA chairman Jimmy Hill receives a parking ticket in December 1960, weeks before abolishing the maximum wage for footballers – coincidence?
Bottom Ferenc Puskas would just like you to step out of the car for a moment, sir





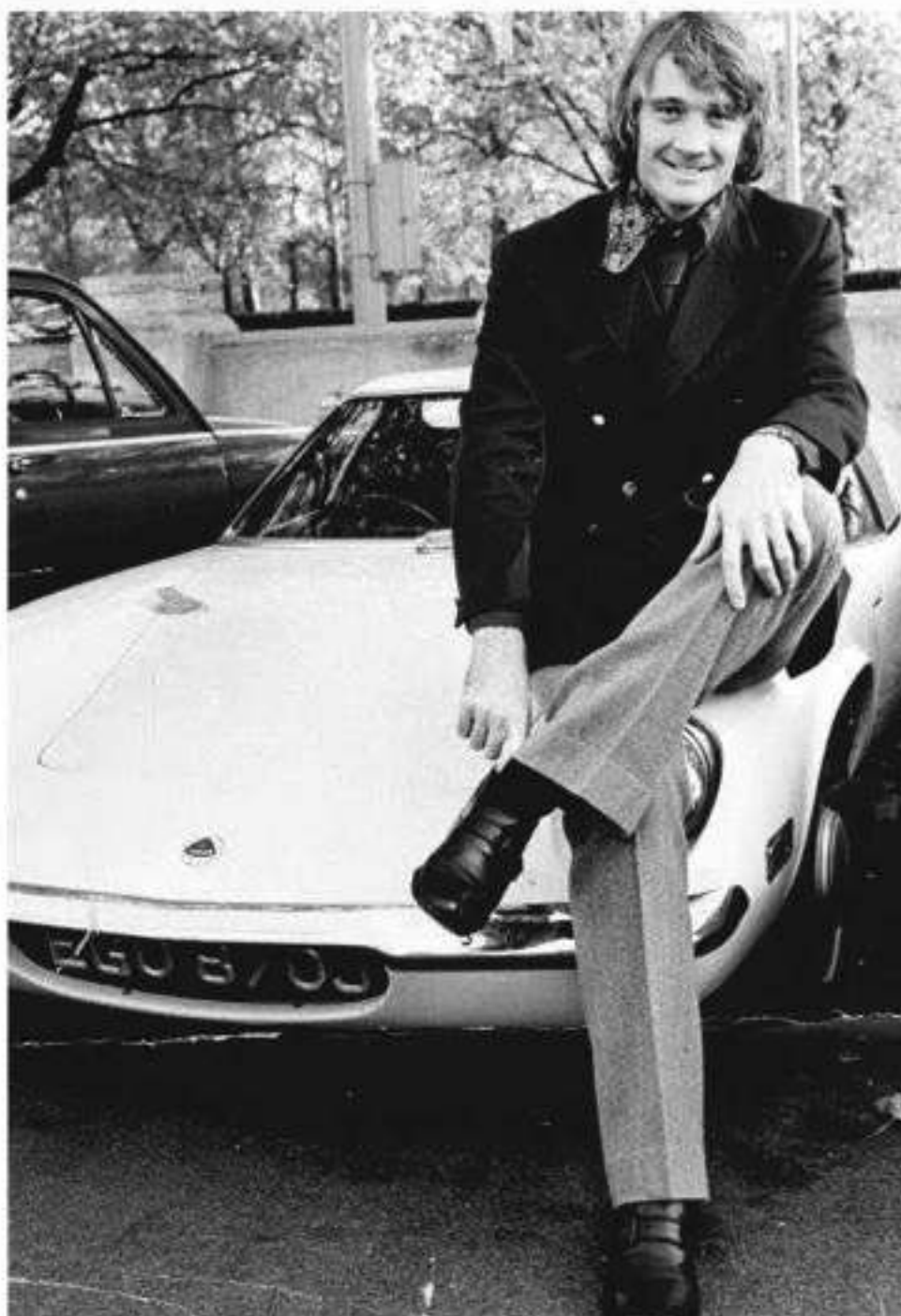
Left Tottenham striker Jimmy Greaves pops across London in 1965 to show off his Jaguar Mark 2 to his former clubmates
Below Being a part-time fashion model helps 1930s Arsenal and England captain Eddie Hapgood to buy some fancy wheels
Bottom Gunter Netzer, who once sold his broken E-type Jag to Franz Beckenbauer, celebrates his retirement with a new Ferrari



Right Denis Law gives young Harry Redknapp an idea
Below When Bill Shankly said, "If you are second, you are nothing", he was talking about street racing



Right QPR's Rodney Marsh picks 'EGO' as a personalised numberplate for his Lotus
Below We don't know what we expected Billy Bremner to drive, but it wasn't a Volvo





Left Suddenly it dawns on Chelsea's Alan Hudson that he could find clutch control a little tricky with his left leg in plaster
Above Footballer-turned-farmer Vivian Woodward takes his milk to market in 1925
Below David O'Leary, man about town





Above Trevor Francis cleans the back of his car for no man

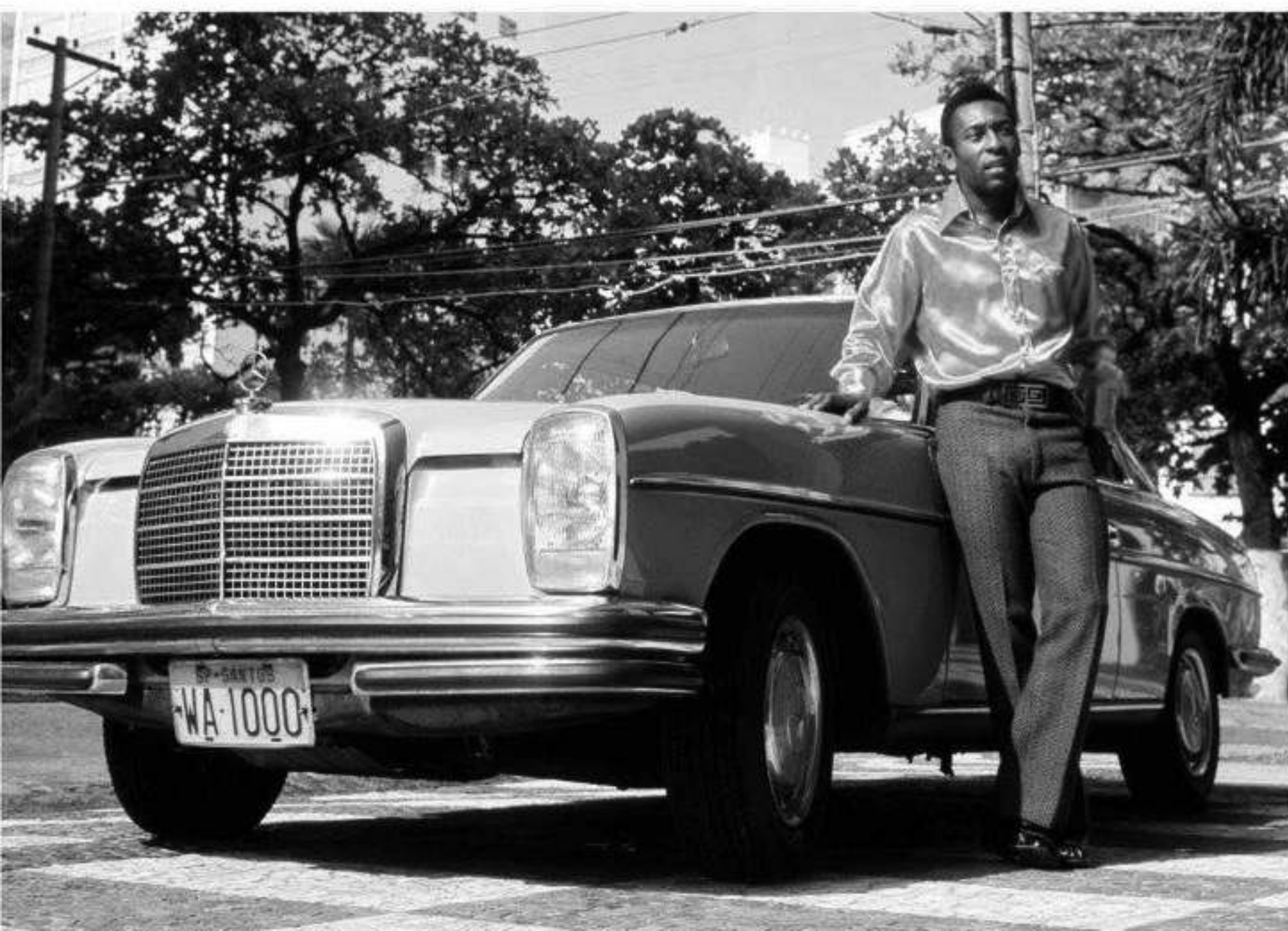
Right "What are you laughing at? All I said is that they're looking for someone to replace Sean Connery as Bond"

Opposite David Platt brings English style to Sampdoria

Below right Pele's detective series: the world wasn't ready

Below Mike Summerbee in 1967, with the expression of a man who has just realised his car has a record player







I REMEMBER THE FIRST DAY I HAD TO
KILL SOMEONE.
I DIDN'T WANT TO
BE A SOLDIER. I WAS A
FOOTBALLER. BUT I HAD
NO CHOICE

Bruce Grobbelaar won the lot with Liverpool, but only after fighting in the Rhodesian Bush War as a teenager. He shares his remarkable story – and how the harrowing experience helped him to stand up to King Kenny

t's you or them. You're crouched, tracking the enemy through the bush. It's dusk. You're surrounded by acacia trees, the low sun is streaming through the long grass – and then you see them. A pair of eyes staring right into yours. You have to act first. To survive, you have to act first.

It's you or them. You're a young footballer, arriving from a faraway country. Your new place of work is with the multiple European Cup winners, and you're among some of the best players in the world. There's a hierarchy. Senior pros want to test a newcomer's mettle. You have to act first. To survive, you have to act first.

I came to Liverpool FC in March 1981. Just weeks later, the club beat Real Madrid in Paris to win the European Cup. But the squad, housing players who had been there so long and won so much, was nearing its end. They were fantastic players, yes, but Bob Paisley and his incredible backroom staff knew that some of their legs had gone.

My first game was a testimonial for Stevie Heighway at Anfield. The likes of Jimmy Case, Ray Kennedy, David Johnson and, of course, Stevie himself were involved, but soon they would all be leaving. Bob was planning to blood a new crop of youngsters. This being Liverpool, players had been bought, put in the reserves and given time to learn – but now was their time.

I didn't have much time to acclimatise. In the summer of 1981, Ray Clemence – for me, the best goalkeeper anywhere – decided that collecting a third European Cup winner's medal meant there were no more challenges at Liverpool. Steve Ogrizovic was at the club, too, but Bob decided that I was to get the No.1 jersey. All of a sudden, I was in.

There was me, Steve Nicol, Craig Johnston, Ronnie Whelan, Ian Rush and Sammy Lee: young, new players, eager to get on but now at the mercy of senior pros, who were just as eager to make jokes and belittle any little thing they could. It was incessant. It never stopped. You'd walk into training and anything could trigger it. New shoes, a new haircut, a new shirt – you'd hear about it. And some struggled.

I could see that some of the lads hated being there. They worried every time they stepped onto the training pitch. We called the worst of them 'The Scottish Mafia': Kenny Dalglish, Graeme Souness and Alan Hansen were brilliant footballers, but my god, they could dish out the stick. Rushie and Ronnie both took a lot and it was getting to them. Early on, I said to them both, "Lads, you have to fight back. Give it back to them. Don't be scared." They had to, or they would crumble.

I had seen men crumble. I had seen it happen, in men sent to war and men who came back from war. Their experiences and what they had seen had proven too much. Men turned to alcohol; they turned to



drugs; they turned to suicide. No one talked of stress, nor conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Young men were simply sent to fight and then told to get on with their lives.

I didn't want to be a soldier. Sport had been my passion from a very young age and I just wanted to play football. As a teenager I had played for a white team in Rhodesia but moved to a predominantly black team called Matabeleland Highlanders, where the club hero was a witch doctor. Before games, we would be taken to a garden. A black man would come out of the house all dressed with feathers in his hair and wearing the skin of a leopard over his shoulders, with a skirt of beads and bells that would jangle against his legs.

Us players would take off our clothes and stand there in a circle while the witch doctor would hold a bucket of water in one hand and the tail of a goat in the other. He would dip the tail in the bucket – at the bottom of it was cow dung and grass – and he'd sprinkle each player with it. Then we'd go and get our kits on, head to the stadium and play. If we won, the witch doctor was the star. If we lost, then you wouldn't see him and we'd get all the grief from the supporters.

I fell out with the manager at the next team I played for, and so I decided to move to South Africa, where I could play despite having a contract in Rhodesia. That move ultimately didn't happen, though. My mother, a very strong woman, knew I'd have to do my national service at some point, so she marched me down to the local barracks to see when this would be happening.

"Six months' time," the sergeant told us.

"In six months' time I'll be surfing in Durban," I said, cockily.

"Actually, there's a space to come in tomorrow morning," he replied, wiping the smirk right off my face. At that point, my mum grabbed a pen and signed me up. There and then, I was a soldier.

My mum's thought was that it was better to get it over and done with. She was right, and at first I just got on with learning my new trade. For six weeks we trained, but then every weekend for the next six months we had to do our marches, not to mention long, hard runs. It wasn't my idea of fun. Fortunately, I found a way out.

If I was part of a sports team, I could get away with playing for them instead. It was rugby season, so we cobbled together a rugby team. I was the fly-half and a good kicker, and we actually did pretty well. When that season ended, I started a baseball team for the baseball season. Instead of doing gruelling 75k runs every weekend, I was playing sport and enjoying a couple of beers. We would come back and our fellow soldiers would grumble, "You bastards."

But that's where the fun stopped.

By now, the Bush War was raging, and in 1975 I was sent to battle. At first I was conscripted for border controls, and that was all quite relaxed – just checking people who'd come over in their cars, perhaps confiscating some chocolate or cigarettes. Then, one day, we got mortared by the other side and things changed. People around me were injured and it suddenly all felt very real.

Our captain, Captain Taylor, decided that our company should be a mobile unit, which meant that 20 of us had to go for tracking-skills training, 20 for medical training and 20 for signals training. Only 10 of us made it as trackers, and I was among them. Then we went for survival training, being taught how to survive if or when we got captured. We learnt from people who had been in the SAS, who were able to teach us how not to give away your regiment and how to cope psychologically with questioning and torture. And then we were prepared, and dropped into battle. Literally.

• • •

You're in groups of five. The helicopter flies you to an area where they believe the enemy is operating. You're being dropped into gunfire, so you're getting shot at from below as you slowly land. I've seen machine gunners shot in the foot. Often you're forced to work in groups of three until the guys who have been wounded can be replaced, but you just get on with it. Your job is to locate the enemy and track them through the bush.

I remember the first day that I had to kill someone. It's not like it is in the movies.

As the stick leader – meaning the main tracker – I am out in front. One day, early on, suddenly there's the enemy, right in front of me.



"THEY RIDICULED MY ACCENT, MY STORIES ABOUT THE WAR, BUT I GAVE IT RIGHT BACK. I HAD SEEN TOO MUCH TO LET IT GET TO ME"

Left Not even a flying Brucie could keep every shot out of the Reds' net
Above Winning the 1986 FA Cup Final's Merseyside derby brought Grobbelaar the ninth of his 13 major trophies with Liverpool

He's in camouflage, with his rifle ready and his eyes locked on mine. My heart is pumping, blood pounding in my ears. I have to act first – and I do. I pull the trigger and I drop, feeling relief that I hit him before he hit me. Suddenly there's rifle fire everywhere and I am just hoping it's not my turn.

Only later do you realise the full effect of what you are doing. Our regiment had to pick up all of the bodies, be they our own or that of the enemy. It was an order, because the army could gain a lot of information from the dead and get an idea of what regiments were where, giving them valuable intel. I found that hard. I would go back and find a body that I had shot, and I could see first-hand what I had done to a person. It made me feel sick.

Men handled it in different ways. One guy cut off the ears from each freedom fighter – that's what the enemy called themselves – he killed and kept each one in a jar. His family had suffered and he wanted brutal revenge. I had no such hate, but I was in a war and I had to get on; I had to become numb to the situation that I found myself in.

Marijuana helped. You kill someone and then later that night, the guys have rolled a few joints and you have a couple of puffs and it helps you to forget. It still triggers something in the brain, though. Years later I was in Cape Town, having a few puffs on a joint, and it did something to me. I thought I was being attacked, and I jumped into a swimming pool. It had triggered a flashback. ▶

In the jungle, you did what you had to do to survive. You ate whatever moved; you bathed in cow sh*t just to put the enemy off your scent; and you killed. I couldn't tell you how many men I killed. But, suddenly, one day it's all over. You've done your bit, and you just thank your lucky stars that you made it out of there alive.

It wasn't over for everyone, though. Some had to do second tours. Many took their own lives when they were told to do another six months. I knew two who killed themselves in the barracks toilets. I was lucky. I had football, and I truly believe that was what saved my life.

• • •

Having escaped the civil war in Rhodesia, I finally got the chance to play football in South Africa, first with Highlands Park, then with Durban City. But one day I received a letter from the government instructing me to join their army in their battle against what the South African regime deemed communism. As I had lived and worked in their country for over two years – not to mention the fact that I had a decent amount of military experience – they called me up. But I just couldn't do all that again. I had to get out, and football was my ticket.

I got a trial at West Bromwich Albion. I loved being there. Ron Atkinson was the manager of an exciting team, with Cyrille Regis and Laurie Cunningham among the players. There was just one small problem: I couldn't get a working visa.

I didn't realise it at the time, but the fact that my grandfather had been born during the Boer War in a Cape Town fort – a British stronghold and, by law, British soil – meant I was eligible for a British passport. If I had known that at the time, I think I may well have stayed at The Hawthorns, and maybe all of those medals I would later win at Liverpool would have been lost. Or maybe West Brom would have won them all instead!

Anyway, just as I thought I was going to have to go back home and 'get a proper job', as my mother often said, an opportunity came up to play in Canada for the Vancouver Whitecaps. I got better as a goalkeeper, playing against the likes of Pele, Johan Cruyff, George Best and Franz Beckenbauer, but I wasn't a regular and it was decided that I should play in England where I could improve further.

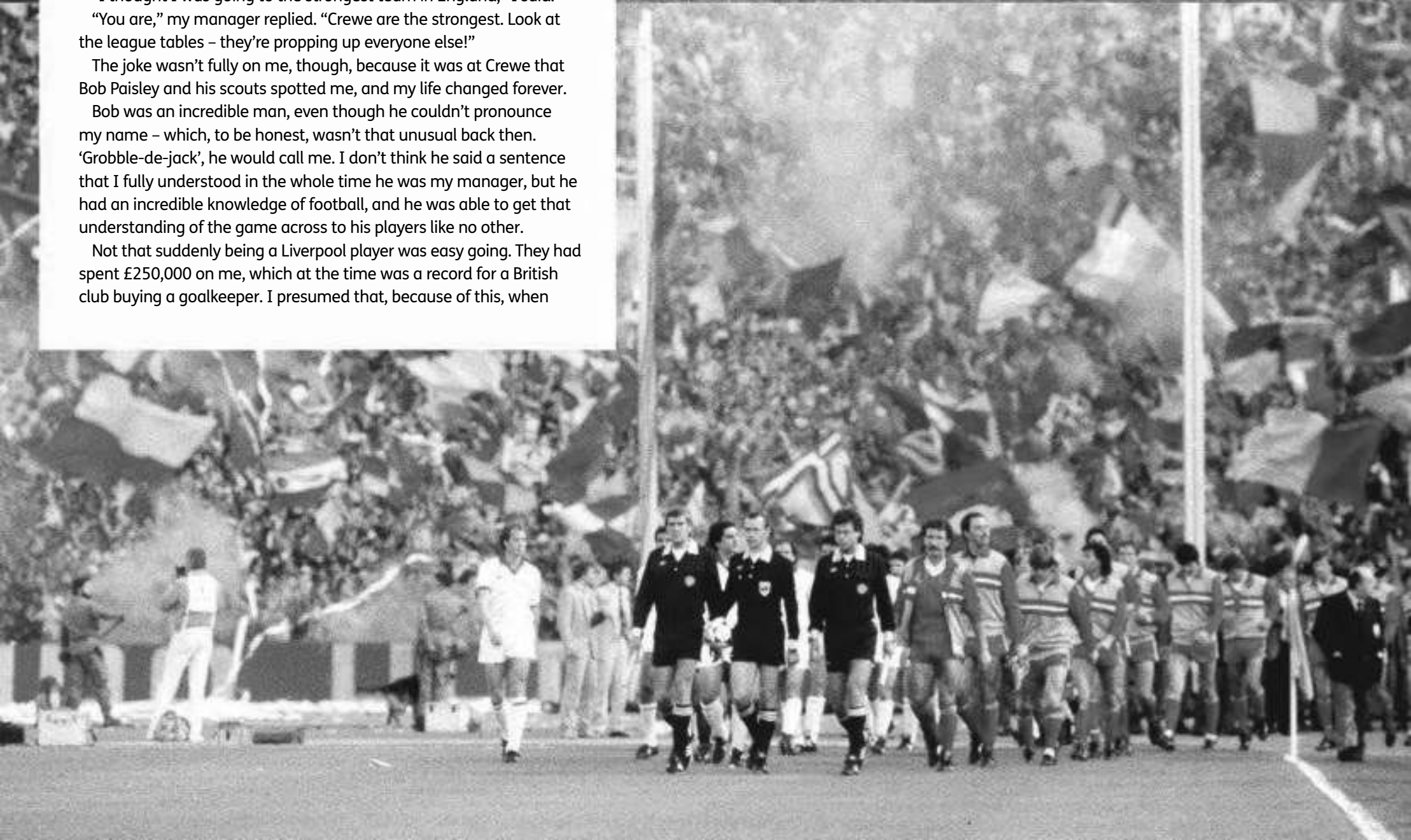
I was told I would be playing for the strongest team in England. Then I discovered that my loan move was to Crewe Alexandra.

"I thought I was going to the strongest team in England," I said. "You are," my manager replied. "Crewe are the strongest. Look at the league tables – they're propping up everyone else!"

The joke wasn't fully on me, though, because it was at Crewe that Bob Paisley and his scouts spotted me, and my life changed forever.

Bob was an incredible man, even though he couldn't pronounce my name – which, to be honest, wasn't that unusual back then. 'Grobble-de-jack', he would call me. I don't think he said a sentence that I fully understood in the whole time he was my manager, but he had an incredible knowledge of football, and he was able to get that understanding of the game across to his players like no other.

Not that suddenly being a Liverpool player was easy going. They had spent £250,000 on me, which at the time was a record for a British club buying a goalkeeper. I presumed that, because of this, when





**“I COULDN'T SAY HOW MANY MEN I KILLED.
BUT ONE DAY IT WAS OVER. I WAS LUCKY:
I HAD FOOTBALL – AND IT SAVED MY LIFE”**

I flew into Heathrow from Vancouver I might be met by someone from the club. I wasn't expecting any fanfare; just for someone from Liverpool to be there waiting for me, to help get me up to Merseyside. There was no one. I used a payphone and called the club. “Get a flight to Manchester,” came the curt reply, and the line went dead.

I had to find my own way from Manchester to Liverpool. I mean, I had been dropped into the jungle under machine gun fire, and I had tracked enemy soldiers through thick African bush, so finding my way around England was something I could do. But the frosty welcome seemed a bit strange. I soon realised that was how Liverpool Football Club operated. Graeme Souness had once asked [then-assistant] Joe Fagan where he wanted him to do his work on the pitch. Joe looked at him and said, “We've paid a lot of money for you – you should be able to figure that out yourself.” You were expected to work it all out. You would be tested, and you *had* to pass.

That's what the senior pros were doing. When a new player joined up with the first-team squad, the club quickly allocated an old head to show you how to be a Liverpool player. Yes, that meant taking you out for a few drinks, but there was more to it than that. The likes of Kenny were always testing young players with their banter, pushing them to see if they could handle the dressing room. They knew just how important team spirit was to the club's success and they wanted to see if a new player could handle it. I could.

I had seen too much to let what was happening get to me. I was always a confident young man – my mother and father had made sure of that – and I could immediately handle the mental side of the game. They went for me, though. My accent, my stories about the war and about Africa – none of them believed me, and they tried to ridicule me. But I gave it right back. “Who are you?” I would say to them. “Who made you manager?” They respected that. Soon, the likes of Rushie and Ronnie were giving it back, too.

The thing is, I was a very different ‘confident’. While Ray Clemence was still at the club, a journalist interviewed us both. During that interview, Ray said he had come to Liverpool and learnt from his predecessor, Tommy Lawrence, for two years before replacing him. I laughed and said, “I'll be taking your place way before that.” I wasn't being disrespectful; I just wanted to show how confident I was.

I'm sure that raised a few eyebrows. A lot of what I did raised a few eyebrows. In my new home in the city, I had a zebra skin on my floor and in the front window, so that you could see it from the street. I also had a leopard skin and a stuffed leopard head. I was from Africa – these things were normal to me. But I soon received a letter from the animal rights people, demanding that I remove the leopard or they would firebomb my house. I obliged, putting it in my cellar. I was in a new country and I respected that.

I was seen as different on the pitch, too. I liked to use my whole penalty area. I could use my hands anywhere in my area, so that's what I did, even if it meant venturing far from goal. Sure, I dropped a few, but I always backed myself. In my first two seasons, I made

Left From the horrors of war to a European Cup final, Grobbelaar's path wasn't common, nor easy

Above His Liverpool testimonial in 1992 gave the spectators at Anfield a whole new experience

mistakes which knocked us out of the European Cup. That was hard to get through. I'd stand in front of the vast Kop and hear the odd comment. In general, the fans were brilliant and encouraged me, but in the press and elsewhere, I could sense the doubters were there.

The army had taught me so much. I'd command my area as I had in the war. It was mine. This was my natural game. The defenders had to get used to my way of doing things. So, I'd whistle at my full-backs. In the bush, you never shouted, for fear of being shot, so you learned to whistle. You learned different birdsong and how to use the sound of crickets at night. Soon, Alan Kennedy at left-back knew to respond to one sound and Phil Neal at right-back knew to respond to another.

I settled into life at Liverpool and the English game. I won trophies – lots of them. I became a senior player, dishing out the stick to young, new footballers while, I hope, ultimately helping them to settle in. I have recently written a book about my life and gone over the many wonderful and far-from-wonderful things I have seen.

War gave me a sense of perspective; a sense of life. I can't undo what happened, nor unsee the horrors I witnessed, but war taught me how to live for today. You can't ever worry about the past. ●

'Life in a Jungle: My Autobiography' by Bruce Grobbelaar is published by deCoubertin Books and available to buy now

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ACTION REPLAY

Action Replay editor Andrew Murray

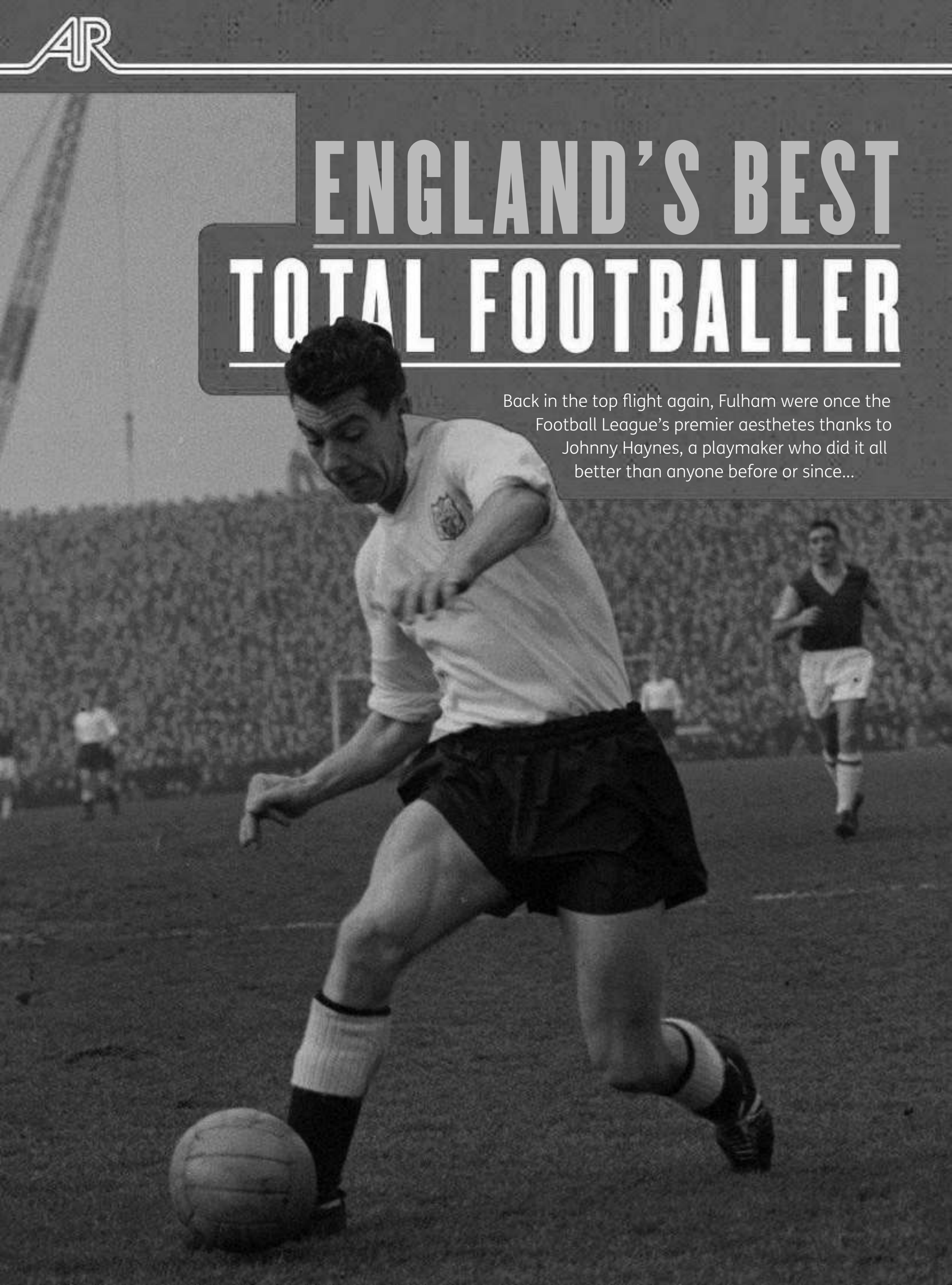
Johnny Haynes: Fulham's
Total Football totem p96

Howzat?! Why a cricketer
inspired the shin pad p99

THE STORY
BEHIND
THE SHOT

ADAMS' APPLES

It doesn't take a genius to work out why Cox's would ask Arsenal skipper Tony Adams to promote the start of English apple season in September 1998. However, Tone wasn't always so happy to see the fruit bowl regular. "The other night one of our players ate an apple, but I let it go," he said in 2003 while boss of Wycombe. "If I started talking about what it does to the digestive system before you play football, I'd confuse the hell out of them." Or bore them.



ENGLAND'S BEST TOTAL FOOTBALLER

Back in the top flight again, Fulham were once the Football League's premier aesthetes thanks to Johnny Haynes, a playmaker who did it all better than anyone before or since...

Johnny Haynes is hailed by many as the most creative midfielder England has ever had. Between 1954 and 1962 he won 56 caps (22 as the captain) and scored 18 goals, but is best known nowadays for becoming the first British footballer to earn £100 a week in 1961.

Shortly before Haynes died in October 2005, following a car crash on his 71st birthday, he was asked to collaborate on an autobiography. His reply? "Don't think so. Nobody knows who I am."

That isn't entirely true. Haynes is still revered at his beloved Fulham, but his legend should extend far beyond west London's leafy diaspora. This is a player who left Bobby Charlton in awe.

"I could only admire his ability to read a game," the World Cup and Ballon d'Or winner said, lauding "his immaculate passing, both long and short, and the wonderful masking of his intentions, which often sent at least half a defence running in the wrong direction."

So how did Haynes get to be so good that Pele once called him "the greatest passer of the ball I've ever seen"? His obsessive perfectionism was perfectly expressed in his favourite training drill.

It started off with a small towel being positioned near the halfway line. Haynes would stand inside the 'D' on the edge of the penalty area, with his back to the halfway line, and then glance towards a team-mate by the corner flag to play him a diagonal pass. Haynes' aim was to turn and, with one touch, volley the ball onto the towel.

"Johnny was such a perfectionist that even though the ball would land on the towel eight times in 10, he wouldn't be happy," fan Pete Grinham, who used to sneak into Craven Cottage in the 1960s to catch a glimpse of Haynes, tells *FFT*.

Haynes was also famed for conveying disapproval by putting his hands on his hips and looking pained. In training, he turned the gesture on himself if he fell below his own exacting standards.

Genius is seldom meek and Haynes' greatest flaw was that he found it hard to tolerate his team-mates' faults. His schoolmate, winger Tosh Chamberlain, bore the brunt of this disdain. Haynes would dispatch a withering look, put his hands on his hips or irately ask, "What the f**king hell was that?"

Sometimes Chamberlain bit back, and once got booked after telling Haynes to "go f**k yourself". Tosh cried, "You can't do that ref, we're on the same side!"

"It was never personal with Johnny," says Grinham. "He had a photographic memory for where players ought to be, based on what they'd practised. If they weren't doing their job, he'd tell them."

Fulham's stronger personalities – like Chamberlain, Scottish wideman Graham Leggat, World Cup-winning right-back George Cohen, midfielder Alan Mullery and Jimmy Hill – all let the bollockings wash over them.

Yet Dave Metchick, a young midfielder looking for his first-team niche in 1961, found the strictures difficult to handle. An England Youth international, he left the Cottage for Leyton Orient in 1964 after making 47 first-team appearances.

At that time, Fulham gave "a feeling of animated recreation rather than solid professionalism", in the words of writer John Moynihan. This meant that Haynes played a large part of his club football in the second tier.

"One season we scored 100 goals and couldn't figure out why we hadn't come top of the league," he later told Michael Parkinson, "until someone pointed out that we'd conceded 100 goals as well!"

One of the world's best midfielders in the late-50s and early-60s, Haynes was the creative fulcrum for both club and country. This usually worked well – in October 1958 he hit a hat-trick in a 5-0 Wembley drubbing of the Soviet Union, and in April 1961 masterminded a 9-3 demolition of Scotland.

Yet such individual brilliance could be a weakness, too. As one Yugoslav coach said, "Why is everything with England's No.10? The No.10 takes the corners and the No.10 takes the throw-ins. So what do we do? We put a man on the No.10 – goodbye England!"

At the 1962 World Cup, Hungary did just that, marking Haynes out of their opening group game and winning 2-1.

Conventional wisdom claims that he was disappointed at two World Cup finals. In 1958, playing with badly blistered feet following a gruelling campaign at Fulham, he scored once – during a 2-2 draw with Austria – but England lost 1-0 to the USSR in the group play-off.

Though Walter Winterbottom's side had been depleted by the tragic losses of Duncan Edwards, Roger Byrne and Tommy Taylor in the Munich air disaster, the nation had expected more.

The *Observer's* damning assessment, "Industry without skill", must have hurt Haynes who, as the face of Brylcreem, was slammed in northern newspapers as an overrated 'glamour boy'.

Never one to take criticism too lightly, Haynes moaned, "Everyone in England thinks we have a God-given right to win the World Cup."

Four years later in Chile, this time as captain, he had an air, Brian Glanville suggested, "of thin-skinned petulance" that alienated the press. In retrospect, losing 3-1 to eventual winners Brazil in the quarter-finals was no disgrace but, with no live coverage of matches, the public's perception of England's World Cup was shaped by the journalists who Haynes had irritated.

So much went wrong in 1962 that it would be absurd to scapegoat Haynes: Bobbys Smith and Robson had injuries, defender Peter Swan nearly died from

dysentery and goalkeeper Ron Springett was at fault for Brazil's decisive second goal after spilling a free-kick.

There was no PR spin from the Three Lions' skipper after that defeat.

"We couldn't get hold of the ball," he said, "and when we did, our passing let us down big time."

Haynes was still only 27, but he never played for his country again. Later that year, a freak gust of wind sent his sports car into the path of another vehicle on Blackpool promenade.

"Don't worry, son," he remembered the policeman who attended the scene saying. "You've only broken your legs."

While Haynes recovered to play for Fulham – leaving the club in 1970 after 158 goals in 658 games – he was never seriously considered for international duty. Past his peak, Johnny was likely too independently minded to suit Alf Ramsey's Wingless Wonders, though it's fascinating to ponder what might have been had Haynes – and England – built on a glorious run of form in 1961.

"The team that won the World Cup in 1966 was the most efficient England side of the era but not the best," wrote Tommy Docherty in *ABC of Soccer Sense*. "At their peak, the Walter Winterbottom team captained by Haynes were more skillful, adventurous and attractive."

Jimmys Greaves and Armfield agreed, the latter enthusing, "We put nine goals past Scotland, eight past Mexico, five past Wales (twice), and three past Italy."

Trouncing a Scotland team featuring the talent of Billy McNeill, Dave Mackay and Denis Law 9-3 was no mean feat. At his best as an England No.10, Haynes could read the game better than Bobby Charlton, was more creatively consistent than Paul Gascoigne, and sprayed more laser-guided passes to change a match than Glenn Hoddle.

His love of Fulham – and £100-a-week salary – fended off bids from Tottenham and Milan. The Londoners' greatest ever player still stands guard outside Craven Cottage, albeit in bronze, hands on hips, in perpetual reproach.

Douglas Jennings' sculpture captures that aspect of him brilliantly, while also obscuring the fact that, off the pitch, he was a perfect gentleman. One particular incident springs to mind.

"At a post-game function in May 2005 I joined the queue to get his autograph," recalls Grinham. "As he signed it, I told him he was very nearly, but not quite, my all-time number one Fulham player."

Haynes looked up quizzically and then asked, "Who's number one?"

"Graham Leggat," replied Grinham.

Haynes handed over his signature and smiled. "Good choice."

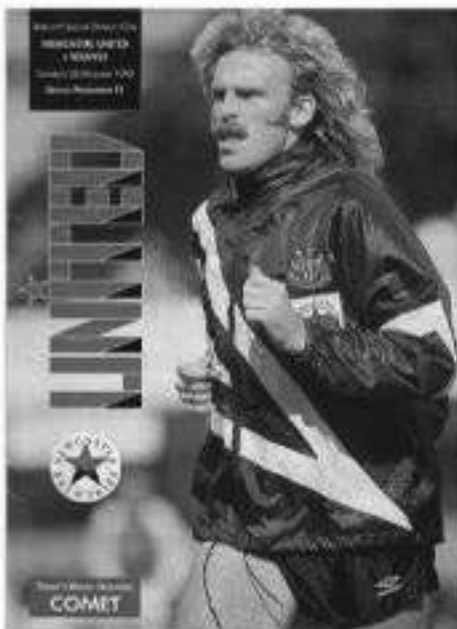
"ENGLAND CAPTAINED BY HAYNES WERE MORE ADVENTUROUS AND ATTRACTIVE THAN THE 'EFFICIENT' TEAM IN 1966"



"I'm not talking to you bastards until November"
Firebrand Bulgarian forward Hristo Stoichkov tells the
Barcelona press to stick it at the start of pre-season



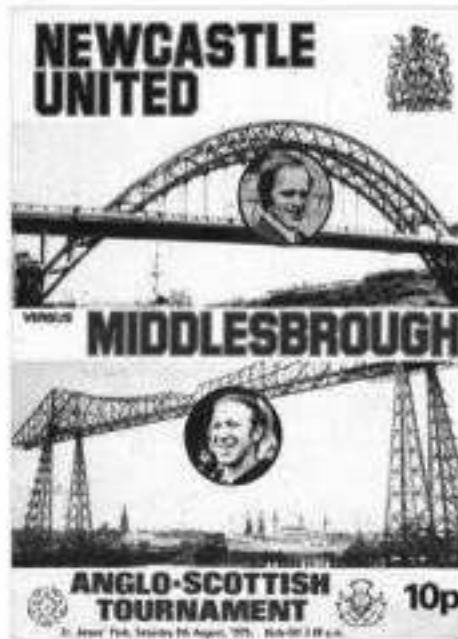
A Killer haircut
And moustache, for that matter.
Brian Kilcline remains a Toon icon.



"Fetch the sugar paper"
No photos for this European Fairs
Cup effort, just colour. Lots of it.



Battle of the bridges
It's the Tyne Bridge vs the Tees
Transporter Bridge – who wins?



"Watch your left hand, Les"
Rob Lee gets a bit more than he
bargained for from Mr Ferdinand...



Getting cosy
A sterling attempt at beating the
world record for people in a room.



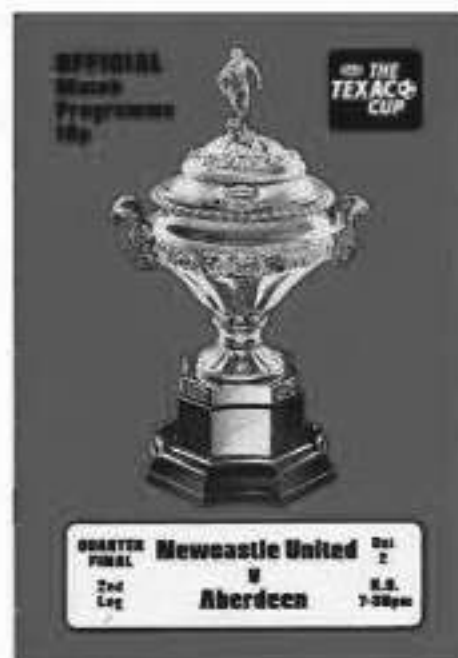
Circling the drain
What happens when you just can't
decide on a cover image? Pick five.



From a distance
No players, the manager or even
block colours. Simply the ground.



Red is the colour
Surely a red background will only
inspire Aberdeen to cup victory?



Keegan takes the lead
A greyhound named after King Kev
really is something to get behind.



Kitson's new wheels
Ever spotted 'fabulous' and 'Rover'
in the same sentence? Us neither.



GET YER PROGRAMMES! NEWCASTLE UNITED

FFT's collector Miles McClagan finds moustaches,
greyhounds and Rovers aplenty in the North East

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO...Colin
Barrett

Who?

Former Manchester City and Nottingham Forest full-back who Brian Clough signed for £29,000 in 1976. Barrett won the First Division in '78 before a knee injury all-but ended his career. He missed the following year's European Cup win over Malmö, and played only 12 more competitive matches.

That's unlucky

It got worse, too. He struggled to find work after retirement and was forced onto the dole. He later pulled pints behind the bar at The Crown Hotel in Southwell before another career move.

What's better than pulling pints? Well, Colin built and sold snooker tables in the mid-80s, until the baize dropped out of the industry. Then, after "hating" selling lottery tickets for Forest's commercial team, he did up the outside of his house. "A neighbour said, 'I need mine doing,'" said Barrett. "Then another, so I became a painter-decorator." And he's carried on doing it ever since...

JUST
THE
TICKET0 SCOTLAND
2 ENGLANDMay 27, 1989
Rous Cup

Scotland fan Damon Main

"Outside of the wilderness years – when competitive football ceased because of both World Wars – the annual Scotland vs England match had taken place since 1872. To some, especially the Scottish fans who made a bi-annual pilgrimage to Wembley, it was the highlight of the year, but by 1989 others regarded it as a chore in an already chocker calendar.

Even Northern Ireland and Wales were not involved in the Rous Cup, with Brazil, Colombia and Chile invited along instead.

Off the pitch, concerns about supporter safety just a month after the Hillsborough disaster meant both national associations agreed this would be the last annual clash between the neighbours.

Interest in the game may have been on the slide, and the Hampden Park terraces crumbling, but nearly 65,000 fans turned up. Small pockets of England supporters were dotted around the stadium, despite the FA turning down an official allocation for travelling fans.

I was 18 and this would be my second game with the Auld Enemy. It was great. The ready availability of tickets, as well as a Football Special train to Glasgow, meant I walked up to my Aberdeen ticket office, handed over £5, and that was that.

The match sprang to life on 20 minutes when Chris Waddle sent a bullet-header past Jim Leighton. Bobby Robson started Tony Cottee and John Fashanu, but it was his substitutes who I'll always remember. Steve Bull bagged England's second after 80 minutes, the last goal scored between the nations until Alan Shearer at Euro 96.

Paul Gascoigne was the other. I couldn't believe how young he looked – like a kid out of school – but he was such a talent.

The core of that side reached the World Cup semi-finals the following year, but for Scotland it was a sad end to the annual joust between the best of enemies. I was just glad to have been there."

Barrett words Rhys Noye-Allen

FOOTBALL'S
INVENTORS

SHIN PADS

Were it not for a Nottinghamshire and England cricketer's ingenuity, a lot more bones would've been broken during football's early years

KNIGHTS OUT

Medieval warriors first came up with the idea of sliding a greave between shin bones and outer armour, often decorating them with Gorgon's heads for good luck. Made from leather, cloth or iron, they covered the front and back of the legs.

HOWZAT?!

Ever at the zeitgeist, cricketers realised it hurt if you got hit by a hard ball, so strapped on pads to protect their pins. The bigger the pads, it soon became clear, the harder it was to be bowled out, until lawmakers brought in rule change 'leg before wicket'.

BIG SAMMY STYLE

Tired of his shins being hacked to pieces in 1874, Nottingham Forest's Sam Weller Widdowson – a one-time Nottinghamshire batsman – decided to cut down a pair of his cricket pads before tying them to the outside of his football stockings.

SUITS YOU, SIR

Initially sneered at, Widdowson and his pads quickly caught on and were added to the laws of the game, with shin bones the world over breathing a sigh of relief. Widdowson later became a referee and officiated the first match using goal nets in 1891.

Words Andrew Murray





THE PHANTOM SHOOTOUT

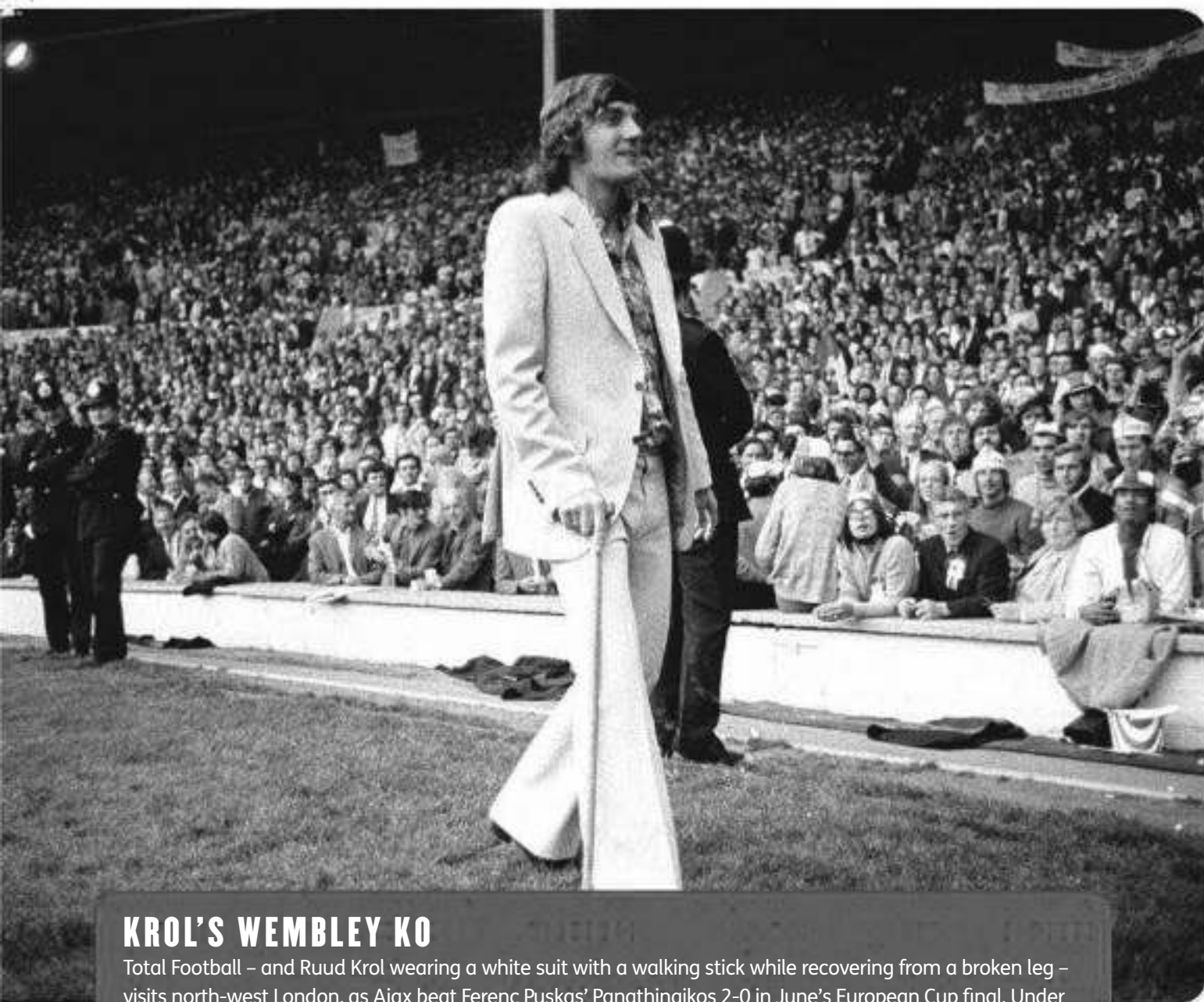
Sporting fans storm the Estadio Jose Alvalade pitch in November after Rangers miss three penalties in a Cup Winners' Cup Second Round shootout. "I remember the heads were down," said forward Willie Johnston. "Then journalist John Fairgrieve came in and said we were through!" Referee Laurens van Raavens wasn't aware the away goals rule applied, so Gers boss Willie Waddell (above) marches into the official's room with Fairgrieve's UEFA notebook. The result is overturned, and Rangers go on to lift the trophy six months later.

Words Andrew Murray

THIS YEAR IN

1971

A birthday surprise, battle to remember and shootout that should never have been – the start of the '70s was frenetic



KROL'S WEMBLEY KO

Total Football – and Ruud Krol wearing a white suit with a walking stick while recovering from a broken leg – visits north-west London, as Ajax beat Ferenc Puskas' Panathinaikos 2-0 in June's European Cup final. Under disciplinarian manager Rinus 'Iron' Michels and anarchic forward Johan Cruyff, Ajax's revolution takes root. Tragedy follows for Pana keeper Takis Ikononopoulos, who'd been promised "a week with me in Crete if he doesn't concede at Wembley" by statuesque actress Zeta Apostolou before the final. Stupid Total Football.



BOMBONERA BEDLAM

Chaos descends on La Bombonera in May's Copa Libertadores clash between Boca Juniors and Sporting Cristal after the hosts' Ruben Sune attacks Alberto Gallardo, who soon responds with a flying kick to Sune's head. Nineteen players trade blows – all are later sent off – with Boca's Angel Rojas (above) fracturing the skull of Fernando Mellan while the Cristal man lies on the pitch. Boca are booted out of the tournament and the Peruvians welcomed home as heroes, as both sides somehow overthrow 30-day prison sentences. The mother of Sporting defender Orlando de la Torre was so shocked as she watched the brawl unfold on TV, she suffered a fatal heart attack.



“FROM STAMFORD BRIDGE TO... THE KARAIKAKIS STADIUM”

Chelsea keep the blue flag flying high in Piraeus by beating Real Madrid 2-1 in May's European Cup Winners' Cup final replay, two days after a 1-1 draw. Nicknamed 'the Sponge' for his uncanny ability to chest the ball under pressure and shield it from opponents, forward Tommy Baldwin proves the Blues' key man. He creates the space for Peter Osgood and Alan Hudson to run riot against Los Blancos – who labour with 37-year-old talisman Paco Gento unable to start twice in three days – and secure the Londoners' first European trophy.



THE BEST OF (FRIENDLY) ENEMIES

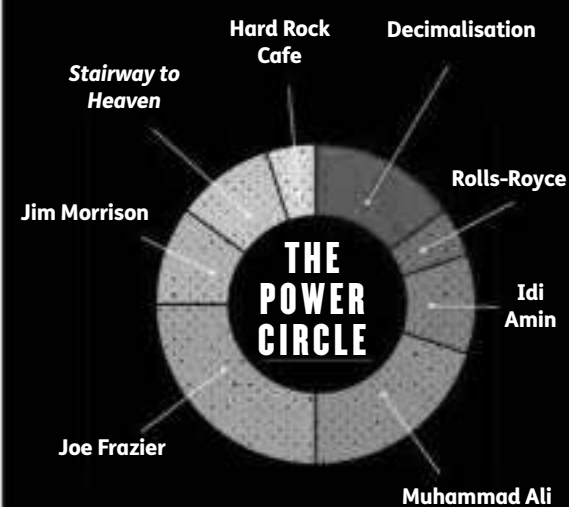
Inter and Milan playmakers Sandro Mazzola and Gianni Rivera are each made Commander of the Order of Merit in Italy in December. Existing in each other's shadow like a prototype Lampard and Gerrard, Mazzola (left) scored more goals and was a better athlete, while Rivera (right) had greater vision and technique. They seldom played in the same Azzurri team in a policy known as *staffetta*, or 'relay', en route to the 1970 World Cup Final. Mazzola had been intended as a sole recipient, but in the interests of political expediency, Rivera got a medal, too. Mazzola is said to have asked for a higher honour upon finding out.

HORST'S BIG REVEAL

His side relegated a day earlier after losing 4-2 at Koln, Kickers Offenbach president Horst Canellas invites DFB officials, Bundesliga suits and a few journalists to his home on June 6 for a party to celebrate his 50th birthday. After cutting the cake, Horst (below) releases recordings of various players offering to throw matches involving Offenbach – which he didn't accept – and relegation rivals Arminia Bielefeld and Rot-Weiss Oberhausen. Among the nine fixed games implicating 52 players is Bielefeld's 1-0 win away at Schalke, with many of Die Knappen's squad banned for life after protesting their innocence under oath. Kickers' relegation is upheld, though. Harsh.



WHAT ELSE HAPPENED IN 1971?



UP THE WALL

Unable to urinate on demand, the four members of The Who need snapper Ethan Russell to pour rainwater from a film canister to achieve the desired effect for the cover of *Who's Next*.



BEST ACTOR

Gene Hackman *The French Connection*

BEST ACTRESS

Jane Fonda *Kluge*

BEST RETURN

Sean Connery *Diamonds Are Forever*

BEST SHOTGUN USE

Michael Caine *Get Carter*

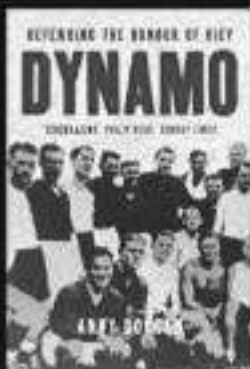
LUCKIEST PUNK

Albert Popwell *Dirty Harry*

THE CLASSICS

Dynamo

The story of how 11 Dynamo Kiev players beat a Luftwaffe XI in 1942, only to be executed is mired in myth. Andy Dougan looks for the truth in this moving tale.



1963 Santos home strip

True, Real Madrid have the all-white look nailed down, but Santos were no less stylish during the early-60s. After all, Pele looks good in anything, right?



Gola boots

The Goalmasters bestrode British bootmaking in the '70s. Not the most comfortable, but they won pure style points and became synonymous with England's players.



7 OF THE BEST NICKNAMES



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

1 GIUSEPPE BERGOMI UNCLE
“What? Are you really 18?” said Inter midfielder Gianpiero Marini to his mustachioed team-mate in the teenage defender’s first training session. “You look like my old uncle.” Zio’s elderly epithet was born.

2 HANS-GEORG SCHWARZENBECK THE BODYGUARD
Franz Beckenbauer’s defensive partner for club and country was labelled ‘Katsche’ as the guy who did Der Kaiser’s donkey work. Big Keeley Hawes fan, too...

3 BILLY McNEILL CESAR
Many people believe that Celtic’s 1967 European Cup-winning captain earned the moniker for his immense leadership qualities. In fact, the Bhoys’ team modelled themselves on the Rat Pack in *Ocean’s Eleven*, and like Cesar Romero’s character in the movie – Duke Santos – Billy was the only player who had his own car.

4 RONALD KOEMAN LITTLE SNOWFLAKE
The Barcelona press dubbed the Dutch defender ‘Floquet de Neu’ as his white hair reminded them of an albino gorilla of the same name in the local zoo.

5 GUNTER SIEBERT TROUT
Schalke’s goal-getter was so adept at wriggling free from defenders in firing Die Knappen to the 1958 league title, he was nicknamed ‘Forelle’, or trout.

6 ROBERT HERBIN SPHINX
The Saint-Etienne boss was so enigmatic in his ‘70s press conferences – never a word wasted – that he was known as the Sphinx by the French media.

7 JAN KOLLER DINO
The Czech striker could never shake his dinosaur sobriquet, earned due to his extreme height even as a lad. Later christened a giraffe ‘Dino’ in his honour.

MATCH REPORT

Goal Netting Arrangement

Nottingham Evening Post
January 1891

“During the match between Notts and Bolton on Thursday, Mr Alexander Brodie was allowed to try his patent netting arrangement, with the object of saving disputes regarding whether the ball had passed through the required goal space.

Netting extended back from the posts at a slight angle for about one and a half yards, while another net was fastened to the bar and drawn backwards like a roof.

The plan is simple and effective, but the nets should be used on grounds with lots of room behind the goal, whereas there is little at Bolton.

The Wanderers had a free-kick and, tipping the ball to Jones, the full-back shot through, Brown unable to stop the high shot. Barbour scored a second and the Wanderers had much the better of the exchanges, with Robertson notching.

The Forest never looked like scoring, and were defeated accordingly: Bolton Wanderers three, Notts Forest none.”

A report on the trial of a new goal net. (And yes, the NEP referred to Forest as “Notts Forest”!)

FourFourTwo.com

FOOTBALL

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THE MIXER

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JORDAN X PSG COLLECTION

store.nike.com

The Michael Jordan wing of Nike have teamed up with PSG to release the hottest football-fashion crossover of recent years, presumably after they'd decided that the Jordan logo's resemblance to the Eiffel Tower on the club's crest was too good an opportunity to ignore. Hype beasts worldwide will love the range's sleek Parisian design, while PSG's Neymar is one step closer to his dream of playing a non-contact sport such as darts. Next month, Nike reveal their ambitious Jay Spearing/Blackpool Tower project.

NIKE MERCURIAL VAPOR PE 'MODRIC' BOOTS

N/A

Claiming a third consecutive Champions League title and leading Croatia to their first World Cup final won Luka Modric the UEFA 2018 Best Player award. To honour the diminutive Real Madrid playmaker, Nike released a rather lavish set of wheels: the Mercurial Vapor PE 'Modric'. They're chrome-wrapped with what Nike call an 'iridescent finish', meaning the luminous boot is blinding in more ways than one, but unfortunately only one pair exists, and there's no prize for guessing the owner.



LEVI'S X LIVERPOOL DENIM SHIRT

liverpoolfc.com/levis

Sure, this is a lovely shirt, simple and sophisticated with a YNWA trim and red hints throughout, but seeing as there's also an accompanying jacket, it could be so much more. Namely: what about a double-denim third kit? You can just imagine Mo Salah cutting inside and curling an effort just wide before ripping his denim shirt open in frustration, as the crowd immediately do the same with their replicas. Buttons. Everywhere.



BANDS FC

bandsfc.com/shop

For years, FFT has wondered what our favourite musicians would look like as football badges – and now we know, thanks to Bands FC. Fashion bods Mark Liptrott and Nick Fraser have united football and music so neatly, these badges would've been all the rage on the school playground 20 years ago. Trading your unwanted Proclaimers/Hibs with your younger sibling's Beastie Boys/Cosmos, knowing full well that you were mugging them right off? Perfect.



MARCUS MARRITT PRINTS

shop.marcusmarritt.com

For anyone who wants their living room to feature a poster of David Beckham with his arms outstretched after that free-kick against Greece at Old Trafford, only to be told by their partner that it's not "cool" and "ruins the room", these are perfect. Marcus Marritt focuses on light and shadow to create these minimalist artworks of some of the world's most iconic stadiums, and we think they're just bloody lovely.



STANLEY CHOW FOOTBALL KITS

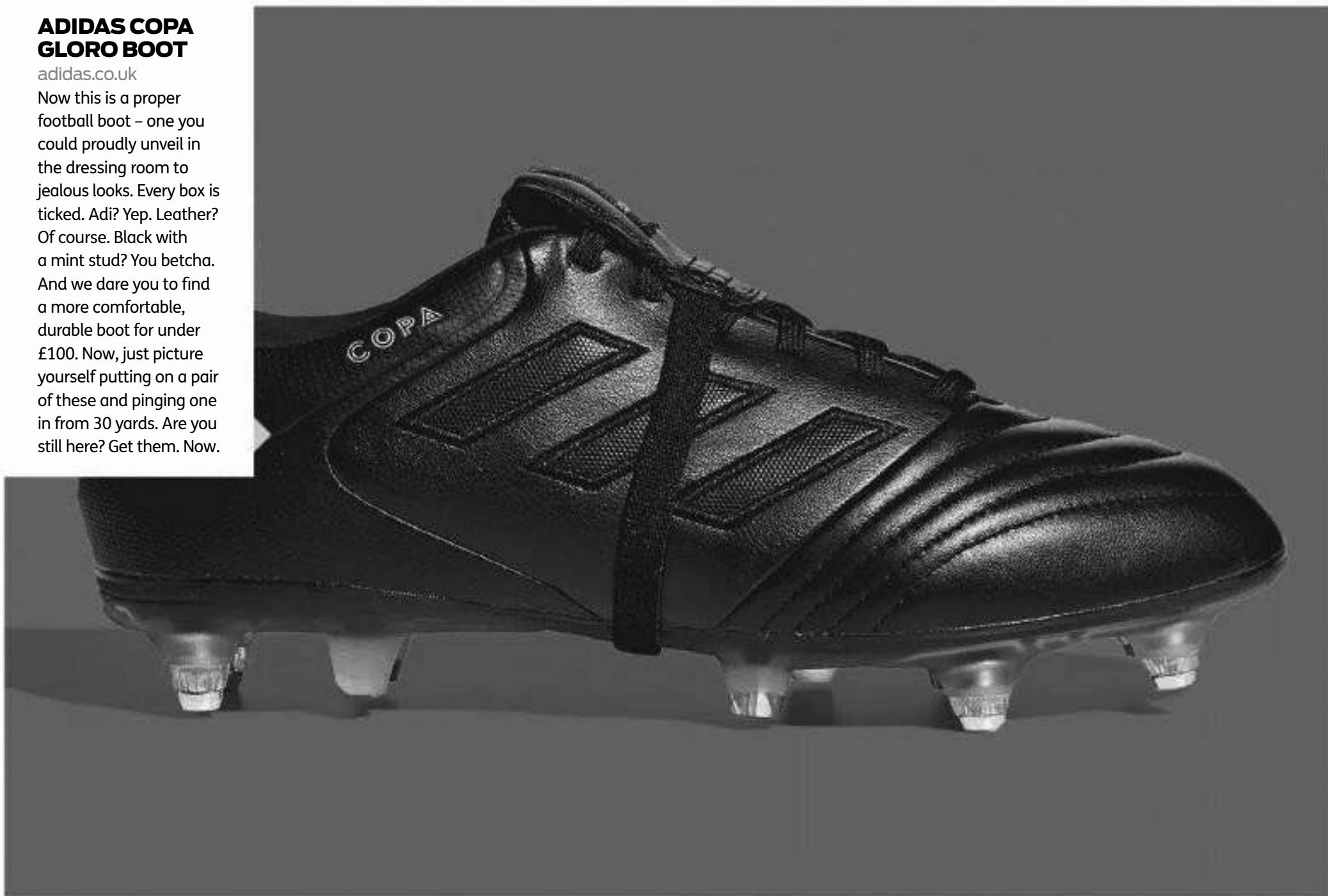
stanleychowfc.bigcartel.com

Artist and illustrator Stanley Chow has created a brilliant new genre of kit by combining his three passions in life: football, food and fashion. "I love football shirts," he tells *FFT*. "I own nearly 100, but I decided it was maybe time to stop buying them and start selling them instead. Sticking the name of a random food item on the shirt and pretending it's the sponsor seemed like a good idea." It was.

ADIDAS COPA GLORO BOOT

adidas.co.uk

Now this is a proper football boot – one you could proudly unveil in the dressing room to jealous looks. Every box is ticked. Adi? Yep. Leather? Of course. Black with a mint stud? You betcha. And we dare you to find a more comfortable, durable boot for under £100. Now, just picture yourself putting on a pair of these and pinging one in from 30 yards. Are you still here? Get them. Now.





ULTIMATE EARS BOOM 3

ultimateears.com

Once you have speakers in your dressing room, you'll wonder how you ever lived without them. Music is a must, whether it's pre-match tunes before kicking off on an icy-cold Saturday, or post-match anthems to celebrate beating your lairy rivals. Waterproof, idiot-proof and Bluetooth – uh, Bluetooth – this is an essential accessory that even Big Dave can't break. Probably.

FOOTBALL BOBBLES VINTAGE HATS

footballbobbles.com

You want to show support for your team, but you don't want to buy their kit because in this instance it's a) bloody expensive; b) poorly made; and c) thinner than Alan Shearer's remaining hair. How about a vintage bobble hat, then? The gang at Football Bobbles have taken your team's best vintage strip and turned them into timeless warming headwear – all without breaking the bank.



CORINTHIANS SENNA KIT

nike.com.br

To celebrate 30 years since Ayrton Senna clinched his first world title at the 1988 Japanese Grand Prix, Brazilian compatriots Corinthians have unveiled this beauty of a tribute kit. The lush Nike shirt matches Lotus' black and gold cars from Senna's day, while the 41 golden lines represent his individual Grand Prix wins. It's a fitting tribute to one of F1's greatest drivers and it's a beautiful kit – what's not to like?

ADIDAS PREDATOR PRO PINK GLOVES

adidas.co.uk

Keepers are mad, right? So, why not embrace it and get some baby-pink goalkeeper gloves from Adidas? Now you can fly off your line to smash the opposition's mouthy striker into Row Z while wearing something your nan might use while doing the washing-up.



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adidas Pogba Predator 18+ TR
QR: 185690 - £170



MY PERFECT XI

EIDUR GUDJOHNSEN

The former Chelsea and Barcelona forward has played with so many star names, he's had to drop Gareth Bale back into his dream team's defence



GARETH BALE

"If I was to go for a natural left-back I'd pick Eric Abidal or Wayne Bridge, but I think it looks sexy having Bale there! When he first went to Spurs at left-back, they had that run where they never won when he started, but that was purely coincidence. When I joined, he was transforming into a left-winger and benefiting from playing with Luka Modric and other good players in that Tottenham team. His speed and ability to go past people was incredible."



ANDRES INIESTA

"It's virtually impossible to choose Iniesta without Xavi, but I've got to split them up. Xavi controlled play and played around the opposition, but as an individual I just thought Iniesta was even better: he had more of a change of pace. He's the nicest guy in the world – he never got angry, he was an artist who made everything look easy. He should have won the Ballon d'Or – the only reason he didn't was because he didn't score enough goals, but he had people in front of him who did that job!"



RONALDO

"We joined PSV in the same week: he was 18, I was 16. I was only a boy but he was a man – he scored 30 league goals in his first season. We played together in a few games, and that was the first time I ever played a one-two with a striker who then gave the ball back for a double one-two! I remembering thinking, 'Yeah, of course it's possible. It's not just a one-two and then it stops – you have to anticipate and keep going'. He'd already figured this out. His mind was so advanced, plus he had speed, power and ability – phenomenal."

Gudjohnsen was speaking on behalf of 188BET. Visit 188bet.co.uk/en-gb/sports/football



THE CAFFER

JOSE MOURINHO

"It was between Mourinho and Pep Guardiola. Jose was my boss when he first went to Chelsea, and I've picked him as we had a better connection."

THE SUBS

01

JAAP STAM

02

LUKA MODRIC

03

DAMIEN DUFF

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