

ROVERS

REVIEW

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10th 1998

Kick Off 7.45 pm

TRANMERE ROVERS FC

VS

**SWINDON
TOWN**

**In tonight's action-packed
issue:**

Andy Thorn

...a tribute on his retirement

Lee Jones

*... debuts don't come much
harder than Man. Utd.*

**Rugby League at
Prenton Park?**

...Gil Upton investigates

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We have to keep winning matches

Welcome to this evenings match and especially Steve McMahon, his players and staff from Swindon Town. This fixture should have taken place on Saturday but as you are all aware we will be at Newcastle in the FA Cup and I felt it was important that we were able to play a home fixture in the middle of four away fixtures.

February sees us travelling some very long distances from Portsmouth to Middlesbrough and Norwich in between we appreciate you loyal supporters who follow us everywhere which means so much to the players.

I was very disappointed with our performances against Manchester City and especially Middlesbrough where once again it highlighted our problems of not scoring goals. Despite breaking a Football League record of five successive clean sheets it is still not good enough. I am looking for more responsibility from our midfield players to see us through this.

Up to the end of October David Kelly and Lee Jones had formed a very successful striking partnership but since then, because of injuries they have hardly played together. I came in and scored a couple of goals but we have never been able to send out a settled strike force. Our midfield have been disappointing in taking strong chances and they are fully aware of how I feel. They do well in training but it is only they who can carry this over onto the pitch. I can threaten them but at the end of the day its up to them.

Being able to buy players is proving very difficult as most clubs seem to be after the same thing - a goalscorer and with a limited budget this is very difficult.

We have now got to the point where we have to keep winning matches. Three points tonight added to the excellent three we achieved at Reading on Saturday will start to see us climb out of the bottom three.

Seven clean sheets was excellent for the defenders and I can see them getting very frustrated to see their hard work wasted by other players not taking chances.

I can't leave this column without mentioning Newcastle on Saturday. For once we will be able to forget the pressures of the League and go up there to enjoy our football as Stevenage did, perhaps cause an upset. It will be nice to meet Kenny Dalglish and Terry McDermott again and for you the supporters the chance to enjoy seeing one of the top Premiership grounds. I understand nearly 3,000 will be travelling up and so it should be a great atmosphere.

Enjoy tonight's game and be safe travelling to Newcastle.

John Aldridge

The Striking Views of John Aldridge



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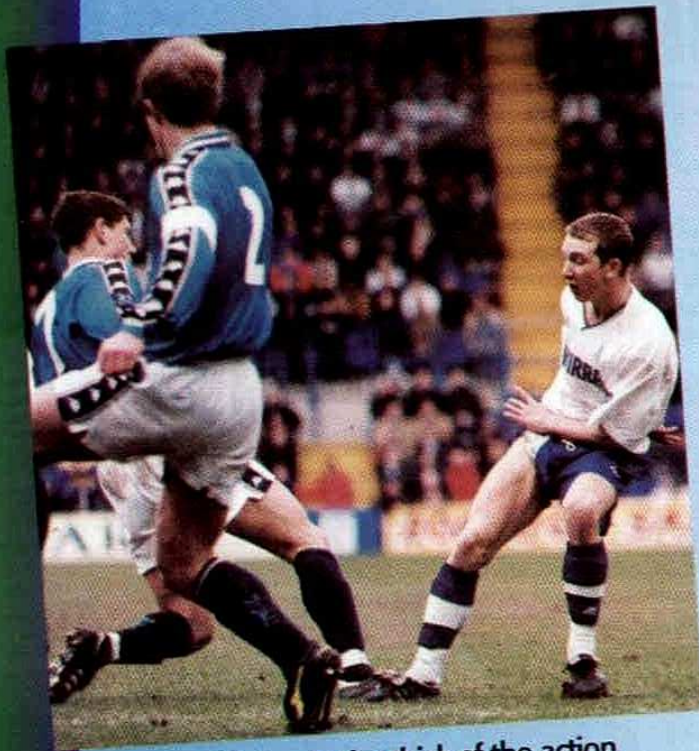


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Andy Parkinson in the thick of the action



Rovers.....0

Man. City0

Muddy Incredible

- Daily Post



New boy Stephen Frail tries a shot against Manchester City



Richard Edgehill and Georgi Kinkladze leave poor Lee Jones in a heap

MATCH FACTS

Tranmere Rovers 0

Manchester City 0

Tranmere: Simonsen, Morgan (Morrissey 68), Thompson, McGreal, Challinor, Frail, G. Jones, Mellon (Mahon 80), Parkinson, O'Brien, L. Jones (Branch 58).

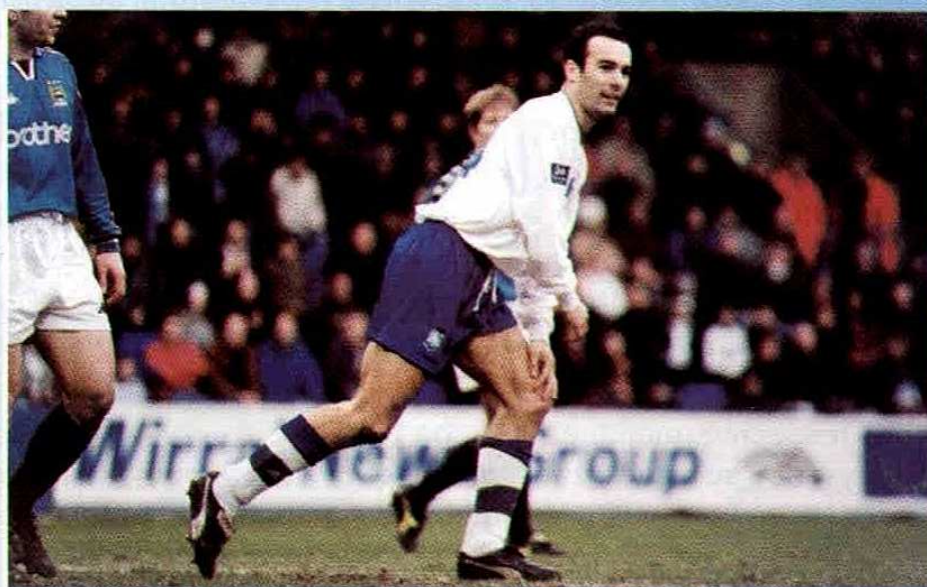
Shots 6, Corners 8, Fouls 12.

Man. City: Wright, Brightwell, Shelia, Brown, Symons, Edgehill, Crooks, Russell, Bradbury (Van Blerk 74), Kinkladze, Rosler. Subs not used: Greenacre, Jeff Whitley

Shots 7, Corners 13, Fouls 8.

Referee: Mr. M. Wilkes (Gloucester)

Attendance: 12,830



In from the cold... Graham Branch makes a surprise return after his spell at Wigan.



Gary Jones is thwarted by City's Richard Edgehill as he primes his left boot.



TRANMERE ROVERS FOOTBALL CLUB

From The Top



Tonight's match has been hurriedly re-arranged in the wake of our Cup exploits and the cancellation of fixtures through international duty which is already causing something of a log jam; for whilst games in hand give some degree of comfort, there can be no substitute for points in the bag.

For many years we have dreamt about a run in the FA Cup and reaching the fifth round for the first time in thirty years is notable and financially rewarding but not even that must deflect our concentration for the truly main issue which is of course survival and progress in this division. We now know of course that our reward is a trip to St. James' Park on February 14th which will no doubt reduce the purchase of Valentine cards and flowers by regular supporters who are making the journey north.

Although we previously played at this magnificent stadium on equal terms, their elevation to the Premiership over recent years, has given this Cup tie at that venue, a particular magic to say nothing of the welcome gate receipts. If we show the same grit and determination as demonstrated against Sunderland few would write us off.

I extend a warm Prenton Park welcome to the Chairman and Directors, Steve McMahon and his players, and the Swindon fans who have made the journey north.

I know our respective managers are the best of pals, but tonight the gloves will be off as they both seek a further three points for different reasons, for I doubt the game has seen two more competitive personalities both on and off the field.

I hope you enjoy the match and mind how you travel home.

Frank Corb.



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FanScene

by
**CAROL
DALZIEL**

A-Z of TRFC

Peter McLeod, who lives in Dukinfield, Cheshire but has become a Tranmere follower through the good influences of his friend – also called Peter – who hails from Tranmere originally, but is now resident in Cheshire too – is looking for a copy of Peter Bishop's book, *The A-Z of Tranmere Rovers*, which was published a few years ago but has completely sold out and cannot be bought new these days. Does anyone out there have a copy which they would be willing to sell to Peter? If so, please contact him at 147 Birch Lane, Dukinfield, Cheshire.

Peter sent in a very interesting letter, telling us that he and his fellow Rovers' fans meet up on a Tuesday night in their local pub in the form of an unofficial Rovers

Supporters Club, and that they travel through to Hamilton Square on matchdays, prior to hitting the Halfway House before kick off! Thank you for your kind comments about the Club, Peter – I have passed your letter on to General Manager Janet Ratcliffe – but just one thing... I'm a Miss, not a Mr!

Finally, Peter is interested in any sort of history about Rovers, not only the A-Z, but he has already got a copy of Gilbert Upton's recently published complete history; if you have any articles, pamphlets or suchlike that you think he'd like to see, please get in touch with him at the address previously given.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Somewhat belatedly, many happy returns to long-time supporter Kevin

Turner, who "celebrated" his fortieth birthday on 27th January. He lives in Higher Bebington and is a season ticket holder who sits (and previously stood) in the Borough Road Stand. Sorry we're a bit late, Kevin, but I was stuck for room before now...

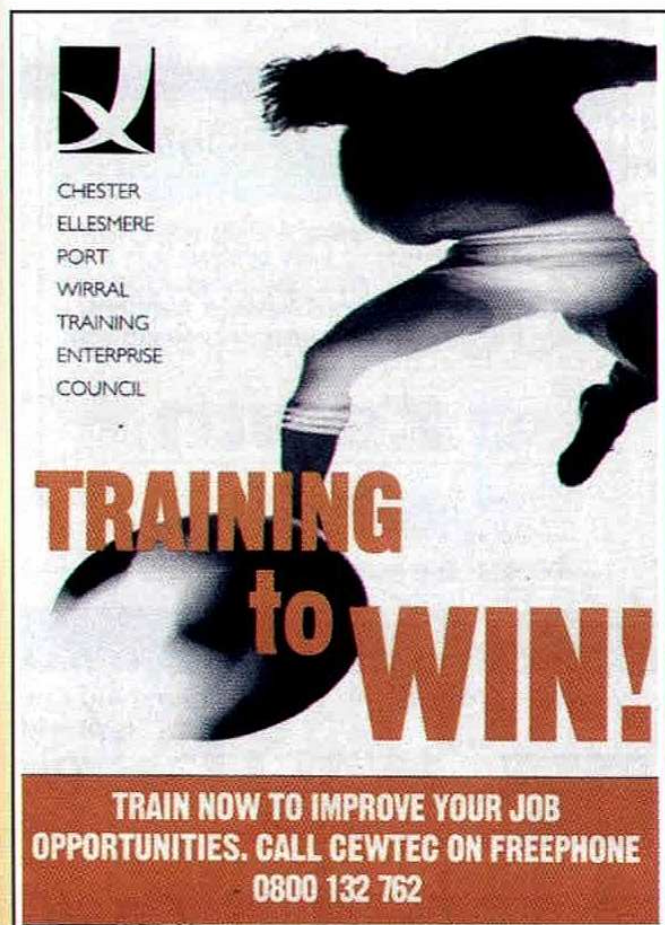
FAN FILES WANTED...

Please don't be shy. Send in your recollections of the first time you ever watched Tranmere – where, when, how, why, with whom, the score, anything that particularly stuck in your mind about the game, all that sort of thing.

Enclose a photograph of yourself as well – we'd love to use your article in a future programme. If you don't, you may all have to suffer my memories of Tranmere v Shrewsbury at Prenton Park in season 68-69...

Letters to me or Peter Bishop, care of Tranmere Rovers, please!

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PROGRAMME REVIEW

Our match programme recently received the following complimentary review in the February issue of the collectors bible, "Programme Monthly".

"Tranmere Rovers provide another attractive and value for money issue. The emphasis has been placed on quality rather than quantity of reading matter with some imaginatively conceived and presented features. Perfectly balanced with enough new ideas to avoid any complacency or staleness creeping in, this is once again one of the best programmes in the First Division from by no means the largest club."

What can I say, other than the cheques' in the post!

HIGGY FOR ENGLAND?

Yes it's true! Such has been Higgs's form in the Unibond League up at Barrow, he is now being touted for the England Semi-pro team at the grand age of 35! Dave has been selected to play for England against the Unibond in a warm up match which should hopefully clinch a place in the squad for internationals in March and a tour of New Zealand in the summer.

GILLIE ALDISS R.I.P.

We are sad to report the death, in mid-January of our former player Gillie Aldiss, just a week short of his 78th birthday. A right half, he made 77 appearances for Rovers either side of the last War before finishing his career with New Brighton. In his later years he lived in Wallasey. Our thoughts go to his family and friends.

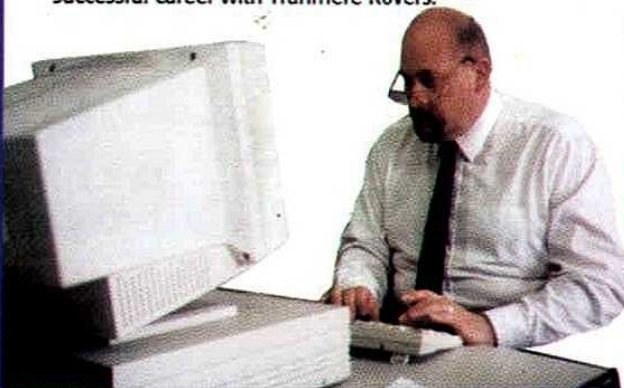
KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

It's not often we get a mention on "Parkinson" (Michael not Andy!), however Birkenhead born actress Patricia Routledge banged the drum for us when asked by Parky about her football loyalties. Quite rightly, Patricia told the audience about 'her team', Grandfather George, being a director in the twenties, and the Routledge brothers Ike and Will, who were founding members of the original club in 1881.

FRAIL BY NAME ONLY

We extend a warm welcome to Stephen Frail who has joined us from Hearts for an initial £75,000 with a further £20,000 due after a set number of appearances. Edinburgh born, Stephen has now recovered fully from a cruciate ligament injury sustained a couple of years ago when he was on the verge of the full Scotland squad. His early career was spent with Dundee who sold him to Hearts for £400,000 in 1994 but since his injury he found it hard to re-establish himself in Jim Jeffries revitalised side and was delighted to get the chance to play in the English League.

Likened to Ged Brannan by John Aldridge 28-year-old Stephen can play a number of positions but prefers the right back - right wingback role. We trust he has a long and successful career with Tranmere Rovers.



THE RECORD BREAKERS

An unwanted one first. Our five successive 0-0 draws in the League breaks a Football League record going back 110 years... seven consecutive games without conceding a goal is also a club record, while no other keeper in our history has ever kept seven consecutive clean sheets - that's 11 hours without conceding a goal. Well done Simmo!... New record gate receipts of £130,541 were set at the Sunderland match.

UP FOR THE CUP

Another offering from Rovers unofficial poet Doug Sharkey:

*So it's Newcastle v Rovers in the 5th Round,
I think that's fantastic, really sound.
Now some outsiders are saying the score
Could be 5-0 or 6-0, or even some more.
But I said to the wife, we were having a chat,
Tranmere won't win by as many as that.
If I had to forecast and give a statistic,
I'd say one or 1 or 2-0 is more realistic!
But the better result, for much needed cash,
Would be a draw and another big clash.
Then Mr. Corfe, who likes to be Frank,
Would go laughing once more along to the bank.
So all of you Rovers' let's all hope and pray,
For a draw at Newcastle, when we play away.
Then when we win, on our own ground,
We'll re-write the records, and be in the 6th Round!*

IS THIS YOU?



If so you've won a Pontins 3 night self-catering weekend for a family of four. To claim your prize call at our Commercial Reception, Monday to Friday between 9am & 5pm (closed for lunch 1pm-2pm). - Look out in our next programme for another great prize to be won!



Hot Off The Press

Community Centre

Steve Williams on Tranmere's Football In The Community Programme

TONIGHT'S SPECIAL GUESTS

I would like to welcome tonight's special guests from the Wallasey Boys Brigade. I would also like to welcome members of the Action Youth Club from Edge Hill in Liverpool. Enjoy the game.

WIRRAL SCHOOLS QUIZ

The Football in the Community Annual Wirral Primary Schools Quiz is now up and running with schools from across the peninsula being visited during the next couple of months. Quizzes will be set up at over 80 different schools with the winning team from each quiz being invited to Tranmere Rovers to take part in the semi-finals/finals.

The boys and girls who make up teams of five answer general knowledge, pop music, films, TV and sports questions. The quiz has been running for nine years and is now firmly established in primary school activities. Over 8,000 children involve themselves in the quiz either as participants or as the audience and this makes the quiz one of, if not the largest run by any football club in this country. Regular

updates will be given during the coming months.

The following schools have been visited so far (winning points score in brackets):

St. Werburgh's (20½), Devonshire Park (26), Hillside (24½), Portland (27), Prenton (34½), Park Primary (16½), Bedford Drive (24), St. Anne's (26), St. Laurences (31), Stanton Road (25½).

SOCCER SCHOOL

Tranmere Rovers Football in the Community are holding a 4-day Soccer School in the February Half-Term on Tuesday 17th February to Friday 20th February at Borough Road Playing Fields. This will be a chance for your son or daughter to come along and experience how much fun it is to come along and experience how much fun it is to learn the basic skills of football.

The course is for boys and girls between the ages of 7-12 and the fee is £25.

The aim of the Soccer School is to provide enjoyment, improve the child's basic football skills and to give all

participants an action packed four days of football fun.

The Soccer School offers: Qualified coaching; small sided games; prizes for endeavour and enthusiasm; Mini World Cup; certificates and numerous spot prizes; a tour of Prenton Park; a visit to a Tranmere Rovers game; supervision in a safe environment; superstar competition; American Shootout; Penalty Shootout.

To reserve a place or for further details phone Steve Williams on 608 2354.



TRANMERE ROVERS GIRLS U-12's

The U-12's have put on some impressive performances during their first season in the Merseyside Girls League. They are flying high at the top of the table and have scored 100 league goals this was achieved with a 3-0 win over Barcelona with goals from Rachel Thomas and Kim Holden (2). This game also gave a few of the younger players a descent run out and they all performed admirably. So the signs are good for next season with a few of the girls already having a taste of the action and showing they are capable of playing at this standard. Their next game is against Halton on Saturday 14th Feb.

Tranmere Rovers Ladies were eliminated from the Woman's FA Cup last Sunday after a 2-1 defeat at home to local rivals Garswood Saints. Julia Merola scored the goal in an exciting game which could have swung either way. Becky Smith was voted Player of the Match.

The Ladies team are playing Chester College in the Quarter Finals of the Cheshire Cup. The game will be played at Heswall FC - 2.00 ko, Sunday 15th February. Admission free.

All support welcomed.

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Well here I am an hour ahead, it's snowing and -10°C , and I discover I need to fill a speech bubble for next Tuesday, which is of course tonight?! How considerate to rearrange this fixture whilst I'm in the land of Stig in the Dumps 'cause I'm stuck in Anfield's Reserves (Norway for the uninitiated).

And to be entertaining our old "friends" Swindon four days early due to our continued involvement in the FA Cup which they couldn't handle. I'm surprised they didn't try the old floodlight trick against Stevenage just like they did on us... oh, and against Stoke a fortnight ago. Except that, this time, they were winning so they managed to fix the bulbs.

On to more serious matters, and it was very disappointing to hear that Andy Thorn has finally admitted defeat to Tommy Smith Knee Syndrome. A fine career of an excellent ambassador has been prematurely cut short. A word of warning though... when we get to the Cup Final, don't take a penalty, whoever's the opposition, and whichever's the charity.

Charity, nowadays, doesn't begin at home, and what with all the blah blah blah about us not scoring, and the pitch resembling Sabina Park, the media seem to have forgotten one very important statistic... we haven't conceded in 7, a new club record. Obviously we'd like to have scored one or two to convert those singles into trebles, but we didn't let one in during January. Congrats Simmo!

So now attentions turn to a very important few days, and two crucial games. Tonight's three points are so important in our battle to stay in the First, and a win would be an ideal platform for Saturday.

For all the talk of Geordie fun and North Eastern weekends, we might be heading to deeper Herts. Naturally, though, I am expecting to be back in colder climes, and after -10° I'm ready for anything!

Newcastle are famous for that Hereford shock. We disposed of them Bulls in the Hereford potential shock, so why not us do to Shearer what they did to Super-Mac?


Howay the Lads out the Cup!!!

Half Time - Let's Get QUIZZICAL!

1. Which two players celebrated their first full international call ups for England's squad versus Chile?
2. Steve McMahon left Everton to join which club, before eventually joining Liverpool?
3. In which year was the FA School of Excellence at Lilleshall opened?
4. And in which year was the system of loan transfers introduced?
5. Who moved from Manchester United to AC Milan for £1.5m in 1984?
6. Name the last English manager to win the FA Cup?
7. Which was the first English ground to go all-seater?
8. Which current Premiership club once played at the Antelope Ground?
9. Who is the manager of Stoke City?
10. Who scored the winning goal for Nottingham Forest in the 1980 European Cup Final?



Questions set by Ian Kennedy. Answers on page 35



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Who's Next? ... Crewe Alex

Garry Doolan takes a close look at the next visitors to Prenton Park

Crewe come to Prenton Park showing signs of finally adapting to the demands of the First Division.

Dario Gradi's side initially struggled to adapt to the higher level after winning promotion from the Second Division last season.

But an improvement in form and a string of decent results since the turn of the year have lifted Alex out of the relegation zone and closer to mid-table safety.

The New Year also started well for Gradi – the longest serving manager in the game – honoured with an MBE and Manager of the Month for January.

Gradi's purist footballing

principles have not waned over the years and he said: "Football has to be an exciting game for the players and an exciting game for the supporter".

He insists Crewe's recent improvement is down to hard work and the ability to learn fast in the higher league.

"We have worked very hard on learning from each game and the players work both physically and mentally to get that improvement and quite a few players are beginning to think they can play at this level," he said.

Although honoured by the MBE, Gradi said he has been more

pleased by the development of his team at a club he holds dear. He took over the reins at Gresty Road way back in June 1983 and has succeeded despite a sell-to-survive policy.

"I was pleased with the MBE but I am more pleased with winning points in the league", he said.

Crewe, as always, have a side packed with young talent like Kevin Street and Mark Rivers. They are sure to give us some problems, having already beaten us once this season. It should be an interesting match



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HOLIDAY CLUB PONTIN'S

LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

It has turned into a difficult season for the Reserves who have found victories hard to come by in the Pontins Premier League.

Indeed only one success has been recorded in fifteen outings and amazingly it was on an unlikely occasion away to Manchester United who duly gained revenge in the return clash.

With so many injuries running through the senior camp the Reserves have often lacked experience in their line-ups but it has been a good learning period for the young players who have been drafted in.

The Reserves are due at Aston Villa tomorrow and have a re-arranged home clash with Everton on February 25th. Six points would be welcome but it is something of a tall order.

Meanwhile the second string are hopeful of qualifying for the later stages of the Pontins League Cup despite an unexpected away defeat 1-3 at Blackpool.

Rovers created enough chances to have won comfortably but paid dearly for some erratic finishing.

Marc Anthony who went on as a fifth minute replacement for the injured Lee Jones grabbed a consolation goal near the closing minutes.

It was scoreless at the interval but the home side went clear with three well taken efforts. Alan Morgan completed the full ninety minutes after suspension to put himself back in the first team squad.

Rovers Reserves: Coyne, Pereira, Morgan, McIntyre, Hill, Mahon, Morrissey, Williams (Koumas 75), Parkinson, Hebel (Gibson 75), L. Jones (Anthony 5).

The return game against the Seaside was scheduled for Thursday of last week. Details next programme.

Andrew Stratton

Waiting Their Turn

Thur 14 Aug	Blackburn Rovers	1-1 (Branch)
Wed 20 Aug	Leeds United	2-3 (Parkinson, Branch)
Wed 27 Aug	Sheffield Wed.	3-3 (Mahon, Aldridge, Morgan)
Wed 3 Sept	Everton	0-0
Wed 10 Sept	Aston Villa	0-3
Mon 15 Sept	Rotherham (Pontins Cup)	1-1 (Mahon)-
Wed 24 Sept	Liverpool	2-3 (Branch 2)
Mon 29 Sept	Manchester United	2-1 (Hebel, Branch)
Wed 8 Oct	Preston North End	3-4 (O'Brien, Gibson, Aldridge)
Mon 13 Oct	Stoke City	0-1
Wed 29 Oct	Derby County	0-0
Wed 5 Nov	Scarborough (Pontins Cup)	6-3 (Morrissey, Hebel, Aldridge 2, Parkinson 2)
Wed 12 Nov	Nottingham Forest	4-6 (Aldridge, Parkinson, Mauro, Hebel)
Wed 26 Nov	Birmingham City	2-2 (Parkinson, Mauro)
Tues 2 Dec	Manchester United	0-1
Wed 10 Dec	Leeds United	1-3 (Branch)
Wed 17 Dec	Blackburn Rovers	2-3 (Williams, L. Jones)
Tues 6 Jan	Sheffield Wednesday	0-0
Wed 21 Jan	Blackpool (Pontins Cup)	1-3 (Anthony)
Thur 5 Feb	Blackpool (Pontins Cup)	-
Wed 11 Feb	Aston Villa	-
Wed 25 Feb	Everton	-
Thur 5 Mar	Liverpool	-
Wed 11 Mar	Nottingham Forest	-
Tues 24 Mar	Derby County	-
Wed 1 Apr	Birmingham City	-
Wed 29 Apr	Stoke City	-
TBA	Preston North End	-

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Today's mascot is 10-year-old
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Stephen, who attends Brookdale Primary School in Greasby is a big fan of Kenny Irons. His hobbies include football, cricket, rugby and watching Tranmere Rovers.

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SuperWhites Quiz

SUPERWHITES QUIZ Just for fun!

1. Which former Tranmere player scored an own goal in the play off semi final at Swindon?
2. Name the player signed from Swindon who kept us in the Football League?
3. Who scored two goals at Swindon before the match was abandoned due to floodlight failure?

1. Steve Vickers; 2. Gary Williams;
3. John Aldridge

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write that?

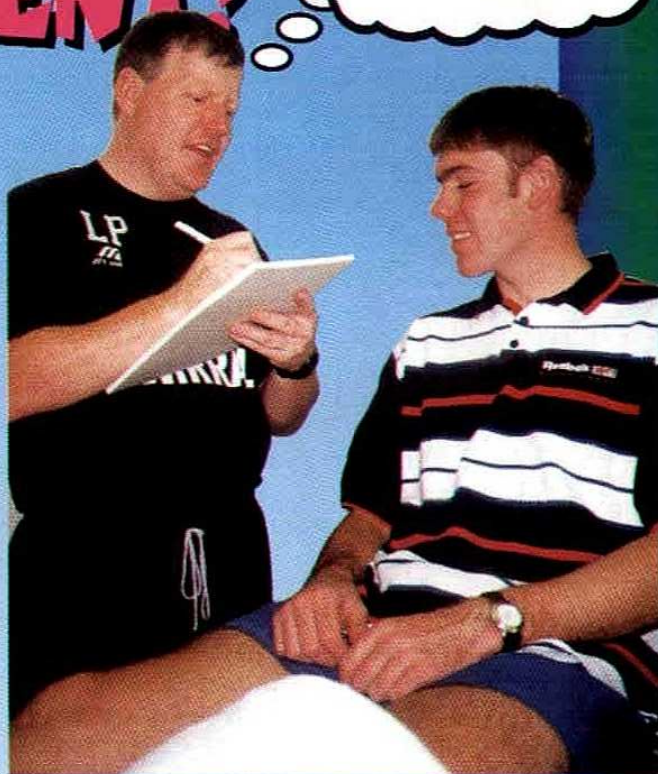
This really is a last minute column, having this match arranged at the last minute has meant hurried notes and loads of guesstimates. I'm a bit fed up with reading about an injury crisis at the club, I'm sure 90% of other teams would swap injury lists with us at this moment in time. What makes it a crisis isn't numbers of injuries but the fact that we are carrying a very small squad so any injuries cause problems in filling the holes, for the Man. City game we had four players unavailable for selection through injury. One of those was Andy Thorn who I mention later on, Mauro Pereira who is a long term absentee, Gary Stevens who had operations on his knee and ankle and David Kelly who was only a couple of days away from playing and who has been struggling simply because we have to get him back as soon as we can because we need him. Lee Jones played in that game and contrary to reports didn't break down with the same knee injury, he actually received a painful kick to his other knee with a stud mark right on his joint line and it was too painful to carry on. Just to finish off my soapbox bit, those who think that training methods have anything to do with our injuries are barking up the wrong tree. Looking through the injuries for this year where players haven't been available there is only Mauro who sustained his injury on the training pitch and 80% of the others have been contact injuries during matches. I bet that gave you a bit of a shock, you've never read anything serious before from me have you? I'm not too well at the moment so I can give both barrels through my column instead of shouting at the kids and making them tidy their rooms.

Anyway, enough of that rubbish, onto updating injuries. Danny Coyne had an operation last Wednesday on his troublesome groin. It was only a minor procedure and he spent one night in hospital. Believe it or not he was in the next room to his mother-in-law who was having cosmetic surgery, Danny said it was something about having her mouth reduced. When I went in to see him, Wanda was taking a bunch of flowers and putting them in her mum's room. Evidently she moved the flowers every hour so that she didn't have to buy two bunches. I had a little chat with her mum whilst I was there and I can't understand why Danny says the things he says about her to the lads at the club. If she is a witch she is certainly a pretty one. Danny will be out for about four weeks but that should be the end of the problems he has been having with his groin.

Gary Stevens is recovering well from his operations and is well on target for a March return to training. Lee Jones's knee is still very tender due to the location of the stud mark. Lee may well be available for tonight but the chances are that he will be involved tomorrow night at Villa Reserves. Dave Kelly played at Middlesbrough and came through without any adverse reaction, but the three games in six days will test his knee to the limit, fingers crossed.

The final paragraph of my column has to be about Andy Thorn. I've known since the day after the Hereford match that this injury may well be the final straw for Andy and just hoped through all the consultations with Mr. Geary and subsequent operation that he may be able to carry on without any detrimental effects to his long term health. Unfortunately that wasn't the case and it finally hit me when I attended the press conference to announce his early retirement from professional football. I never really minded Andy being injured because he has a great attitude, trained hard morning and afternoon and looked after himself as far as food and drink went, he's a great professional. I can visualise the lads reading this tonight all looking at each other and in unison shouting "Is he sure?" it makes him sound great doesn't it? Sam will be asking me to write his obituary in about fifty years time when he pops his clogs. She's a lot younger than him so he'll probably go first, all the other mothers used to think he was her dad when he picked her up from school. I never realised how much stick I give Sam, it fills half my page, I may have to try to get her off with one of our younger players so that I can continue writing about her. On a serious note to finish, I will probably miss Andy more than any player who's left the club before, mostly I suppose because he spent half of his time with me injured and the other half of his time in my room even when he wasn't injured. The whole club will be different without him and my job certainly won't be as enjoyable. I'm going to have to ask the editor to halve the space he gives me as without Andy I'm going to struggle to fill a whole page. Good luck to him and Sam. Hoping there is nothing to report next time.

Les Parry



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Nationwide

Around the Leagues with Jonathan Caswell

Although all our games in our current predicament are big ones, the next real big test is our Fifth Round FA Cup match and you know, I think we can pat ourselves on the back for getting this far and to be honest the sixth round is not that far from our clutches.

These days the romance of the Cup means even more than it used to as far as I'm concerned. Footy is the national obsession, trendy and middle class and most of the recent converts to the game will support Manchester United or one of their local Premiership sides.

And I know I've said it before, but every small success a lower division club achieves is actually a big boost to the game. It proves there's more to life than the top 20 and the more success we get the fewer times we will have to endure football writers saying: "the gulf in class". It may be true, for the moment, but surely it fosters inferiority complexes... it's not necessary and when they use it, they make it sound like they have uncovered the holy grail of togga truth, when in actual fact it's as old as the hills themselves.

And for this reason I sincerely hope that more top flight teams tumble in the Cup this round than ever before. And especially Man. Utd. Speaking of which, you know they've lost five league games this season, no more no less than Liverpool and two more than Blackburn. Yet they are spoken of in awe, held up as example of all that is right and good in our world, life everlasting. Amen. Again you footy writers have some sense of proportions please.

And while I'm still just hanging on to the thread, I heard a classic on Five Live the other night: Picture if you will Reading versus Cardiff City, one all in the first period of extra time, 9.50pm and over the tannoy you hear. The last train to Cardiff is at 10.24pm... well I thought it was funny anyway. Another thing that makes me smile with happiness is the resurrection of the England B internationals... Simmo will be there soon, the World Cup still beckons for at least one man at Tranmere?

And before I excite you with my knowledge of the transfer scene, I want to take time out to tackle a thorny issue. I'm lucky in my job that I get

to see the Rovers players a lot, but I am unhappy now that I won't be seeing Andy Thorn as often as I used to. I tore my ankle ligaments playing football and had to sit on my team's sidelines for three months and that was bad. Andy has had to endure injury after injury in his time at TRFC, but you need to know this, he has remained a chirpy cockney character, quick with a joke and a light up your smoke. There are times when I've seen him stare wistfully at his colleagues training their hearts out, while he's been kicking his heels, but he still has time to talk about the weather with you. And I will miss him and I wish him thee best in whatever he does... perhaps he could become a physio and write Les's notes from time to time and get his own back.

Right talking of movers and shakers here are the top boys this week: In addition to the following I counted at least thirteen loans and trials, but on to the bit you've all been champing at the bit for: Trevor Sinclair has finally quit his Nationwide hell at QPR and joined West Ham for £3.5m, scoring on his debut no less.

Keith Rowland and Iain Dowie went the other way by the way. Newcastle bought Andreas Anderson for £3m from AC Milan and by the time you're reading this who knows Gary Speed might finally have gone to the Magpies too. Teammate, at least until last week, Andy Hinchcliffe finally left Everton, to Sheff Wed for £2.9m. Andy Griffin is another at Newcastle leaving Stoke for £1.5m, while John O'Kane left Man Utd for Everton for £400,000... and I'm telling you that could be one good and cheap acquisition. Shaun Derry, Notts County to Sheff Utd, Daniel Dichio from Sampdoria to Sunderland (potentially another great buy) Jon Cullen, Hartlepool to Sheff Utd, Rufus Brevett, QPR to Fulham, Robbie Ryan, Huddersfield to Millwall and Jehad Muntasser went from Arsenal to Bristol City, as did Andy Cole once!

On top of all those it was quite a week for goalies, no less than four moved clubs and Jurgen Sommer left these shores (QPR) to return home (Columbus Crew). And finally a hearty welcome to Steve Frail.

how teams have scored

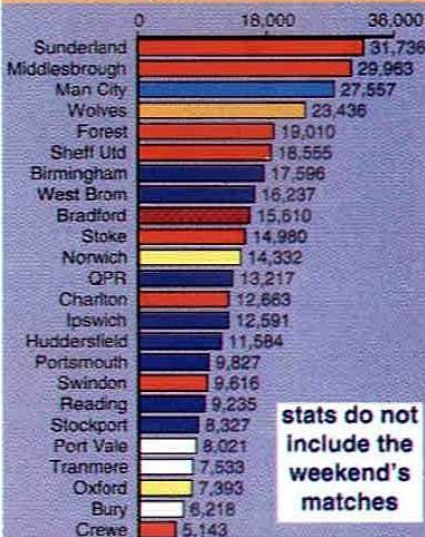
see key below

	Hd	CR	Ob	V	FK	P	Ib	OG
Birmingham	6	8	5	4	2	1	9	1
Bradford	9	7	1	4	2	0	8	1
Bury	8	3	2	2	0	1	9	0
Charlton	10	4	11	8	0	2	16	2
Crewe	3	5	4	5	3	2	12	1
Huddersfield	4	9	4	3	0	1	9	1
Ipswich	7	6	3	2	1	2	13	1
Man City	9	8	6	1	1	3	4	1
Middlesbrough	7	7	9	6	0	2	17	1
Norwich	2	2	7	2	0	2	11	3
Forest	9	7	6	6	3	5	11	0
Oxford	7	5	4	7	0	3	10	0
Port Vale	12	2	5	4	1	1	7	1
Portsmouth	5	8	6	6	0	2	4	0
QPR	7	6	4	3	0	3	6	1
Reading	6	8	0	4	0	4	5	3
Sheff Utd	9	5	3	12	0	1	14	1
Stockport	9	14	5	4	1	2	11	2
Stoke	3	6	4	2	0	4	11	0
Sunderland	10	7	7	5	1	0	16	2
Swindon	6	3	6	3	0	3	12	1
Tranmere	6	6	6	1	0	0	9	0
West Brom	4	6	4	2	0	1	12	1
Wolves	7	6	8	5	0	0	12	2

.. and how conceded

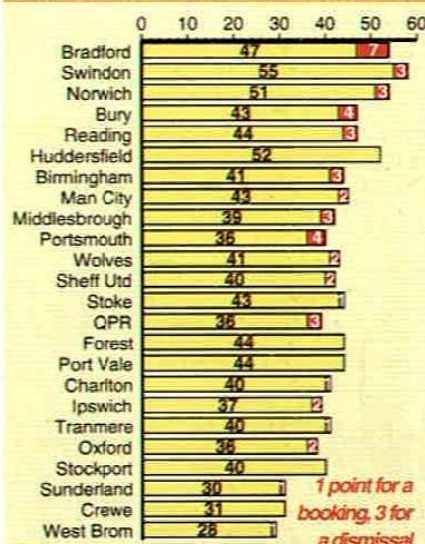
	Hd	CR	Ob	V	FK	P	Ib	OG
Birmingham	8	3	3	3	0	0	5	0
Bradford	5	3	4	4	0	3	13	0
Bury	5	7	2	7	1	2	13	1
Charlton	6	8	5	9	1	4	3	1
Crewe	7	7	1	4	2	4	16	1
Huddersfield	5	5	9	3	0	1	15	3
Ipswich	11	3	2	2	0	0	9	3
Man City	4	4	7	4	1	3	9	2
Middlesbrough	8	2	3	2	0	2	8	0
Norwich	8	6	8	3	1	1	13	1
Forest	4	4	4	6	0	1	8	1
Oxford	9	10	4	6	0	3	8	3
Port Vale	7	9	7	4	0	4	13	1
Portsmouth	9	15	6	3	1	1	9	2
QPR	14	6	5	1	0	2	15	0
Reading	7	9	5	4	2	1	13	1
Sheff Utd	8	10	1	3	0	1	7	1
Stockport	6	6	7	8	2	2	10	0
Stoke	10	6	9	4	1	3	11	0
Sunderland	3	4	6	5	0	2	6	2
Swindon	8	7	6	4	3	2	10	1
Tranmere	4	3	10	6	0	1	13	0
West Brom	5	7	1	2	0	0	12	1
Wolves	4	5	5	2	0	2	10	1

average attendances



stats do not include the weekend's matches

yellow & red cards



1 point for a booking, 3 for a dismissal

Current Form Table

Index in the table below reflects the league position of the opposition in the 6 games. ie the higher the position, the higher the index.

	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Indx	Sequence
Crewe	5	1	0	9	3	16	40%	WWWWDW
Sunderland	4	1	1	13	7	13	48%	WLWWDW
Middlesbrough	4	1	1	10	6	13	43%	WWDLWW
Wolves	4	0	2	11	3	12	45%	LWLWWW
Nott'm Forest	4	0	2	10	7	12	41%	LWLWWW
Birmingham	3	2	1	12	3	11	37%	LWDWDW
Charlton	3	2	1	10	8	11	47%	DDWWLW
Reading	3	2	1	9	7	11	55%	WLWDDW
Ipswich	3	2	1	8	5	11	67%	WWDDWL
Sheff Utd	2	3	1	11	9	9	52%	DDWLWD
Stockport	3	0	3	9	9	9	51%	WLWLLW
Norwich	3	0	3	6	9	9	69%	LWWLWL
Bradford	2	2	2	10	8	8	43%	LWDLWD
Huddersfield	1	4	1	7	4	7	68%	DDWDWL
Oxford	2	1	3	7	10	7	59%	WWLLDL
Man City	1	2	3	7	7	5	48%	DDLWLL
Stoke	1	2	3	6	14	5	74%	LLWLDD
West Brom	1	2	3	5	7	5	38%	WLLDDL
Swindon	1	2	3	2	7	5	36%	DWDLWL
Tranmere	0	5	1	0	3	5	50%	LDDDDD
Portsmouth	1	1	4	5	10	4	40%	DLLLWL
Bury	0	4	2	3	6	4	51%	DLDDDD
Port Vale	1	0	5	7	15	3	58%	LLWLLL
QPR	0	3	3	2	7	3	46%	LLDDDL

Campaign Records

Highest/Lowest Gates

40,055 Sunderland v Bradford 26-Dec

4,176 Crewe v Swindon 11-Jan

Highest Aggregate Scores

Forest 5-2 Charlton 22-Nov

Crewe 2-5 Huddersfield 6-Dec

Stoke 0-7 Birmingham 10-Jan

Biggest Home Win

Tranmere 6-0 Reading 20-Sep

Man City 6-0 Swindon 27-Sep

Biggest Away Win

Stoke 0-7 Birmingham 10-Jan

Consecutive Wins

Sunderland 5

Games Unbeaten

Sunderland 16

Consecutive Defeats

Port Vale 7

Games without a Win

Huddersfield 14

Current Sequences

Consecutive Wins

Crewe 4

Games Unbeaten

Crewe 6

Consecutive Defeats

Port Vale, QPR, Stoke 2

Games without a Win

Bury 13

leading scorers

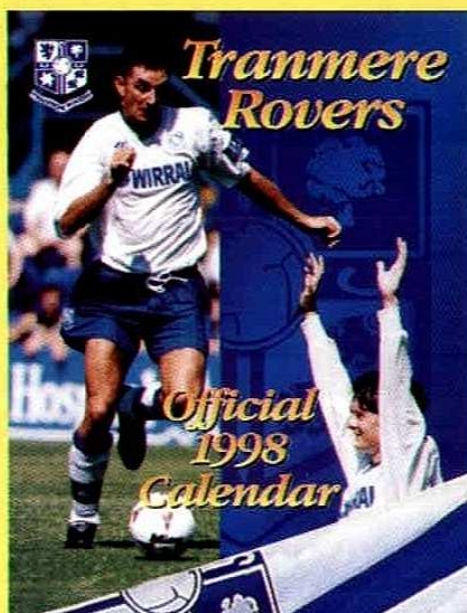


League goals in club colour, Coca Cola in Green, FA in Orange

.. various Div 1 stats ..

includes those who have left the club	Plyrs used	goals for	goals agt	clean sheets	low pos.	high pos.	position is taken after 4 games played	Plyrs used	goals for	goals agt	clean sheets	low pos.	high pos.
Birmingham	21	36	22	13	14	2	Port Vale	23	33	45	5	21	7
Bradford	24	32	32	9	13	1	Portsmouth	27	31	46	2	24	6
Bury	29	25	38	6	24	6	QPR	27	30	43	7	17	2
Charlton	25	53	37	10	15	2	Reading	27	30	42	10	24	14
Crewe	27	35	42	8	23	13	Sheff Utd	37	45	31	9	7	2
Huddersfield	34	31	41	7	24	19	Stockport	24	48	41	8	23	7
Ipswich	30	35	30	8	22	13	Stoke	24	30	44	7	18	6
Man City	30	33	34	9	22	14	Sunderland	27	48	28	10	12	3
Middlesboro	30	49	25	9	13	1	Swindon	34	34	41	10	10	1
Norwich	28	29	41	6	17	10	Tranmere	23	28	37	9	22	15
Nott'm Forest	26	47	28	13	5	1	West Brom	24	30	28	11	8	1
Oxford	27	36	43	10	22	14	Wolves	30	40	29	9	15	6

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The Game Of My Life

Debuts don't come much more daunting for a 17-year-old than a European Cup Winners Cup tie against Manchester United.

But at least Lee Jones was in good company when he started a first team game for Wrexham for the first time in a 2nd Round, 2nd Leg encounter against United at a packed Racecourse ground in November 1990.

Wrexham, then in the bottom division, trailed 3-0 from the Old Trafford leg. Player-Manager Brian Flynn, his hand partly forced by nationality regulations in European competition, threw a collection of Welsh-born teenagers into his line-up including Gareth Owen, Wayne Phillips, Chris Armstrong and Lee Jones.

Lee recalls: "It was a massive game to make your debut in. I think I qualified as the sixth Welshman that night. I did not get nervous because Brian Flynn only told me I was playing an hour before kick off.

"I don't think we disgraced ourselves that night even though we lost the game 2-0. I had one or two chances and Les Sealey tipped one of them over the bar.

"We put up a good fight. We did not have much of a chance being 3-0 down from the first leg. We would not have had much of a chance if we were only 1-0 down.

"The oldest player in the Wrexham side that night was Joey Jones who came on as a substitute with 20 minutes to go - he got the biggest cheer of the night because the first thing he did was boot Danny Wallace six feet in the air!"

Many of the Wrexham youngsters who saw action that night have gone on to enjoy successful careers - Owen, Phillips and Phil Hardy with Wrexham, Armstrong at Spurs.

Lee Jones was picked up in March 1992 by Liverpool in a £300,000 deal and then all but disappeared.

In five years at Anfield he made four first team appearances, all as a substitute.

By the time he was allowed to join Tranmere Rovers on loan in March of last season, Lee had his mind fixed on leaving English football altogether and trying his luck abroad.

But Lee made a big impact during his loan spell, scoring five goals in eight appearances.

By the time he arrived at the ground for the last game of the season against champions Bolton a petition pleading for him to stay at Tranmere and signed by hundreds of fans was waiting for him.

"I was pleased with the way things went for me here at the end of last season but I could not believe the

Europea Cup Winners Cup 2nd Round, 2nd Leg
November 7th, 1990 Att: 14,327

WREXHAM...0MAN. UTD. 2
(Robins, Bruce)

MAN. UTD.: Sealey, Irwin, Blackmore, Bruce, Phelan, Pallister, Webb, Ince, McClair, Robins, Wallace.

WREXHAM: Morris, Thackeray, Hardy, Hunter, Beaumont, Phillips, Flynn (J. Jones), Owen, Armstrong (K. Jones), L. Jones, Cooper.

petition. The name at the top of the list was John Aldridge. Someone must have forged his signature.

"So I spoke to the chairman and my agent. Aston Villa and Bolton were interested, but I did not want to go somewhere and sit on the bench. I'd had enough of that at Liverpool. I wanted to play in the front line. That's why I ended up here".



LEE JONES

Head To Head

	P	W	D	L	F	A
Home:	17	9	5	3	33	23
Away:	18	1	5	12	15	32
Total:	35	10	10	15	48	55

Landmarks

First Meeting	18 Oct 1958 (a) 2-1
Last Home Win	2-1 1996-97
Last Home Draw	0-0 1991-92
Last Home Defeat	0-2 1984-85
Biggest Home Victory	3-0 1984-85
Heaviest Home Defeat	3-5 1968-69
Biggest Away Victory	2-1 1958-59
Heaviest Away Defeat	1-4 1978-79

Highs and Lows

In the case of Rovers v Swindon the lows tend to outweigh any highs we've had over the years. We've had our differences but one pair of games, the 1992-93 play off semi finals stands out. Though we won the second leg 3-2 it wasn't enough given we lost 1-3 at the County Ground. That same season a Kenny Irons hat-trick steered us to a 3-1 home win

Last Time Here...

Friday, 10th January, 1997

Rovers 2...Swindon 1

Two Pat Nevin goals warmed a near 9,000 crowd in freezing conditions. The first, midway through the first half, was a spectacular overhead bicycle kick, and the second with a cross-cum shot that seemed to hit Dave Higgins en route. Kevin Horlock netted Swindon's reply. The match was John Morrissey's 500th for Tranmere.

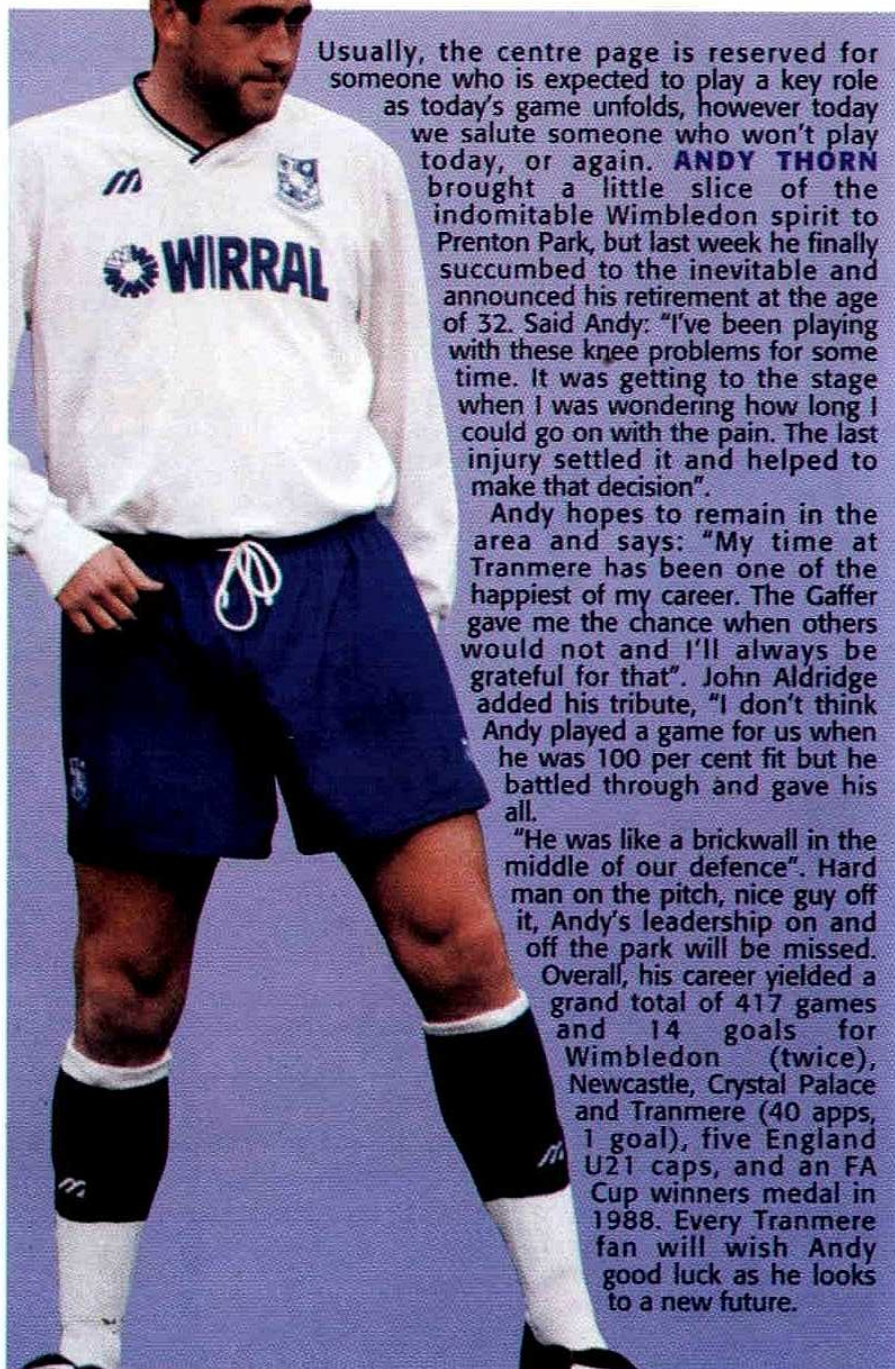
Tranmere: Nixon, Stevens, Thomas, McGreal, Higgins, O'Brien (Irons), Brannan, Aldridge (Moore), Cook, Morrissey (Branch), Nevin.

Swindon: Digby, Kerslake, Drysdale, Leitch, Seagraves, Robinson (O'Sullivan), Culverhouse, Watson (Mildenhall), Cowe, Allison, Horlock.

Linkmen

Look no further than the dug out tonight as two old pals from their Liverpool days try to outwit each other. Further back there are a number of playing connections including ex-Rovers hero **Ian Muir** who had an unproductive spell at Swindon. Both **Bryan Hamilton** and **Kenny Beamish** (1983-84) had spells as either coach or manager at the County Ground with little success. **Gary Williams** and **John Kelly** enjoyed much happier times in Wiltshire. A few other names which will evoke memories in both camps... **Scott Endersby**, winger **Steve Peplow**, **Stevie Williamson**, **Pat Jackson**, **Abe Rosenthal**, **Alf Day** and **Arthur Briggs**.

Match Of



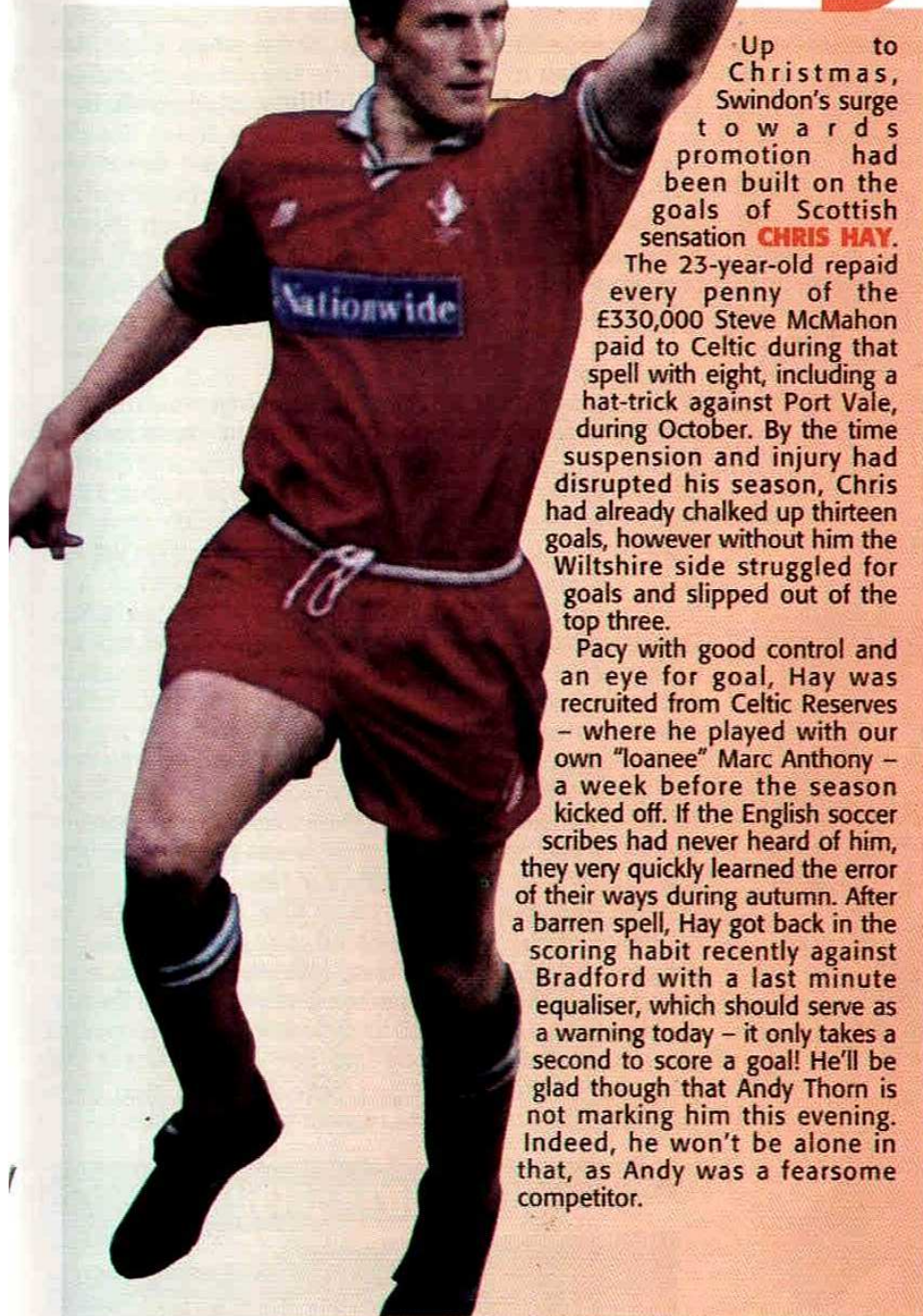
Usually, the centre page is reserved for someone who is expected to play a key role as today's game unfolds, however today we salute someone who won't play today, or again. **ANDY THORN** brought a little slice of the indomitable Wimbledon spirit to Prenton Park, but last week he finally succumbed to the inevitable and announced his retirement at the age of 32. Said Andy: "I've been playing with these knee problems for some time. It was getting to the stage when I was wondering how long I could go on with the pain. The last injury settled it and helped to make that decision".

Andy hopes to remain in the area and says: "My time at Tranmere has been one of the happiest of my career. The Gaffer gave me the chance when others would not and I'll always be grateful for that". John Aldridge added his tribute, "I don't think Andy played a game for us when he was 100 per cent fit but he battled through and gave his all.

"He was like a brickwall in the middle of our defence". Hard man on the pitch, nice guy off it, Andy's leadership on and off the park will be missed. Overall, his career yielded a grand total of 417 games and 14 goals for Wimbledon (twice), Newcastle, Crystal Palace and Tranmere (40 apps, 1 goal), five England U21 caps, and an FA Cup winners medal in 1988. Every Tranmere fan will wish Andy good luck as he looks to a new future.

Rovers 1

The Day



Up to Christmas, Swindon's surge towards promotion had been built on the goals of Scottish sensation **CHRIS HAY**.

The 23-year-old repaid every penny of the £330,000 Steve McMahon paid to Celtic during that spell with eight, including a hat-trick against Port Vale, during October. By the time suspension and injury had disrupted his season, Chris had already chalked up thirteen goals, however without him the Wiltshire side struggled for goals and slipped out of the top three.

Pacy with good control and an eye for goal, Hay was recruited from Celtic Reserves - where he played with our own "loanee" Marc Anthony - a week before the season kicked off. If the English soccer scribes had never heard of him, they very quickly learned the error of their ways during autumn. After a barren spell, Hay got back in the scoring habit recently against Bradford with a last minute equaliser, which should serve as a warning today - it only takes a second to score a goal! He'll be glad though that Andy Thorn is not marking him this evening. Indeed, he won't be alone in that, as Andy was a fearsome competitor.

Robins' 10 year record

	Div.	Pos.	FA	CC	Top League	Avg Att
96/97	1	19	3	3	Allison	11 9,265
95/96	2	1	5	2	Allison	17 10,602
94/95	1	21	4	6	Fjortoft	16 9,408
93/94	p	22	3	3	Fjortoft	12 15,011
92/93	1	5	3	3	Maskell	18 10,489
91/92	2	8	5	4	Shearer	22 9,871
90/91	2	21	4	3	Shearer	22 9,507
89/90	2	5	3	4	Shearer	20 9,433
88/89	2	6	4	2	Shearer	14 8,692
87/88	2	12	4	3	Quinn	21 9,542

table above shows the division, final league placing, round reached in FA & Coca Cola cups, top league scorer and average league attendance.

Swindon's league results

	hme/awy	Result	Points	Position
Crewe	H	2-0	3	4
Reading	A	1-0	6	3
Huddersfield	H	1-1	7	2
Stoke City	A	2-1	10	4
Ipswich Town	A	1-2	10	5
Nott'm Forest	H	0-0	11	4
Tranmere	H	2-1	14	2
West Brom	A	0-0	15	2
Man City	A	0-6	15	6
Port Vale	H	4-2	18	3
Bury	H	3-1	21	2
Wolves	A	1-3	21	2
Sunderland	A	0-0	22	2
Norwich City	H	1-0	25	2
Portsmouth	A	1-0	28	1
QPR	H	3-1	31	1
Bradford City	H	1-0	34	1
Stockport	A	2-4	34	2
Middlesbrough	H	1-2	34	3
Charlton	A	0-3	34	4
Oxford United	H	4-1	37	5
Sheff United	A	1-2	37	6
Birmingham	H	1-1	38	7
Nott'm Forest	A	0-3	38	9
Ipswich Town	H	0-2	38	9
Crewe	A	0-2	38	10
Reading	H	0-2	38	10
Bradford City	A	1-1	39	10
Stoke City	H	1-0	42	8
Huddersfield	A	0-0	43	10

Appearance Details

	A	G	C	Previous Clubs
Ty Gooden	28	2	5	Wycombe Arsenal
23/10/72	3			
Fraser Digby	25	1		Man Utd Swindon (L)
23/4/67 Eng U21				Oldham
Brian Borrows	24	4		Coventry Bristol City (L)
20/12/80 Eng B				Bolton Everton
Alan McDonald	23(2)	3		QPR Charlton (L)
12/10/63 N Ire	3			
Chris Hay	22(3)	14	5	Celtic
28/8/74	2	1		
Craig Taylor	17(3)	1		Dorchester
24/1/74	1			
Scott Leitch	16(1)	1	3	Hearts Dunfermline
6/10/69	2	1		
Mark Walters	15(4)	3	2	Southampton Liverpool
2/6/64 England	2(1)	1		Wolves (L) Stoke (L)
				Rangers Villa
Darren Bullock	14(5)	7(1)		Huddersfield Nuneaton
12/2/69				
Mark Robinson	14(1)	1	3	Newcastle Barnsley
21/11/68	2			West Brom
Kevin Watson	11(2)			Tottenham Brentford (L)
3/1/74	1			Bristol City (L) Barnet
Stephen Finney	10(6)	4	1	Man City Preston
31/10/73	1(1)			
Jason Drysdale	10(3)		1	Newcastle Watford
17/11/70 Eng Yth	2(1)			
Lee Collins	9(4)		4(1)	Albion Possil Utd
3/2/74	1			
Phillipe Cuervo	9(3)		1	St Etienne
13/8/69	2			
Ian Culverhouse	8(1)		2	Norwich Tottenham
22/9/64 Eng Yth	1			
George Ndah	8	1	1	Palace Bournemouth (L)
23/12/74	1			
Mark Seagraves	5			Bolton Man City
22/10/65 Eng Yth	2			Liverpool Norwich
Steve Cowe	4(3)	1	1	Villa
29/9/74	(1)			
Bobby Howe	4		1	Forest Ipswich (L)
6/11/73				
Steve Mildenhall	3			
13/5/78				
Alex Smith	2(3)		1	Everton
15/2/76				
Frank Talia	1	1		Blackburn Hartlepool
20/7/72	1			(L)
Michael Pattimore	(2)			
15/3/79				
Robin Hulbert	(1)			
14/3/80 Eng Yth				
Steve McMahon	(1)			Man City Liverpool
20/8/61 England				Villa Everton

appearances - A (as sub), goals - G and Cautions - C
date of birth & cup details on 2nd row

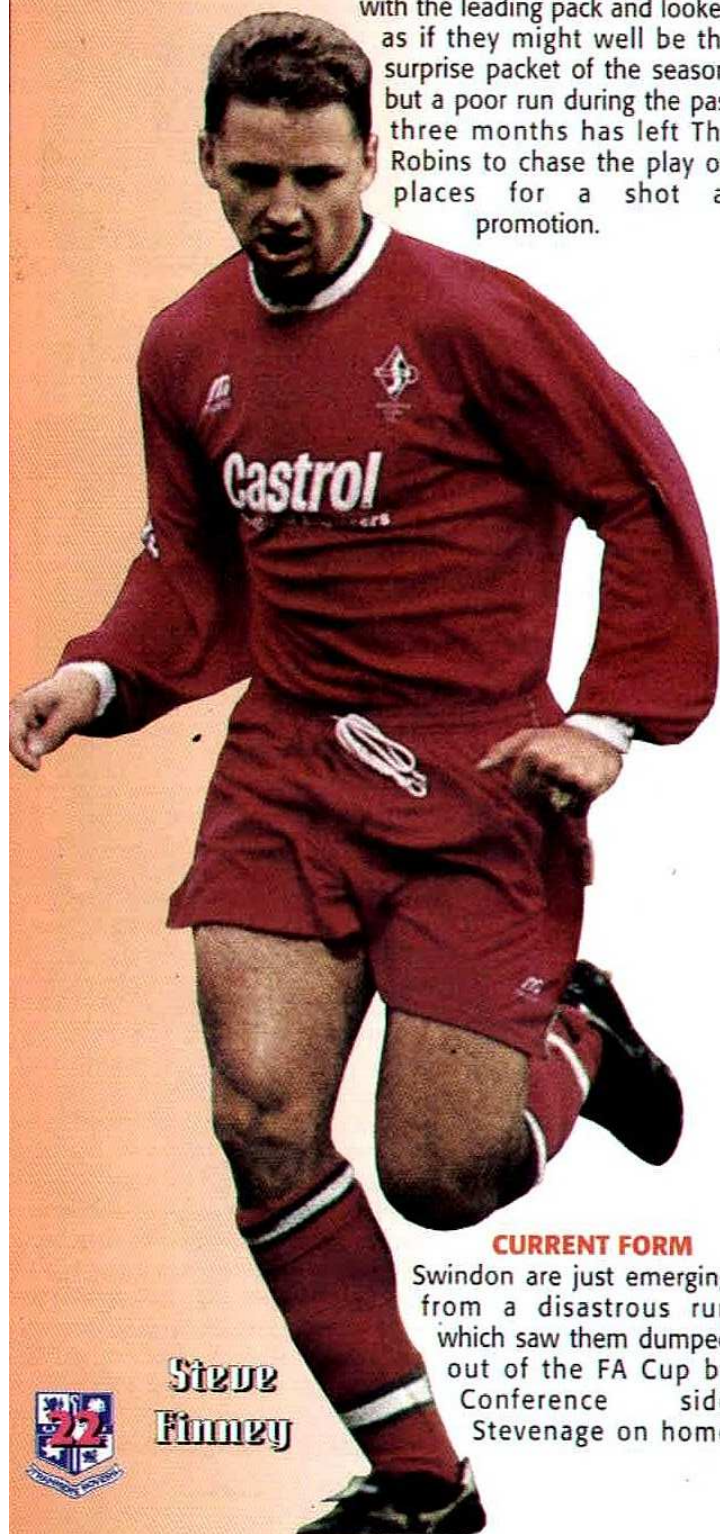
Robins

Dave Knott Introduces ...

Swindon

Good evening and welcome to tonight's visitors Swindon Town. This fixture should have been played this coming Saturday but due to Rovers' more pressing engagements has been brought forward. Earlier in the season Rovers were unfortunate to lose 2-1 at The County Ground, a fact acknowledged by Steve McMahon in his post match comments. At that point Swindon were nicely tucked in

with the leading pack and looked as if they might well be the surprise packet of the season, but a poor run during the past three months has left The Robins to chase the play off places for a shot at promotion.



Steve
Finney

soil, and lose eight out of ten league games as they dropped from top spot to tenth in the First Division. The break needed to end that run came when Chris Hay snatched a last minute equaliser for The Robins at Bradford City a couple of weeks ago. That was followed up by a morale boosting 1-0 victory at home to Stoke. Reports suggested the game was a bit of a yawn but when confidence is low results come first and the performances can follow. Ten days ago a battling 0-0 draw was ground out away to Huddersfield and Steve McMahon will have been hoping that the unbeaten run could be extended last Saturday when Swindon entertained West Brom.

THE COUNTY GROUND

The County Ground whilst having been somewhat redeveloped during the 90s still retains the character of a traditional English football ground, i.e. four completely different looking sides. The North Stand was built in 1971 immediately behind the old Main Stand which stayed in place until construction was finished. On completion the old stand was taken down leaving open ground between the touchline and the front of the upper tier of the new stand. The intention at the time was to add a lower tier but the open area was not actually seated until 1992. To the right of the North Stand is the Town End, formerly a terrace which was converted to seating in 1990. It looks rather a poor relation when contrasted with the North Stand and the new Intel Stand which was erected in 1994 in place of the old Tattoo Stand which had been closed for safety reasons in 1985. The Intel Stand took just 14 weeks to complete, and it was intended to build a similar type of stand at the Stratton End, but the club came into conflict with the residents of the houses behind who objected to the proposed height. As a temporary measure seats have been bolted to two thirds of the terrace. Given the size of the site the club occupy it is difficult to understand how the ground came to be built so tightly into one corner, where the closeness of their neighbours now stops the club from completed the ground in the manner they would like.

CURRENT FORM

Swindon are just emerging from a disastrous run which saw them dumped out of the FA Cup by Conference side Stevenage on home



in Town

THE SQUAD

Fraser Digby currently the longest serving player on the books at Swindon is the senior keeper with the Robins. He joined Swindon in 1986 and celebrated his testimonial season last term. His competition comes from Aussie **Frank Talia** and 20-year-old **Steve Mildenhall**. Last season Mildenhall came on as an outfield substitute at Prenton Park when Swindon visited in the midst of an injury crisis.

At the back **Brian Borrows** has been a permanent fixture since his arrival from Coventry at the start of the season, as has ex-Newcastle man **Mark Robinson** since his return from injury in December. **Craig Taylor** who was picked up from Dorchester town has impressed with his performances this season and he is keeping the experienced **Alan McDonald** on the subs bench. Out with a long term



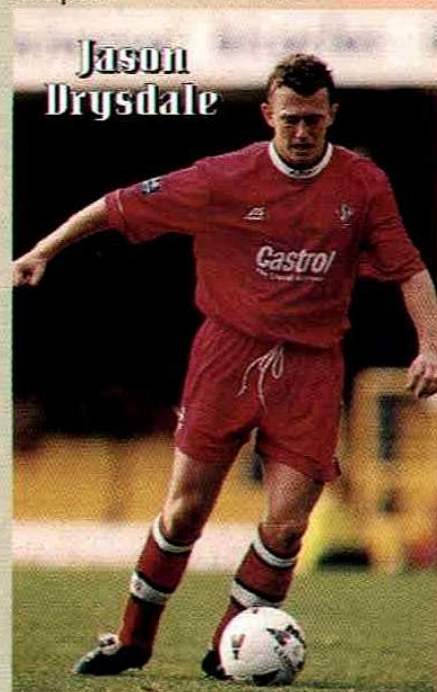
injury is club captain **Mark Seagraves**. Other defenders on the books include **Ian Culverhouse** who joined the club in 1994 from Norwich, and **Jason Drysdale** who was one of eight players placed on the transfer list following the defeat by Stevenage. New signing from Nottingham Forest **Bobby Howe** has been brought in to hopefully add some goals from midfield. He had been on the list at Forest frustrated at his lack of first team opportunities. **Scott Leitch** who was recruited from Hearts and **Darren Bullock** a £400,000 signing from huddersfield last season have been vying for the ball winners role all season with neither able to say they are ahead in the pecking order.

In the flair and imagination department McMahon can select from the talented Frenchman **Phillippe Cuervo** who joined the club in the summer or **Mark Walters** who scored a fizzy dazzler against Rovers at The County Ground earlier in the season. The tough tackling **Lee Collins** who spent much of last season out injured and **Ty Gooden** who can play wing back or an attacking midfield role complete the midfield options. Steve McMahon will be hoping that **Chris Hay** can rediscover the form which saw him score 13 goals before injury interrupted his season before Christmas. The pacy Scotsman cost £330,000 when he joined from Celtic in the summer and took to English football immediately. He is likely to be

partnered by **Steve Finney** who had a loan spell with Cambridge earlier in the season. On his return he struck in three successive games in December and he is currently preferred ahead of **George Ndah** who was signed to fill the gap left by the departed Wayne Allison. Ndah has had a lean time of it since his transfer scoring only once in nine outings. The livewire **Steve Cowe** who had 32 starts last season has failed to find a regular place this term. **Kevin Watson** may come into contention now that loan signing David Thompson has been recalled by Liverpool

THE MANAGEMENT

Following Swindon's relegation from the Premiership in 1994, John Gorman paid the ultimate price when a second successive relegation battle loomed in the Autumn of that year. Enter **STEVE McMAHON** given his first shot at management and the task of keeping the club in the First Division. This he could not achieve but he did manage to steer the club to the semi final of the Coca Cola Cup where they were narrowly beaten by Bolton 4-3 on aggregate. The Swindon support did not take to McMahon's style initially and he managed to upset them by selling crowd favourite Jan Aage Fjortoft, but any reservations they may have had in that first season were overcome as he led the club to the Second Division Championship and promotion at the first attempt. It speaks volumes that he rates this as the highlight of his career despite having won the games top honours while a player at Liverpool, where he played alongside Aldo. An ambitious man he is determined to lead Swindon back to the top flight and the clubs recent run will have probably tested his patience more than anything else



WHAT? RUGBY LEAGUE AT PRENTON PARK?

by Gilbert Upton

At the time Steve Wilson and I were publishing our book *Tranmere Rovers 1921-1997 - A Complete Record*, in November, 1997, I received a letter from Michael Wray, son of Billy the Badge, to point out a mistake in my book *Tranmere Rovers 1881-1921 - A New History*. For those with a copy, it is on page 47 where I wrote that, in 1903, Rovers entered into a ground sharing arrangement with "Birkenhead Rugby Union Club". Michael pointed out that the ground share was with Birkenhead Northern Union Football Club who played the professional rugby code. In 1922, the Northern Union, sworn enemy of rugby union, became what we know now as the Rugby League.

I confess that it had always struck me as rather odd that a semi-professional soccer club would be so closely associated with an amateur rugby club but, obviously, I had allowed the important difference to pass me by. Michael's letter did, however, arouse my curiosity and I decided to see what I could find out about the affair in the *Birkenhead News* and the *Advertiser*.

Birkenhead Wanderers rugby union club was founded in the early 1880s, an artisans' rather than a gentleman's club, with their headquarters in the Queen's Hotel outside the Park Entrance. They switched to the Lancashire Second Competition of the professional Northern Union code from season 1897-98 to allow their working class members to be paid for playing and later became known simply as Birkenhead (not to be confused with the Birkenhead A.F.C. who started up in 1899 in Bedford Park). Their ground, the Park Station enclosure, had originally been the home of Birkenhead Park rugby union club, when it was called St Anne's field, being opposite St Anne's Vicarage across the road in Birkenhead Park. It was when Park rugby club moved to Upper Park, in 1886, that Wanderers took over their ground on that rectangle of land now bounded by Duke Street, Park Road North, Arthur Street and the Mersey Railway line cutting behind Harcourt Street. Like Tranmere Rovers, they enclosed their ground prior to the start of the 1888-89 season - "This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, and I do not hesitate to say that they will reap a substantial benefit financially, and rid their ground of a host of children and a set of rowdies who were a source of annoyance to respectable spectators." (*News*, 5 September, 1888).

Birkenhead became members of the Northern Union's new Second Division in 1902-03 season but, soon after their last home game of the season, against champions Keighley on 25th April, 1903, they were given three months' notice to quit their ground because of "THE RUTHLESS MARCH OF THE BUILDER" as a headline in the *News* of 13th May put it. The expansion of Birkenhead meant that the built up area of new housing was inexorably moving up the stretch of Conway Street that today we know as Park Road North. "The building operations have latterly been characterised by great activity in the neighbourhood, and the trowel wielders have crept nearer and nearer until now houses in course of erection overlook the ground, and the inevitable end has come; the chaser of the leather must chase it elsewhere." (*Advertiser*, 16th May, 1903). Their committee took the news with an equanimity that puzzled many but it was not long before it became common knowledge that a deal with Tranmere Rovers was being put together. At their annual general meeting, on 11th June in Gamble's cafe in Conway Street, the members learned of the club's mounting financial difficulties, brought about by poor results and attendances coupled with heavy travel expenses, and were informed that agreement had indeed been reached with Tranmere Rovers to use Prenton Park, then located in Temple Road.

Rovers had also had an approach from a local soccer club, Melrose, who similarly had lost their ground in Downham Road, but they could not match the spectacular offer from the Northern Unionists. As well as paying an annual fee of £10 (when they had been paying £30 for the Park Station enclosure), Birkenhead would, at their own expense (£30), move their grandstand to Prenton Park, to be erected on the reserved side (for the toffs), and they would bring too their turnstiles and other valuable fittings, amenities which Rovers had previously managed to do without. In return, Birkenhead became joint tenants of Prenton Park under the terms of which they could not be given notice unless Rovers had a similar notice. Thus, when the season started, Prenton Park had been greatly improved, the result of a canny bit of business by Rovers' President 'Pa' McGaul who was, in effect, their landlord too through his business interests. As events subsequently unfolded, it became an

agreement from which only Tranmere Rovers benefited.

After two pre-season trial games, Birkenhead's first fixture at Prenton Park was a friendly against powerful First Division Runcom, played on Wednesday, 2nd September, which was lost 0-28. After losing their opening 1903-04 Northern Union league fixture 0-14 at Wakefield Trinity on 5th September, their first home game was on 12th September against St Helens - another defeat, 0-3. Only once was there a clash of fixtures at Prenton Park when, on 16th January, Rovers had a home Cheshire Senior Cup tie against Port Sunlight and Birkenhead's home fixture against Castleford was switched to Wirral Railway F.C.'s Docks Station ground in Cavendish Street.

It was to become an even worse season than before with a finish in 14th place out of 17 (9th of 18 in 1902-03). Gates were extremely poor and did not benefit from access to Rovers' soccer fans who showed no interest in the handling code. Whereas Rovers' home attendances were around the 2,500 mark, Northern Union games initially brought in barely 1,000. By the end of the season, they were down to 200. Financially, this was catastrophic as gate money was well below what was required to meet travel expenses to away fixtures in such distant towns as Barrow, Wakefield, South Shields and Pontefract. The committee began to rue their switch to the Northern Union as Birkenhead was very much on the periphery of the game's heartland after the withdrawal of other Cheshire sides, such as Stockport who had shared Edgeley Park with County F.C. However, this did not preclude the inter-county game between Cheshire and Northumberland & Durham being staged at Prenton Park on 25th February, 1904, an 8 points to 4 Cheshire victory.

At Birkenhead's agm, on 5th July, 1904, in the Grange Hotel, Charing Cross, the club announced a deficit of £135.9s.2d much of which had been financed by committee members, notably Messrs J. Love the secretary, J. Grayston the treasurer and T. Collins the president, paying out of their own pockets. With little prospect of income from gates improving, the club opened the new season, on 3rd September, with a visit to Brighouse Rangers with scant cause for optimism. True enough, the first three games were all big defeats with not a solitary point registered in opposition. Then the home game with Holbeck on 24th September was called off when the Leeds club defaulted to the soccer code and so, having only a meagre revenue from the single home game with York on 10th September, the club failed to fulfil the fixture at Pontefract on 1st October. The committee were reduced to appealing to Pontefract for assistance to meet their travelling expenses across the Pennines, but to no avail. Resignation was submitted to the Northern Union who persuaded them to keep going as their next game was to be at home against Dewsbury.

This time the Fates conspired to bring it all to an end. The town of Dewsbury was gripped by an outbreak of smallpox, a disease which terrorised any community which suffered it, and there was a reluctance to allow players and followers from that stricken town into Birkenhead. In desperation, the committee decided to play the game in Dewsbury, despite the health risk to the players, officials and followers, and to their friends and families on their return. They were given a warm welcome by the beleaguered folk of Dewsbury when they ran out on 8th October but it ended there with another heavy defeat, 0-23. It was to be Birkenhead's last game in the Northern Union. Faced with the expenses of a long trip to Barrow the following Saturday, the committee again submitted their resignation to the League Committee and, this time, it was accepted. A playing record of played 4, lost 4, 0 points for and 93 points against, plus the large and worsening financial deficit, was a clear indication that the club did not have a future - "The officials, who deserve all credit for the determined struggle to keep the club alive, have had to make contributions from their own pockets to prolong its life, just as they have come to the rescue in past seasons. But workmen must come to the end of their financial resources sooner or later, and with such a prospect before them, the committee wisely considered their own individual interests first." (*Advertiser*, 8th October, 1904).

This was not quite the last of Northern Union football in Birkenhead though. The following Thursday, 13th October, the inter-county game between Cheshire and Cumberland was staged at Prenton Park, Cheshire winning by 5 points to 2, to bring to an end this intriguing chapter in the history of Tranmere Rovers.



The Swinging Sixties Revisited

Just to prove that they weren't totally dependent on Yardley, Rovers bounced back with a convincing 3-0 win at Mansfield with goals from Stevens, Pritchard and Williams. Injuries were taking their toll, however, and with Johnny King, Casey, Hill and Robertson absent they suffered their second home defeat of the season at the hands of a useful Watford side. This match saw the debut of Rovers' latest acquisition, 23-year-old Scottish winger, John MacNamee, a former team mate of George Yardley's in his Raith Rovers days. In King's absence the reliable Stan Storton regained his right back slot while there was promising talk of Stan's younger brother, Trevor, a 17-year-old centre half who had just signed professional terms after a string of impressive reserve team performances.

Off the field came the sad news that Fred Lloyd had been forced, by ill health to relinquish the chairmanship of the club, his place being taken by the long term director and local Co-op chairman, Chris Hodgson.

For the next few weeks Rovers continued to impress at home and failed to bring anything back from their travels but there was no let up from the Yardley goal machine. After going down 0-2 at bogey team Southport in the local derby Yardley collected a brace in an impressive 2-0 revenge victory over Walsall. He was given a new striking partner in this match in young Kenny Beamish, a Bebington lad who had made his debut at the back end of the ill-fated 1965'66 season. "Beamo" scored his first league goal the following Friday against Scunthorpe, who were beaten by the same scoreline.

Thirty Years Ago . . .

Rovers warmed up for their 4th round FA Cup tie with Coventry City by beating Colchester 2-1 at Layer Road thanks to George Yardley and Graham Williams. The 3,739 crowd was a tenth of that at Highfield Road seven days later! Meanwhile Trevor Storton got a dramatic call up to the England Youth squad.



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Sue Adams

WEDNESDAY, 4th FEBRUARY, 1998

Attendance: 29,540

Journey: Three hours, 2 1/2 video journey

Mileage: Prenton Park to Riverside Stadium: 145 miles x 2 = 290 miles.

Mileage so far this season: 4,056 miles.

Ground: Best Feature - Brilliant PA system, impressive external appearance. Worst Feature - Awful pitch (and the media blame ours for our league position), no scoreboard!

Previous Matches There: This was our first ever visit to the Cellnet Riverside Stadium

Mascots: A big, cuddly-looking brown animal with a long tail - your guess is as good as mine what "it" was.

Home Crowd: Cheered the goals but generally not very noisy. Played "Another one bites the dust" when they scored.

Best chant: We're top of the league - two minutes from end.

Away End/View: Behind goal, in a corner. Clear and unobstructed.

Distance from coach: Dropped right outside before game, five minutes walk after game.

Away crowd/number: Approx. 150 - subdued by Rovers' poor performance.

Police/Officials: Heavy police presence in immediate vicinity of ground but let stewards get on with it. Surrounding roads blocked off making access to car parks a frustrating experience. Impressive display of synchronised motorbike riding from coach escort after game.

Standard of toilets: Clean, hot water, paper towels.

Admission: Seats £17 (£10). **Food:** Usual high catering prices but reasonable quality (finished 8th in recent national survey).

Rovers performance and Man of the Match: Held our own for half an hour until first goal. Denied opening goal by linesman, the same one also allowing Boro's third goal from an obviously offside position. We eventually became disjointed and ended well beaten. MOTM: Kenny Irons shared with John McGreal

Home team's performance: Did enough to win comfortably. Missed several easy second half chances. Seemed to be playing well within themselves. MOTM - Andy Townsend.

Referee: John Kirby (Sheffield) Watching the White Lightning video on the coach made you realise how often last season this referee was involved in controversial penalty incidents with us (Portsmouth home for them, Oldham away for them). This time no penalties, but you still got the impression that the odds were stacked in favour of the home side. The linesmen also gave several debatable decisions against us - it sometimes felt like we were playing against 14.

Lasting memories of the day: How far home it seems after a disappointing performance. When are we going to score a goal?!

And The Lassies!

Tickets & Travel

Box Office Info on Rovers' coming Home & Away Fixtures

Saturday, February 14th, 1998 – FA CUP 5th ROUND

NEWCASTLE v TRFC 3 pm KO

CHECK AVAILABILITY WITH TICKET OFFICE FOR MATCH AND COACH TICKETS

Wednesday, February 18th, 1998

NORWICH CITY v TRFC 7.45 pm KO

Executive Coaches only – Depart 12.15 pm

£17.50 (£16 under 16/over 60)

Admission £12 adult, £7 Junior/Senior Citizens

TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED FROM TICKET OFFICE BEFORE 5pm

TUESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY

NO TICKETS AVAILABLE ON THE DAY

Saturday, February 21st, 1998

TRFC v CREWE ALEXANDRA 3 pm KO

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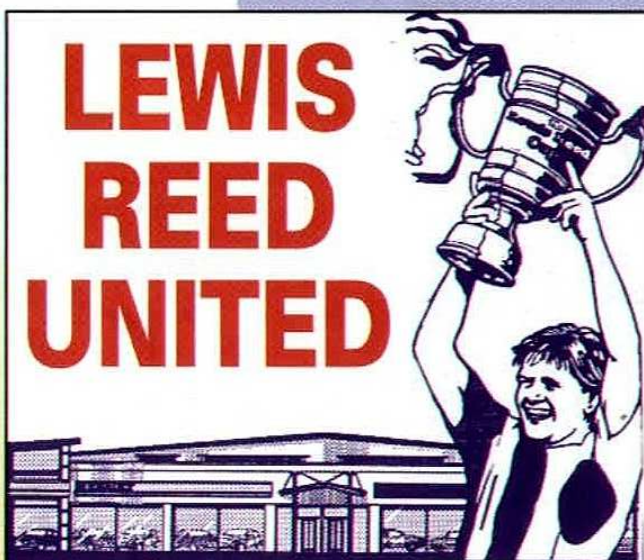
NEWCASTLE, NORWICH

How to get there...

NEWCASTLE: Use A1, A68 and then A6127, cross River Tyne and at R/B take 1st exit into Mosley St. One way keep to left lane into Neville St. At end turn right into Clayton Street for Newgate St. Then left into Leazes Park Road (one way). Parking to north of ground and in side streets. For St James Park – just follow the crowds.

NORWICH: Follow the ring road to the east side of the city, following the signs for Gt Yarmouth (A47). Then follow the signs for the Riverside Park and Ride into Norwich. The ground is next to park and ride car park.

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SERIOUS PERFORMANCE

Tranmere Rovers FC

Tranmere Rovers Football Club will be looking just as good this season. Thanks to their exclusive Mizuno strip.

Prenton Pups

Les Sands

On Thursday, January 29th the Pups gathered for their first meeting of the year. Alan Beedles opened by awarding prizes to recent Kennel competition winners. They were v. WBA – Katy Clough; Sunderland – Michelle McLean and Andrew Taylor; Oxford – Helen Shrimpton; Ipswich – Katy Clough (again!)

Alan also announced, regretfully, that the Norwich Awayday would not go ahead as many families would be making the effort to go to Newcastle, or Stevenage, and the burden on the family budget would prove too much.

It was fitting, following Rovers fine FA Cup win over Sunderland, that the Pups guests were goalscorer Andy Parkinson and Alan Morgan. Andy, used to the media attention following interviews on TV and radio, now had to face the real challenge – a battery of questions from the Pups.

He opened by revealing his experience at Liverpool. He started out with Michael Owen and then progressed, training with the likes of Jamie Redknapp and Robbie Fowler. Now his footballing education is continuing under the wing of the master goalscorer John Aldridge, Andy revealed: "He was the main reason for coming to Prenton Park". Despite Michael Owen's call up to the England squad Andy still describes the new Liverpool hero as Welsh – he was born in Chester!

At this point, Rovers' proudest

Welshman, Alan Morgan, looked forward to the next round – hopefully against Newcastle. Alan said: "If we can keep Shearer quiet we've got a chance". Andy was asked about his celebration after the goal. "It was fantastic. I just set off on a run and got to the paddock when that fella with the flag jumped on me – I couldn't get him off! The crowd were great all game. It's much easier when the crowd are behind you."

Alan described the fabulous team spirit at the club, especially as a number of youngsters are beginning to prove their worth to the manager. As a reward for their efforts the players jetted off to Dublin for a few days of golf and a day at the races. "We sometimes get recognised but Liam, David Kelly and the Gaffer get all the attention".

Alan is starting to look around for a new house as he's now signed a new contract that will keep him at Rovers for a few more years, at least. He fancies the Bromborough area at the moment. On the other hand, Andy is happy to live at home with his family over the water in Childwall.

As usual, both players kindly stayed behind to sign loads of autographs for the excited Pups before leaving to rousing cheers. Thanks to Alan and Andy for their support.

MIDFIELDERS

The Midfielders have kindly

donated a pair of Mizuno Estriela Jnr football boots for the Pups. During the meeting everyone was asked their shoe size and the members with the correct size will be put into a hat to decide who wins the prize. Those who weren't at the meeting can leave their shoe size with Debbie in the Kennel. The draw will be made later in the season.

PLAYER OF THE MONTH

It is no surprise that Steve Simonsen has collected most votes in January for his efforts between the sticks and puts himself in the reckoning for the Player of the Year trophy in May. At the moment Lee Jones is leading the way with David Kelly in hot pursuit.

Sadly the news of Andy Thorn's retirement from the playing side of football has just been announced – The Prenton Pups wish him all the best for the future in whatever he chooses to do.

Finally, the Pups welcome all fans of Swindon here tonight, enjoy your visit and have a safe journey home

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DIVISION 1 – "A" TEAM

16th Aug	Man. City "A"	A	1-4 (J. Koumas)
23rd Aug	Stoke City "A"	A	1-0 (N. Gibson)
5th Sept	Morecambe Res	A	2-6 (Moran, Gibbons)
13th Sept	Wrexham "A"	A	5-4 (Moran 2, Parkinson 3)
27th Sept	Man. Utd. "A"	A	0-5
4th Oct	Blackburn Rovers "A"	H	4-1 (Moran 2, Gibbons, Gibson)
11th Oct	Burnley "A"	H	0-1
18th Oct	Everton "A"	H	1-1 (Parkinson)
25th Oct	Bolton W. "A"	A	0-2
1st Nov	Crewe Alex Res.	H	1-3 (Moran)
8th Nov	Oldham Ath. "A"	A	2-1 (Moran 2)
15th Nov	Man. Utd. "A"	H	1-3 (Williams)
22nd Nov	Bury "A"	A	3-3 (Moran, McIntyre, Williams)
29th Nov	Stoke City "A"	H	p-p
13th Dec	Wrexham "A"	H	1-4 (Williams)
20th Dec	Marine Res.	A	3-0 (Koumas, Edwards 2)
10th Jan	Morecambe Res	H	2-0
17th Jan	Marine Res.	H	5-1 (Koumas, McAteer, Anthony 3)
24th Jan	Oldham Ath. "A"	H	0-2
31st Jan	Crewe Alex Res.	A	2-2 (Anthony, Taylor)
7th Feb	Liverpool "A"	H	-
14th Feb	Everton "A"	A	-
21st Feb	Bolton W. "A"	H	-
28th Feb	Blackburn Rovers "A"	A	-
7th Mar	Man. City "A"	H	-
14th Mar	Preston NE "A"	H	-
21st Mar	Bury "A"	H	-
28th Mar	Preston NE "A"	A	-
4th Apr	Marine Res.	H	-
11th Apr	Burnley "A"	A	-
25th Apr	Liverpool "A"	A	-

LANCASHIRE LEAGUE

DIVISION 2 – "B" TEAM

16th Aug	Oldham Ath. "B"	A	2-1 (C. Edge, P. Taylor)
18th Aug	Crewe Alex. "A"	A	2-1 (P. Rogers, C. Edge)
23rd Aug	Blackburn R. "B"	H	4-2 (K. Davies 3, R. Hinds)
30th Aug	Wigan Ath. "A"	A	1-3 (Williams)
2nd Sept	Liverpool "B"	A	0-1
13th Sept	Wrexham "B"	H	4-0 (Tippet 3, Davies)
16th Sept	Everton "B"	A	1-2 (K. Davies)
20th Sept	Burnley "B"	A	4-2 (Koumas, Moran 2, Graves)
27th Sept	Blackpool "A"	A	0-3
4th Oct	Chester City "A"	A	2-0 (Sharps, Hinds)
11th Oct	Man. City "B"	A	3-0 (Moran 2, Edge)
18th Oct	Man. City "B"	H	2-1 (Lampkin, Davies)
25th Oct	Man. Utd. "B"	H	4-0 (Edge 2, Davies, Taylor)
28th Oct	Bury "B"	H	4-1 (Edge, Small, Taylor, Lampkin)
1st Nov	Carlisle Utd. "B"	A	2-2 (Rogers, Joy)
8th Nov	Crewe Alex. "A"	H	2-2 (Rogers, Joy)
15th Nov	Man. Utd. "B"	A	1-1 (Rogers)
22nd Nov	Marine Youth	H	2-2 (Taylor 2)
29th Nov	Morecambe "A"	H	6-2 (Taylor, Davies 2, Edge 2, Holmes)
6th Dec	Liverpool "B"	H	2-0 (Edge, Hines)
13th Dec	Rochdale "A"	A	2-2 (Edge, Holmes)
20th Dec	Oldham Ath. "B"	H	1-3 (Holmes)
31st Jan	Stockport Co. "A"	H	2-1 (Davies, Hinds)
7th Feb	Chester City "A"	H	-
11th Feb	Bury "B"	A	-
14th Feb	Burnley "B"	H	-
17th Feb	Marine Youth	A	-
28th Feb	Wrexham "B"	A	-
7th Mar	Stockport Co. "A"	A	-
14th Mar	Wigan Ath. "A"	H	-
21st Mar	Carlisle Utd. "B"	H	-
28th Mar	Blackpool "A"	H	-
4th Apr	Morecambe "A"	A	-
11th Apr	Everton "B"	H	-
18th Apr	Rochdale "A"	H	-
2nd May	Blackburn R. "B"	A	-

CREWE RES 2 TRFC A 2

Tranmere A had a good result at Crewe Reserves gaining a 2-2 draw, but in the end it was disappointing as they were easily the best team and threw away a two goal lead. In the first half hour Rovers played some brilliant football and should have scored more goals, Chris Edge in midfield doing particularly well.

Tranmere scored two goals through **Marc Anthony** and **Perry Taylor** to give them a well deserved lead. In the second half Rovers tired a little and the experienced Crewe side came back into the game. Danny Coyne was playing in goal to give him some match practice and his obvious experience helped his young defenders many times.

Crewe reduced the arrears with a splendidly taken goal, and soon afterwards Rovers were awarded a penalty but unfortunately Ryan Williams failed to score from the spot kick. In the dying minutes Crewe scored an undeserved equaliser to send a young Tranmere side home bemoaning missing too many chances. Team: Coyne; Holmes, Joy, Sharps, Small, Edge, Williams, Anthony, Taylor, Koumas, Graves. Subs: Tippet, Shields, Kelly.

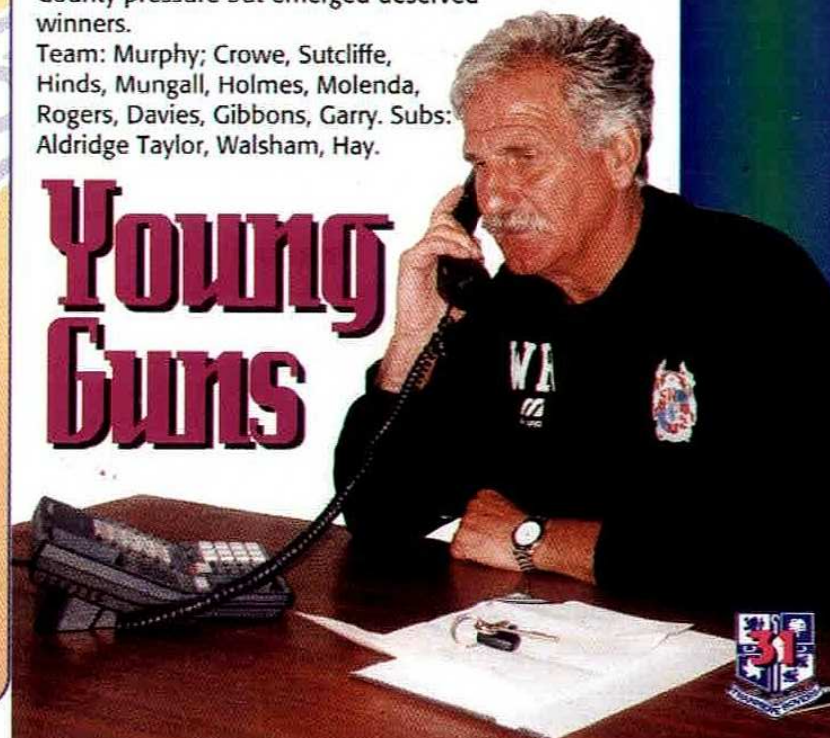
TRFC B 2 STOCKPORT A 1

Tranmere came out on top in a hard fought game against Stockport County. The bumpy pitch, and a referee prone to give free kicks every time there was any physical contact at all, made it difficult to see too much stylish football. Rovers had more of the play and threatened the visitors goal several times. After 20 minutes they took the lead when Spencer Garry shot across the goal after a corner was cleared and **Richard Hinds** deflected the ball over the line.

Ten minutes later Stockport equalised when one of their forwards headed in from close range from one of the numerous free kicks the referee was awarding, although it was poor marking by the Rover defence. The second half was a similar pattern to the first until **Kevin Davies** scored the winner. He turned a Stockport defender in the penalty box and fired a great left foot shot inside the near post to beat the keeper. In the last 10 minutes Rovers resisted some late County pressure but emerged deserved winners.

Team: Murphy; Crowe, Sutcliffe, Hinds, Mungall, Holmes, Molenda, Rogers, Davies, Gibbons, Garry. Subs: Aldridge Taylor, Walsham, Hay.

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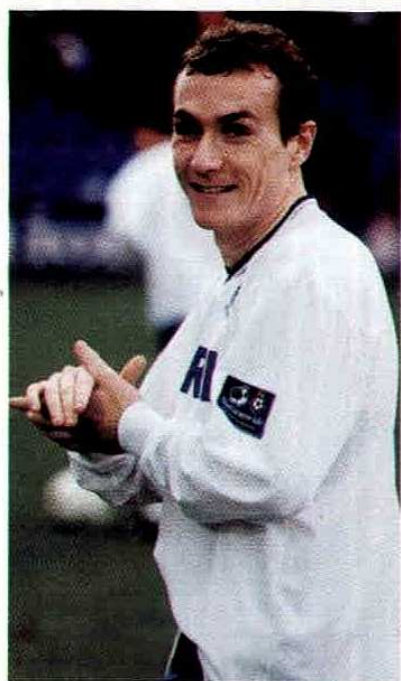


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Micky Mellon FACTFILE

Date of Birth March 18th, 1972
Place of Residence Blackpool
Football Achievements/Honours Promotion with Bristol City & WBA
What Car Do You Drive? BMW
What Scares You? Being third from bottom
Who Or What Makes You Laugh? Billy Connolly
What Makes You Angry? Losing
Main Spare Time Activity? Driving from Blackpool to Birkenhead
Favourite Player? John Morrissey
Biggest Risk Taken? Going to close down Georgi Kinkladze

Get Out The Anorak and find out everything you ever wanted to know about TRFC this season!

Roverstarts

Date	V	Opponents & Event	F-A	Att.	Pos.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Ref.
Sat 9 Aug	A	West Bromwich Albion	1-2	16,727	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Branch	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Irons	Morrissey	Taylor
Tues 12 Aug	H	Hartlepool United (CCC1-1)	3-1	3,879	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Morgan	Irons	Coddington
Fri 15 Aug	H	Queens Park Rangers	2-1	7,467	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Matheson
Fri 22 Aug	A	Manchester City	1-1	26,336	9	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Brandwood
Tues 26 Aug	A	Hartlepool United (CCC1-2)	1-2	1,626	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Leake
Sat 30 Aug	H	Middlesbrough	0-2	12,095	11	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Richards
Tues 2 Sept	H	Birmingham City	0-3	6,620	16	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	Challinor	Thom	O'Brien	Branch	Cook	G. Jones	Morgan	L. Jones	Aldridge	Morrissey	Irons	Frankland
Sat 6 Sept	A	Bury	0-1	5,073	19	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Branch	Cook	G. Jones	Morgan	L. Jones	O'Brien	Morrissey	Challinor	Fumande
Sat 13 Sept	A	Swindon Town	1-2	6,811	21	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Bailey
Tues 16 Sept	A	Notts County (CCC-2/1)	2-0	1,779	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Branch	Irons	Bennett
Sat 20 Sept	H	Reading	6-0	5,565	17	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Mahon	Branch	Morgan	Laws
Tues 23 Sept	H	Notts County (CCC-2/2)	0-1	3,287	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Mahon	Branch	Morgan	Pearson
Sat 27 Sept	A	Crewe Alexandra	1-2	4,845	20	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	O'Brien	Morrissey	Cook	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Mahon	Irons	Danson
Sat 4 Oct	H	Norwich City	2-0	6,674	20	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Branch	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	Morgan	Mahon	Walshe
Tues 14 Oct	A	Oxford CCC R3 (lost 5-6 on pens)	1-1	3,878	-	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Branch	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	O'Brien	Morgan	Mahon	Kirby
Sat 18 Oct	A	Nottingham Forest	2-2	17,009	20	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	Hill	Challinor	Irons	Morgan	Mahon	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Branch	Morrissey	McIntyre	Knight
Weds 22 Oct	A	Wolverhampton W.	1-2	20,841	20	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	Morgan	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Mahon	Branch	G. Jones	L. Jones	O'Brien	McIntyre	Parkinson	Lomas
Sat 25 Oct	H	Charlton Athletic	2-2	5,911	21	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	Morgan	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	O'Brien	Branch	G. Jones	L. Jones	Aldridge	McIntyre	Mahon	Wiley
Sat 1 Nov	A	Sheffield United	1-2	16,578	22	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Challinor	Branch	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Mellon	Morrissey	Morgan	Leake
Tues 4 Nov	H	Huddersfield Town	1-0	5,127	18	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Branch	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Morrissey	Challinor	Mahon	Bates
Sat 8 Nov	H	Port Vale	1-2	7,063	20	Coyne	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Branch	Kelly	G. Jones	L. Jones	Morrissey	Challinor	Mahon	Lynch
Sat 15 Nov	A	Bradford City	1-0	16,494	17	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Aldridge	Branch	O'Brien	L. Jones	Morrissey	Challinor	Mahon	Heilbron
Sat 22 Nov	H	Stoke City	3-1	8,009	16	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Aldridge	Kelly	O'Brien	L. Jones	Morrissey	Mahon	G. Jones	G. Laws
Sat 29 Nov	A	Sunderland	0-3	26,674	16	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Aldridge	Kelly	O'Brien	L. Jones	Morrissey	Challinor	G. Jones	Robinson
Sat 6 Dec	H	Ipswich Town	1-1	5,720	17	Simonsen	Stevens	Morgan	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Mellon	Kelly	O'Brien	L. Jones	Aldridge	Mahon	G. Jones	Singh
Sat 13 Dec	A	Stockport County	1-3	7,903	19	Simonsen	Stevens	Morgan	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Aldridge	G. Jones	O'Brien	Mellon	Parkinson	Mahon	Hebel	Fletcher
Sat 20 Dec	H	Oxford United	0-2	5,181	21	Simonsen	Morgan	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Morrissey	G. Jones	Kelly	Mellon	L. Jones	Aldridge	Challinor	O'Brien	Baines
Fri 26 Dec	H	Bury	0-0	9,146	22	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	G. Jones	Kelly	O'Brien	L. Jones	Morrissey	Parkinson	Challinor	Pearson
Sun 28 Dec	A	Birmingham City	0-0	19,533	21	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Mellon	Morgan	Kelly	O'Brien	L. Jones	Morrissey	Parkinson	G. Jones	Hakey
Fri 9 Jan 1998	H	West Bromwich Albion	0-0	8,058	22	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Morgan	Aldridge	Kelly	O'Brien	Mellon	Morrissey	Parkinson	G. Jones	D. Laws
Tues 13 Jan (7.45)	A	Hereford (FAC3)	3-0	7,473	-	Simonsen	Challinor	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	G. Jones	Parkinson	Kelly	O'Brien	Mellon	Morrissey	Hill	Mahon	Hans
Sat 17 Jan	A	Queens Park Rangers	0-0	12,033	22	Simonsen	Stevens	Thompson	McGreal	Thom	Irons	Aldridge	Hill	Kelly	O'Brien	Mellon	Morrissey	McIntyre	Parkinson	Hall
Sat 24 Jan	H	Sunderland (FAC4)	1-0	14,055	-	Simonsen	Morgan	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Hill	G. Jones	Parkinson	Kelly	O'Brien	Mellon	Morrissey	Coyne	Aldridge	Reed
Sat 31 Jan	H	Manchester City	0-0	12,830	22	Simonsen	Morgan	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Frail	G. Jones	Mellon	Parkinson	O'Brien	Jones	Morrissey	Mahon	Branch	Wilkes
Weds 4 Feb	A	Middlesbrough	0-3	29,540	22	Simonsen	Frail	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	G. Jones	Parkinson	Kelly	O'Brien	Mellon	Morrissey	Morgan	Branch	Kirby
Sat 7 Feb	A	Reading	3-1	7,069	22	Simonsen	Frail	Thompson	McGreal	Challinor	Irons	Morrissey	Hill	Kelly	O'Brien	Branch	G. Jones	G. Jones	Mellon	Leach
Tues 10 Feb	H	Swindon Town																		
Sat 14 Feb	A	Newcastle (FAC5)																		
Weds 18 Feb	A	Norwich City																		
Sat 21 Feb	H	Crewe Alexandra																		
Tues 24 Feb	H	Nottingham Forest																		
Sat 28 Feb	A	Portsmouth																		
Wed 4 March	A	Port Vale																		
Sat 7 March	H	Sheffield United																		
Sat 14 March	A	Huddersfield Town																		
Sat 21 March	H	Bradford City																		
Sat 28 March	A	Stoke City																		
Fri 3 April	H	Sunderland																		
Sat 11 April	A	Ipswich Town																		
Mon 13 April	H	Stockport County																		
Sat 18 April	A	Oxford United																		
Sat 25 April	A	Charlton Athletic																		
Sun 3 May	H	Wolverhampton Wanderers																		
TBA	H	Portsmouth																		

● First Substitute ▲ Second Substitute ■ Third Substitute B = Booked SO = Sent Off * Own Goal Scorers - Goalscorers in Bold

Player	Birthplace	Signed	Date & Fee	TRFC Debut	97-98 Lge	97-98 Cup	TRFC Career
Int Hons	& Date	from		& Date	Apps/Gls	Apps/Gls	Apps Gls
John Aldridge - Eire	L'pool 18.9.58	Real Sociedad	06.91 - £250,000	v Brighton 17.8.91	6+7 3	-	272+21 172
Graham Branch	L'pool 12.2.72	Heswall	05.91 - Free	v M'boro 17.9.91	12+7 2	1+3	57+56 10
Dave Challinor - EU19	Chester 2.10.75	Brom. Pool	07.94 - Free	v Stoke 28.2.97	14+4 4	-	22+4 -
Stuart Connolly	Dublin 8.12.77	S. Maris, Dublin	08.96 -	-	-	-	-
Danny Coyne - Wal	Prestatyn 27.8.73	Ex. YTS	07.92 -	v P'boro 8.5.93	16	5	109+1 -
Dirk Hebel	Cologne 24.11.72	Bursaport	09.97 - Free	-	-	-	-
Stephen Frail	Glasgow 10.8.69	Hearts	01.98 - £75,000	v Man City 31.1.98	3	-	3 -
Clinton Hill	L'pool 19.10.78	Ex. YTS	07.97 -	v Forest 18.10.97	3	1+1 1	4+1 1
Kenny Irons	L'pool 4.11.70	Ex. YTS	11.89 -	v Bury 2.12.89	19+6 3	2+3	313+48 48
Gary Jones	Chester 10.5.75	Ex. YTS	07.93 -	v Millwall 20.11.93	22+4 2	7 3	74+47 19
Lee Jones - Wal	Wrexham 29.5.73	Liverpool	06.97 - £100,000	v Southend 28.3.97	23	9 5 1	36 15
David Kelly - Eire	Bir'ham 25.11.65	Sunderland	08.97 - £350,000	v WBA 9.8.97	21	8 7 3	28 11
John McGreal	L'pool 2.6.72	Ex. YTS	07.90 -	v Southend 25.4.92	25	7	168+5 1
Kevin McIntyre	L'pool 23.12.77	Ex. YTS	08.96 -	v Forest 18.10.97	+2	-	+2 -
Alan Mahon - Eire U21	Dublin 4.4.78	Ex. YTS	03.95 -	v Hud'field 3.2.96	2+9	+4	16+28 2
Maurio	Portugal 16.6.76	Casapia	08.97 - Free	-	-	-	-
Micky Mellon	Paisley 18.3.72	Blackpool	10.97 - £285,000	v Sheff. U. 1.11.97	14+2	2	16+2 -
Alan Morgan - WU21	Aberystwyth 2.11.73	Ex. YTS	07.92 -	v Ipswich 17.4.96	11+3	1+2	12+10 1
John Morrissey - EY	L'pool 8.3.65	Wolves	10.85 - £8,000	v Southend 4.10.85	13+9 1	5 1	481+59 63
Liam O'Brien - Eire	Dublin 5.9.64	Newcastle Utd	01.94 - £250,000	v Bolton 23.1.94	21+2 1	6+1 1	161+9 10
Andy Parkinson	L'pool 27.5.79	Liverpool	05.97 -	v Wolves 22.10.97	2+4	2 1	4+4 1
Steve Simonsen - EY	S. Shields 3.4.79	Ex. YTS	08.96 -	v Bradford 15.11.97	13	2	15 -
Gary Stevens - Eng	Barrow 27.3.63	Glasgow Rgrs	10.94 - £350,000	v Sun'land 24.9.94	25	5	149+1 1
Andy Thompson	Cannock 9.11.67	Wolves	07.97 - Free	v WBA 9.8.97	27	2 7	34 2
Ryan Williams	Chesterfield 31.8.78	Mansfield	08.97 - £70,000	-	-	-	-

Nationwide FOOTBALL LEAGUE

(Up to & including Saturday, 7th February)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nottm Forest	30	18	6	6	48	28	60
Middlesbrough	30	17	8	5	50	26	59
Sunderland	29	16	7	6	49	28	55
Sheff Utd.	30	14	12	4	46	31	54
Charlton	30	15	7	8	53	38	52
Wolves	30	14	6	10	40	30	48
West Brom	30	14	6	10	32	28	48
Stockport	30	13	5	12	48	42	44
Birmingham	30	11	11	8	37	23	44
Bradford	31	11	11	9	33	32	44
Swindon	31	12	7	12	34	43	43
Norwich	30	11	7	12	29	41	40
Ipswich	29	9	12	8	36	31	39
Crewe	30	11	4	15	37	45	37
QPR	30	9	9	12	33	45	36
Reading	30	9	9	12	31	45	36
Oxford Utd.	30	9	6	15	36	44	33
Huddersfield	30	8	9	13	32	41	33
Stoke	30	8	9	13	31	45	33
Port Vale	30	8	6	16	35	47	30
Man. City	30	7	9	14	33	34	30
Tranmere	29	7	9	13	31	38	30
Bury	30	4	15	11	27	40	27
Portsmouth	29	6	6	17	31	47	24

QUIZ ANSWERS

(from Page 11)

1. MICHAEL OWEN & DION DUBLIN
2. ASTON VILLA
3. 1984
4. 1967
5. RAY WILKINS
6. JOE ROYLE
7. HIGHFIELD ROAD COVENTRY
8. SOUTHAMPTON
9. CHRIS KAMARA
10. JOHN ROBERTSON

TRANMERE MIDFIELDERS

Many thanks to Lee Jones for being our guest at our recent meeting. He answered all your questions honestly and also let us into a few club secrets (least said about room mates the better!!). Like Alan Morgan and Steve Simonsen, he was on the winning quiz team but had to leave before collecting his Mars Bar.

Next meeting is on March 2nd and new members are more than welcome to come along.

VALENTINE'S DISCO

February 16th in Aldo's. (8pm - 10pm). Members £1.50, guests £2. Pay on the door.

AWAY TRAVEL

We are organising a coach to the Stoke City game on March 28th. This will cost you £8 which includes the match ticket. Please bring payment to our meeting on 2nd March or telephone Malc on 336 5400. Tickets are limited so its first come, first served.

TRANMERE MURAL

We are still looking for ideas for the Tranmere Mural... so all you artistic types please get to work and let us have your drawings as soon as possible. Then the fun begins with the paint.

FINALLY...

We were saddened to hear of Andy Thom's enforced retirement. We at the Midfielders wish Andy every success in the future.

Malc Jones



Off The Park

Janet Redcliffe - The General Manager

Another busy week behind the scenes with not a lot of notice to get everything organised for tonight's re-arranged fixture. Thanks to everybody - staff, sponsors, programme contributors, typesetters and printers for responding so quickly. I'm sure there aren't many (if any!) typographical errors tonight, but if so do forgive us as we didn't have the usual amount of time for proof reading! Audrey Evans, is having time off from our Club Shop at the moment whilst holidaying in Australia - she'll be disappointed to have missed another match - but no doubt her nephew will fax the results out to her, as had already been arranged for all the other fixtures which take place while she's away!

Don't forget our next Ground Committee Meeting takes place on Thursday in Aldo's at 7.30 p.m. See you there.

DAVE RUSSELL SUITE GUESTS IMPRESSED WITH STAFF

Last week we received the following letter from John Weir, Director & General Manager of Bass Taverns: "I recently attended the Tranmere v. Sunderland FA Cup tie. Although the result was not to my liking, I feel I must write to you and hopefully you will pass on my comments to your staff.

I was a guest in the Dave Russell Suite and being in the drink and food hospitality business would comment that the staff who were dealing with us were excellent.

I know people within the industry are very quick to complain and slow to compliment, but I feel that I must write this letter of compliment.

Good luck for the rest of the season, apart from Saturday, 4th April when hopefully the recent result will be reversed!!

ROVERS GOLD

L. Layfield of Oxton, Wirral was last month's holiday winner.

JOIN NOW AT £1 PER WEEK AND YOU CAN WIN UP TO £5,000

JUDGE PICKLES IS NEXT CELEBRITY DINNER SPEAKER

We had another successful Dinner at the end of January when Lawrie McMenemy was our speaker and we feel sure the next dinner on Thursday, 26th March with Judge Pickles will be an equally entertaining evening. Tickets are £26 - contact Debra Black for details on 608 4194.

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For further information, contact Lillian Hunt on 0151-608 9858.



TRANMERE ROVERS F.C.
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Direct Marketing Support of Upton, chose Andy Parkinson to receive their man of the match award following the memorable cup match against Sunderland



Andy also received a bottle of champagne from Davies Wallis Foyster who also voted him a definite winner



The Vice President club members made it three in a row and Graham Knights did the honours with the after match presentation.



Our ball sponsor, Bromborough Cross Car Sales lines up with match officials and our mascot Andrew Harrison before kick off

Perry Teare – chairman of Medicash the sponsors of our Disabled Enclosure – had his daughter and two grandsons (Matthew 10, and Daniel 7) as his guests at the Sunderland match. Matthew is a goalkeeper for South Shields Primary FA and they train at a school well known to our own goalkeeper, Steve Simonsen. Medicash is now operating in the North East



For Media Suite sponsors Townley Hughes and Co. of Ellesmere Port this was their first taste of corporate hospitality at Prenton Park. What a great match to choose! Everybody enjoyed themselves immensely and plans are already in hand for a return visit.



Gary Higson aged five from Noctorum got a surprise recently when he visited the Pyramids in Birkenhead – he bumped into Footix – the World Cup Mascot, who was there with Carla Jones of the club's Commercial Department to promote our France '98 raffle, and World Cup Goal – a unique way for local organisations to raise funds. For details of both schemes call Carla on 608 4194.



Another blank cheque at half time! However the Equalizer prize – a massive £1,266 was eventually claimed by Mr. G. Hewitt who had winning ticket 24700 which was purchased in the Main Stand

Sports Reporter Paddy Hoey exercises his...

"DOL MIND"

Billy Connolly once said that giving a performance to his heroes during the 1974 World Cup was one of the best laxatives he ever had and said being confronted with a roomful of Billy Bremners and Denis Laws was, in his words, "hellish".

And strange though it must seem, your humble correspondent knows just how that feels, but while the Big Yin experienced panic in Germany, many of my sphincter loosening moments have been due to the presence of the Prenton Park management team in the tunnel under the Directors Box in the main stand.

Picture if you can a callow youth of 24 years of age, fresh faced and untouched by the ravages of stress-related long term alcohol addiction.

I was that svelte and cheerful dandy, brimful of the joys of a newly-found job as football reporter with the big chance to become the next Nick Hornby or Harry Harris, covering Tranmere Rovers on a regular basis with a Press Box seat and access all areas pass to John Aldridge's staff after every game.

I had got the dream job, writing about the very subject which had consumed me every waking hour (and large proportion of those sleeping) from the early years of my life. The soccer train spotter who lucked out, a child of the football revolution for whom his Panini sticker album collections, two decades of Shoot! annuals and an arrest at an Old Firm game finally amounted to something positive.

But I had to speak to Aldo and Kevin Sheedy and was completely at a loss as to how I was going to be able to summon the courage to speak to two of the greatest idols of Irish football.

Aldo isn't just the Tranmere manager, he is the striker I followed across Europe to Germany and Italy and to the USA, the man who helped bleed me dry financially by scoring in front of my rapturous eyes against Mexico on a June afternoon in 1994 thus forcing me to contemplate an immediate £300 loan from my credit card company or consider a life of petty crime in small town Florida just to feed myself.

And all at once, moments before I was due to speak to him and his assistant, as I tried to maintain my cool under the gaze of several seen-it-all-done-it-all hacks, he and Kevin Sheedy walked past me, and while I could lie pointlessly, I don't mind telling you my sphincter all but loosened.

Both seemed to glide imperiously past, while all I could think of were Aldo's goal against Tunisia and Kevin gloriously robbing Steve McMahon of possession outside the box on a rainy Sardinian night in 1990. But simultaneously I recalled a thousand sepia toned football books a million Match of the Day programmes and my bedroom wall posters of Charlie Nicholas, the Republic of Ireland 1987 team, Dave Langan (I'm not joking), Liam Brady, Chris Hughton and Tony Galvin (no, that last one was a joke).

Standing as a supposed upwardly mobile member of the New Labour "Cool Britannia" generation unphased by anyone, I was confronted in real living colour by the posters I cut with my scissors, from my magazines and stuck on my wall, in my house in suburban Northern Ireland. Like a living breathing commemoration of my teenage obsessions they strolled past... and I suddenly realised just what Billy Connolly had meant.

He was overwhelmed by his heroes, and I realise that I am, and to a great extent always will be. And when I worked this out, I also realised I am only a football writer because it acts as an emotional surrogate for the professional football career I never had - just as I suspect it does for all football writers.

To illustrate this point I can tell you the tale of a prominent member of the Liverpool football media who I once caught reciting an obviously well-rehearsed Motosquesque commentary on condemning Everton to relegation in the last minute of an Anfield Derby while scoring a goal in the warm-up to a five-a-side game in the less salubrious setting of a Bootle leisure centre. The reporter in question, who I cannot name for legal reasons (he may sue me), was doing nothing more than keeping his professional football dream alive, much the same way as I do, only rather than seeing Everton go down I still relive my Charlie Nicholas-beating-five-defenders-and-scoring-at-the-Rangers-end-of-Parkhead-on-New-Years-Day-1983 fantasy. (The other main difference is in my dreams I somersault after scoring and land with my bottom in the air and my shorts around my ankles).

Even as the fonts of knowledge who inform the Merseyside public of the goings-on in its three great football clubs we are like barely developed junior school U11 strikers, chasing after quotes as they would a football, in a great scrum-like pack.

And in this is the root of my point. While thousands of people throughout the nation rely on the (mostly) well written, well informed and objective opinions and stories from the football correspondents in the papers and on TV, they can perhaps put too much stock in the maturity of the reporters.

So next time you read my match reports in the Wirral News, I hasten you to exercise some caution. For both my writing and I are supreme examples of an almost incontrovertible truth: behind every football correspondent and his prose there lies a huge collection of Shoot! annuals, a plethora of dog-eared Frank McGarvey/Ian Rush/Cyril Regis/Alan Ball posters and a million broken, strewn and cast away Subbuteo figures masquerading as their favourite players, "substituting" the professional career they never had, perfect metaphors for their dreams.

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