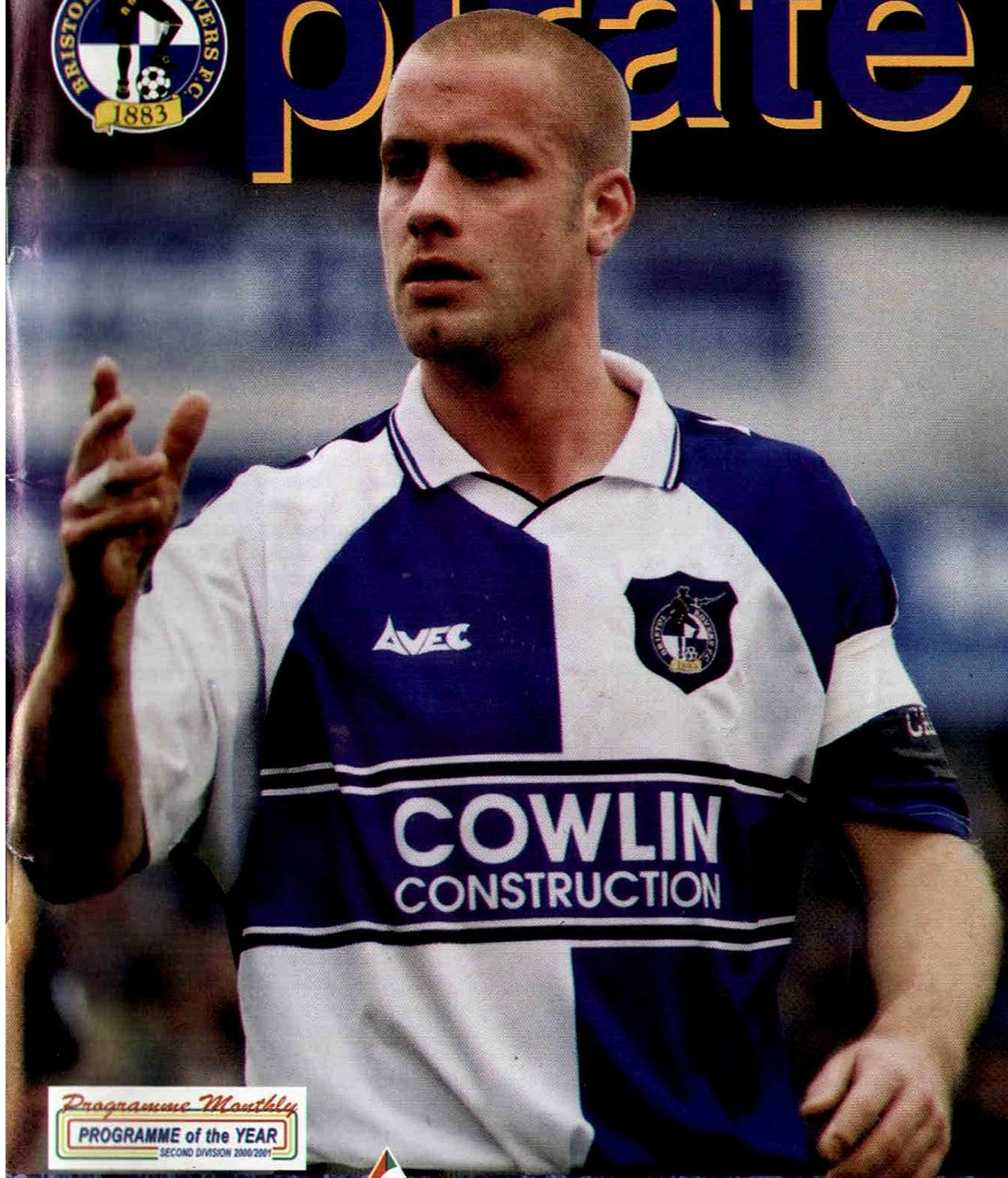


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SECOND DIVISION 2000/2001

v Swindon



Sat 24 March 2001

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with garry thompson

I was very disappointed that Tuesday's game against Peterborough was postponed, as we had worked hard in training and were really looking forward to playing. However, the pitch was saturated and the surface not conducive to good football, so the referee had no alternative but to call the game off.

The game would have enabled us to get the Rotherham result out of our system. I thought we played really well at Millmoor until they scored their first goal just before half time. Up until then, we had played very well and tactically, I thought we were

spot on. We caused them lots of problems and had the game by the scruff of the neck. Rotherham couldn't impose themselves on the game and, apart from one set piece, didn't cause us any problems. We counter attacked well and created a number of chances, but failed to find the target.

After the break, we only played well in patches and we were beaten up a little bit. Sometimes, when you have a number of youngsters in the side, that tends to happen, but they have all done very well for me so far and it's just a question of them keeping going and playing in the way they have done.

We've only lost two of our last eight games, but every time we win, all the teams around us win as well. I'm not too bothered about that, because all we can do is try to get points ourselves and just concentrate on what we are doing.

Everything else will take care of itself. All we have to do is to keep playing and creating chances. We can only worry about what ourselves and not what other teams are doing.

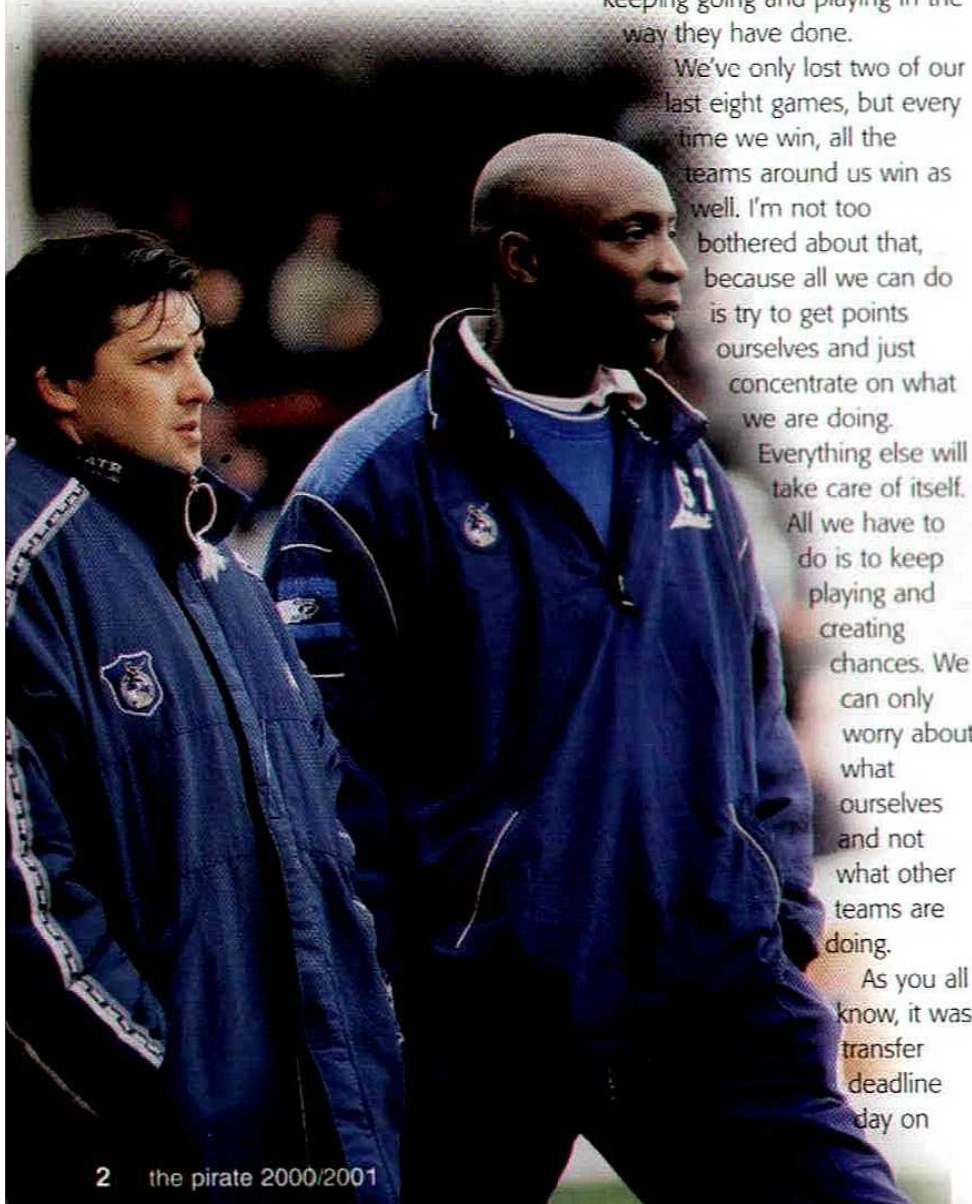
As you all know, it was transfer deadline day on

Thursday and I, like many other managers around the country, spent much of last week on the phone, trying to tie up a number of deals. At the time of writing these notes, I have secured the signatures of Richie Partridge and Christian Lee. Richie will be on loan with us, from Liverpool, for the remainder of the season, whilst Christian has secured his release from Gillingham and signed a contract with us, also until the end of the season.

Richie, a right winger, is a very talented player who can take people on and get crosses into the box. He has a lot of skill and will give the side a lot more balance as we near the end of the season. He's only a young player, but I feel that he will be a good addition to our squad and with him and Mark McKeever on the flanks, I hope we'll start creating a lot more chances for our forwards.

Christian is a striker, with so much potential. He was an apprentice at Doncaster before moving to Northampton, where he got off to a good start. He lost his way a little bit and was pulled out of the limelight when Northampton opted for experienced players in their front line and, after refusing to sign a new contract because he wanted first team football, he moved to Gillingham. He has been unlucky with injuries whilst at the Priestfield Stadium, but has now fought his way back to full fitness. He's scored eight goals in ten reserve games and has recently been on loan at Leyton Orient. He will be another valuable addition to the squad and is a player who has a great first touch, makes good runs and moves well off the ball.

In addition, I have signed Kevin Gall, another young lad who has been at Newcastle for over three years. He has been a regular goal scorer for





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their youth and reserve teams and will be looking to earn himself a contract beyond the end of this season.

I also hope to have signed another goalkeeper as cover for Nick Culkin and it's quite possible that one or two players may have left the club by the time you read these notes.

We did lose Marcus Bignot just over a week ago, when he signed for Queens Park Rangers. He got back into the side recently and did very well for me, especially as he wasn't playing in his normal position. Playing on the right hand side of midfield, he formed a good partnership with Che Wilson, but it's no more than I expected, because Marcus is a very enthusiastic player who can play anywhere and he can lift the players around him, so I was disappointed to see him go. Once the offer came in, though, I knew he'd want to go, as he wanted to play in a higher division. He leaves a lot of friends behind him and we wish him all the best for the future.

There's no doubt that we have a little bit of a fixture backlog here, following the postponement of so

many games. I've been in a similar position before, when I was a player at Cardiff. We had a good cup run which meant that we had a lot of league games to catch up on when we were eventually knocked out of the competition and ended up playing three games a week for the last three weeks of the season.

To be honest, it was quite exciting. We didn't train, had a day off after every game and just got into a routine, so it didn't become a problem for us. However, whilst it was enjoyable, it was also very tiring and as I played in every game, you can imagine how I felt by the time we played our last match! I'd rather not be in the situation we're in at present, but I do have a big squad here and I'll need to ensure that everyone is fit and ready to come into the side to cover for the inevitable injuries and suspensions we'll pick up along the way.

We face a tough test today and, as always, your support will be crucial. Please get behind the lads as you have done since I was put in charge and enjoy the game.



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by the editor

As you will see, from manager Garry Thompson's notes, he has signed Richie Partridge, Christain Lee, and Kevin Gall and at the time going to press he was hoping to sign at least one other player. We extend a warm welcome to Richie, Christian and Kevin and hope they enjoy their time with us.

- One of the main stories of the week concerned the goalkeeping crisis at Manchester United. Injuries to Fabian Barthez and Raimond van der Gouw saw United give fourth choice keeper Paul Rachubka his Premiership debut last week and prompted fears that they may try to recall Nick Culkin from his loan spell with us. However, as Nick points out, that's not an option United have. 'As far as I'm concerned, I'm doing what I was asked to do at the beginning of this season, which was to come here on loan for the whole season and play as many games as possible. There's nothing I can do about the situation at Old Trafford, because there was no recall clause in the contract I signed with Rovers.

I'm a Rovers player until the end of the season. After that, I'll go back to United, sit down and have a chat with the manager and see what his plans are before making any decision on my future. At this moment in time, I think that if United told me it was a case of being third choice keeper for them or coming here, then I'd jump at the chance to come here, because I think we are going to be a really good team next season. All the new players will have bonded together and we'll have a good unit and an excellent team spirit.'

Nick went on to add: 'As far as our current situation is concerned, I don't even think about us being relegated. If I did, it would probably happen, but I'm really confident

that we will stay up. All we have to do is remain positive and keep concentrating on the job in hand. We have a lot of home games to come and now that we've broken the habit of not winning here at the Memorial Stadium, the law of averages says that we should win all of our remaining home games. We'll just keep plugging away and working hard and I'm sure we'll be OK.

This season has been a learning curve for me and I admit I've made a couple of mistakes. What matters, though, is how you respond to that and I've been pleased with the way I've reacted. My form's not been too bad, but I know it could be better.'

Nick has been joined on the training ground this week by Fraser Digby, a very experienced keeper who has played over 450 league games and Alex O'Reilly, from West Ham. 'Fraser has been a big help

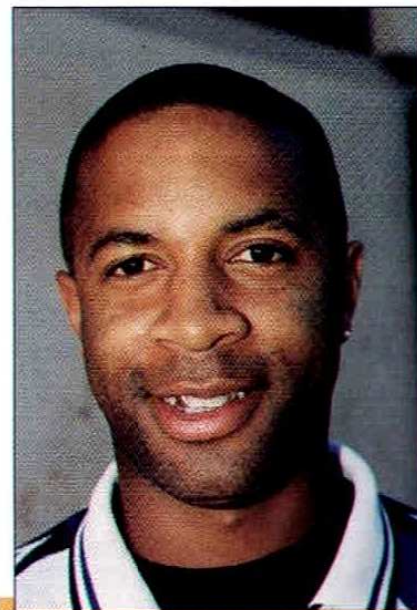


Nick Culkin

and it's good to have someone like him here to learn from. I've only trained with Alex a few times, but he looks as though he's a very good young keeper.'

- Rovers are without the services of Vitalijs Astafjevs and Ronnie Mauge today, as both are away on international duty. Vita is playing for Latvia against Croatia today, whilst Ronnie hopes to be in action for Trinidad and Tobago in their World Cup qualifying match against Costa Rica next Wednesday.

- The Football League have advised us that as from next season the Worthington Cup competition will be streamlined and that the first



Ronnie Mauge

and second rounds of the competition will be single ties only rather than the current two leg format.

- The postponement of last Tuesday's game against Peterborough has only added to the fixture backlog for Rovers and means that we still have twelve games to play after today, eight of which are at home.

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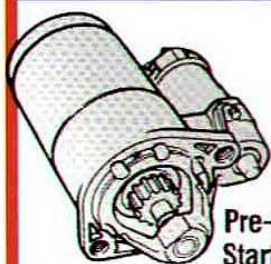
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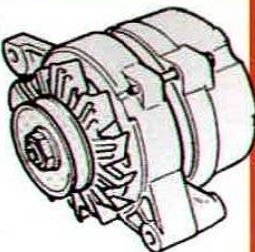
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BATHROOM
SOLUTIONS

no game again

Garry Thompson was hoping to use Wednesday night's reserve game to look at three triallists in action for us, but the postponement of that game scuppered his plans.

The three players concerned were Rhodri Jones, of Manchester United, Newcastle's Kevin Gall and West Ham keeper Alex O'Reilly. 'I've seen them all play before, but I wanted them to be relaxed, mix with our lads and have a game for our reserve team. The postponement makes things difficult for all of us, but I know that

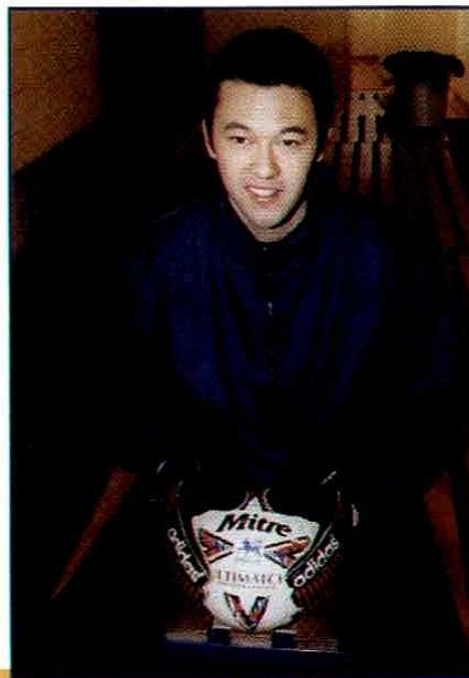
they are all quality players and I'll have to look at where we go from here. Rhodri and Kevin have a number of clubs after them, whilst Alex is under contract with West Ham until the end of the season, so the situation isn't that urgent.

Alex is one of three keepers I'm looking at as cover for Nick Culkin. The other two are Fraser Digby, who has been training with us and helping out with some coaching, and Richard McKinney, of Manchester City, who was due to play a couple of games for Port Vale last week. I may, by the time you read these notes, have decided to take one of the keepers until the end of the season, just in case anything happens to Nick.

That, by the way, is no reflection on Ryan Clarke, who is an outstanding prospect. I'm delighted with the progress he's made this season and we've offered him a pro contract. However, I feel that it would be unfair to put him in the first team given our present league position. I think I need someone who is a little bit more experienced at the moment, but this time next year, I'm sure that Ryan will be ready for his chance.

Alex O'Reilly was probably more disappointed than anyone that Wednesday's game was called off. I spoke to him on his first day at the club and he was looking forward to his week with us. 'I've come here hoping to impress Garry Thompson, maybe stay until the end of the season and then see what happens.

I've been at West Ham since I was ten, but it's come to the point where I have to admit that I may not get a first team opportunity with them, so I have to look for another club. It's been a good experience, though. Training with Shaka Hislop



Alex O'Reilly

and Craig Forrest has been particularly good, as they are excellent keepers and always willing to give advice when it's needed.

I spent the whole of last season with Northampton, on loan, and they won promotion, which meant it was an enjoyable time and earlier this year I spent a loan spell at Wigan, which was also a good experience.

I know a couple of lads who have been at Rovers on loan, Shaun Byrne and Stuart Taylor, and I also know Mark McKeever, as we've played in the same Irish U-21 side on a couple of occasions. Shaun told me that he enjoyed his time here and said it was a good club to come to, so I jumped at the chance of coming here myself.

I've played a few games for a couple of other clubs, including Walsall, but had no offers of a contract and I hope, that if things go well, something might happen for me here.'

fixtures 2000/01

Wed 16 Aug	Brentford	H	1-2
Tue 22 Aug	Portsmouth LC	A	1-1
Wed 30 Aug	Bristol City	A	1-3
Wed 13 Sep	Portsmouth	H	3-0
Thur 21 Sep	Swindon Town	A	1-3
Thur 28 Sep	Wycombe Wanderers	A	1-0
Tue 3 Oct	Cirencester GFA	A	0-3
Wed 18 Oct	Oxford Utd	H	1-4
Wed 25 Oct	Bristol City LC	H	0-0
Wed 1 Nov	AFC Bourmemouth	A	0-2
Wed 15 Nov	Norwich City	H	1-1
Tue 12 Dec	Reading LC	A	1-1
Wed 10 Jan	Peterborough Utd	H	2-1
Mon 5 Feb	QPR	A	1-0
Wed 7 Feb	Barnet	H	2-4
Mon 19 Feb	Millwall	A	2-0
Wed 21 Feb	Colchester Utd	H	0-1
Wed 28 Feb	Leyton Orient	H	2-1
Wed 7 Mar	Brighton & Hove	H	0-0
Wed 14 Mar	Gillingham	A	
Wed 21 Mar	Fulham	H	
Wed 4 Apr	Crystal Palace**	H	
Wed 11 Apr	Reading	A	
Wed 18 Apr	Southend Utd	A	
Wed 25 Apr	Cheltenham Town	A	
Mon 30 Apr	Cambridge Utd	A	
Wed 2 May	Luton Town	A	

TBA **Northampton Town** **H**

LC = League Cup

GFA = Glos Senior Challenge Cup

** = League & League Cup



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IN MEMORY OF
ROGER TUCKER



ROVERS 1 OXFORD 3

This game was played in very poor conditions and the pitch was barely playable.

I began with the youngest team I have fielded this year and also included three trialists in my starting line up. However, Oxford were the better side from start to finish. They are very strong and adapted to the difficult conditions much better than we did.

We were behind after just two minutes when Oxford scored with a shot from twenty yards out, which I thought we could have dealt with much better than we did. On the day, too many of the older lads in my side didn't take on the responsibility of helping the new lads and it was the younger boys who looked more determined and showed a great deal of ability.

Oxford's second goal was scored from a free header, following a corner, after fifteen minutes and their third came when Drew Shore's back pass was intercepted and the home striker rounded our trialist goalkeeper Greg Evans to slot the ball into an empty net.

Tony Davis, though, had a great game for us. He covered every inch of the pitch and was instrumental in creating our consolation goal, scored with just three minutes remaining, by Lance Spencer who headed home a cross from Kevin Kershaw. We have just signed Kevin from Blackburn Rovers and he will be joining us as a scholar next season.

To be honest, our passing throughout this game was terrible, especially from our back four. We never held on to the ball up front and, apart from Tony Davis, there was no support from the midfield. Hopefully, this was a one off performance, but with some of our older boys being released, I am

expecting my second year scholars to take on a lot more responsibility than they did against Oxford.

Team: Greaves(Evans), Arndale, Chambers, Sajic (Crutcher), Scott, Wilson (Kershaw), Cordy, Davis, Gilroy, Spencer, Shore (AJ)

DECISION TIME

It's the time of the year when our third year scholars find out if they are to be given a pro contract and, as always, it's been a difficult decision, as Phil Bater explains.

'We have given contracts to two lads this year, Ryan Clarke and Drew Shore. Both have done well, in different ways, and both deserve their chance.

Ryan has been on the bench for the first team since Brian Parkin left the club and he's also been away with England to a training camp and, by all accounts, did very well. He has been given a one year deal and it's up to him now to make the most of this opportunity and go on and earn himself a longer contract.

The same can be said for Drew, though he has only been given a six month contract to begin with. Drew



John Crowley

has made steady progress for us. Last summer, he was overweight and I gave him an ultimatum, which was to lose weight and regain his sharpness, or he wasn't going to make it in the pro game. He did exactly as he was told and reported back for pre season training looking leaner than I've ever seen him. His times, in training, were much improved and he has kept his weight down throughout the year and has been one of our most consistent players this season. He's a left sided player, something of a rarity these days, and has a great deal of ability.

There's always a downside to any job, though, and whilst it's easy to tell people that they have been given a contract, we've also had to tell others that they won't be getting one and when the lads concerned have been at the club for a very long time, it makes it even more difficult.

Five lads have been released, namely Gary Powell, John Crowley, James Zabek, Christian Parker and Leon Cozens. Christian and Leon have been injured for long periods of time, so it was always going to be an uphill battle for them to get something as they haven't really



Leon Cozens



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the youth of today

played enough games. The others, having had three years as scholars, haven't made the necessary progress to enable Garry to give them a contract.

Naturally, we'll be doing all we can to help them get fixed up with other

clubs. Their names will be circulated to all professional clubs immediately and we also have details of an American scholarship scheme should any of them wish to go over there and continue both their football education and their academic studies.

It's been a big blow for all of them and they probably don't want to even think about playing at the moment and will need a little bit of time to get over their disappointment. They are, of course, still on the scholarship scheme and will continue to be paid by the club



Gary Powell

how well he's done since then.

They should be encouraged by that. They all have a game in them and whether they can get over this and go on to play for another club in the pro game is down to them.

Their parents will also be feeling the disappointment almost as much, as they have all been so supportive. I know what a massive blow it is, as I've been through it with my own son and I hope we can help all the lads who have been released to get fixed up with another club as quickly as possible.'

PHIL BATER



Chris Parker

until July. They have to finish their college studies, but have effectively finished the football element of their scholarship, but they are more than welcome to come in and train with us to keep up their fitness levels.

I have stressed that the decision not to offer them anything is only an opinion and that there are a number of professionals in the game who have, at some point as youngsters, been released by a club without being offered a pro contract. Bobby Zamora is a prime example. He was released as a schoolboy before joining us as a scholar, and look at



James Zabek

U-19 FIXTURES Season 2000/2001

Sat 19 Aug	Cirencester	H	2-0
Sat 26 Aug	Cardiff City	A	2-0
Sat 2 Sept	Exeter City	H	1-0
Sat 9 Sept	Swindon Town	H	1-0
Sat 16 Sept	Swansea City	A	3-2
Sat 30 Sept	Portsmouth Fr	A	0-1
Sat 14 Oct	Torquay Utd	A	3-3
Sat 21 Oct	Plymouth Argyle	A	0-0
Mon 23 Oct	Tonbridge Angels FAYC	H	4-0
Sat 28 Oct	Oxford Utd	H	2-3
Wed 8 Nov	Torquay United ALC	A	0-1
Mon 13 Nov	Reading FAYC	H	0-6
Sat 18 Nov	Cardiff City	H	3-1
Sat 16 Dec	Swindon Town	A	0-4
Thur 21 Dec	Swansea City	H	0-0
Sat 6 Jan	Torquay United ALC	H	2-2
Tue 9 Jan	Plymouth Argyle ALC	A	1-0
Thu 25 Jan	Torquay Utd	H	3-1
Sat 27 Jan	Plymouth Argyle ALC	H	1-2
Sat 3 Feb	Oxford Utd	A	0-1
Sat 10 Feb	Plymouth Argyle	H	2-1
Thur 15 Feb	Cirencester	A	3-2
Sat 17 Feb	Exeter City	A	1-1

FAYC = FA Youth Cup

ALC = Alliance League Cup

MERIT DIVISION

Sat 3 Mar	Colchester Utd	A	2-0
Sat 17 Mar	Oxford Utd	H	1-3
Sat 24 Mar	Cambridge Utd	A	
Sat 14 Apr	Brighton	H	
Sat 21 Apr	Exeter City	A	
Sat 5 May	Leyton Orient	H	

one to one

with justin richards

Although he was only fifteen when he signed for West Bromwich Albion, Justin Richards hadn't grown up with a burning ambition to join the pro ranks and, as he explains, it was quite a while before he decided that he might make a living from the game.



'I did take an interest in the game, as most children do, but I didn't follow the game that closely until I saw the way Ian Wright played, so I eventually began to support Arsenal. However, I played a lot of other sports and though I did play football for my cub scout team, I wouldn't say that I was a mad keen football fan.'

In spite of that, his form soon attracted the attention of the West Brom scouts. 'By then I was playing Sunday league football and being selected for my District side. I was playing on the wing a lot in those days, though I did occasionally play up front as well. West Brom were watching me and when I was fifteen, I signed schoolboy forms for them and after we'd played in a tournament in Scotland, they decided to take me on as a trainee.'

He made rapid progress in Albion's youth team, was offered his first pro contract after just one year as a trainee and soon became a regular member of the reserve team squad at the Hawthorns. 'I think that because I did so well very quickly, I now feel that my career should have progressed more than it has and that I should be playing first team football more frequently than I am. Things did go really well after I signed as a pro and manager Denis Smith gave me a first team chance following injuries to Lee Hughes and Micky Evans.'

In fact, his debut came with a substitute appearance in a home game against Ipswich in March 1999. 'We lost that game 1-0, but it was nice to get my first taste of first team football.'

Another substitute appearance, against Blackburn, in the FA Cup, came in December of the same year, but there were no further first team opportunities before his move to Rovers, even though he was on the fringe of the squad at the beginning of the season. 'At the end of last season, I wasn't too optimistic about

what was going to happen at West Brom, but when we reported back for pre season training and started playing games, I did well even though I was playing out wide again. I was in and out of the squad, on the bench for a few games and travelling with them quite often and I can't quite put my finger on the reason why I was eventually left out altogether. However, the manager had bought Jason Roberts from Rovers and he did change the system to one I didn't really enjoy playing, which, I suppose, goes some way towards explaining things.'

At that time, of course, competition for the strikers places at the Hawthorns was quite fierce. 'Lee Hughes, Bob Taylor, Fabian De Freitas and Micky Evans were all there before Jason arrived and there were times I didn't even get a game in the reserves, so that's probably why I was asked to play out wide. I don't really mind where I play, though and whatever the position, I'll always try to do my best.'

In January, Justin moved to Rovers and was able to talk over the move with Jason Roberts before signing his contract. 'We spoke a lot about it. Jason told me that the only reason he left was because he wanted to fulfil his ambition of playing at a higher level. Everything he told me about the club was positive and he had nothing but praise for the way he was treated here and for how the coaches at the club had helped him.'

Just twenty four hours after signing, he made his debut, when going on as a second half substitute at Reading and there was disappointment that he didn't score that day. 'It was a little bit difficult going straight into the team, having only signed the day before, as I didn't really know the other players and didn't have time to get to know the system and the style of play. However, that's the way things happen in football and you just

have to get on with it. All you can do is put in the effort, work hard, pass the ball properly and hope that things go well for you. There's no doubt that I should have scored on my debut and maybe if I had, it might have gone better for me than it has so far.

I think I do feel under a little bit of pressure to score when I play, but I'm the type of player who wants to score in every game anyway, so I tend to put pressure on myself, without anyone else doing it for me!

In the short time he's been here, he's played with a number of different strike partners. 'They all have slightly different styles of play, which is good, and it doesn't really matter who plays alongside you. Micky wins a lot of balls, on the ground and in the air, and holds the ball up well whilst Nathan and Ansah can cause all sorts of problems for defences with their pace and their skill, so we all tend to help and complement each other.'

As it turned out, he was Ian Holloway's last signing for the club. 'I would have liked to have played more games under him, as he was the one who signed me. I didn't anticipate there being so many changes here so soon after I came and I certainly wasn't aware that there was any talk of him going.'

However, Garry Thompson and Gary Peñrice have been a big help to me here. They were strikers themselves and it makes it easier to take on board what they are saying when you know they've done it at the top level. Jason and Nathan have told me how good they are as coaches anyway and they were right about that.'

He's the first to admit, though, that he's disappointed not to have made a bigger impact since his arrival. 'I've no regrets at all about coming here, but I am disappointed with the way things have gone so far. It's down to me, though. You have to look at yourself when it happens and question

whether or not you have been playing well enough to be selected. The fact is, I'm here and I'm part of the squad and when I'm needed, I'll go in and, hopefully, do the business and make sure I'm not left out again.

I know that I'm still young and that I have a lot to learn, but that doesn't stop me wanting to play and the more I play, then the more I'll learn. This club has a good record of taking strikers from lower leagues, or those who are young and have yet to prove themselves, which is one of the reasons I came here. It's good when people have the confidence in you to take a chance in signing you and tell you to go out and show people what you can do. I don't think I've had a long enough run in the side yet for people to evaluate what I can do, but hopefully, my chance will come.'

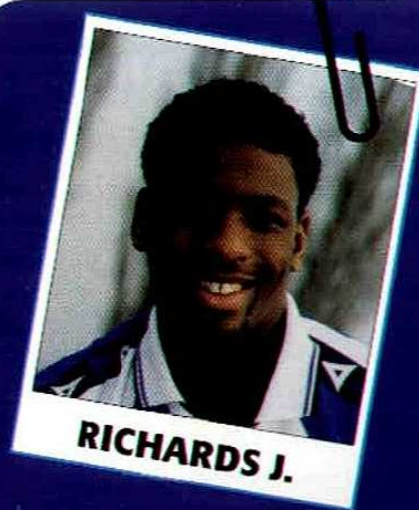
There are still a lot of games to go, and he may well get that chance before the season ends. 'The manager decides the team and the system and if I'm not involved, I obviously won't be happy, but I'll have to accept it and keep working hard to earn the chance to show him what I can do. Scoring my first goal for the club is really important. I know that playing well is probably more important than scoring, but at first team level, it's all about results and when you're a striker, you can't get away with playing well every week and not scoring goals and I really want that first goal to come, whether it's a deflection, a tap in or a spectacular shot, I just want to score.'

I think the rest of the season is going to be a little bit of a struggle, because we've dropped points at places like Luton and Northampton recently, in games where we really should have picked up all three points. Even at Rotherham last week, we outplayed them in the first half and didn't look under any pressure, but still lost 3-0. However, I'm confident that we can get out of

trouble. The standard of our play is much higher than I thought it would be and there are some really good players here. I just can't understand why we are at the bottom of the league.

All good teams go through bad spells, though and I think that we will stay in this division and then go on and make an impact next year. I can't see any reason why that shouldn't happen. As for me, I'd like to think that I'll go on and get a regular place in the side and keep scoring goals!

Hopefully, it won't be too long before that happens. Can't wait for the goal celebrations!



career profile

Born in Sandwell on 16th October 1980 ... Signed schoolboy forms for West Brom at the age of fifteen ... Taken on as a trainee one year later ... Signed his first pro contract in August 1998 ... Made his first team debut, against Ipswich, on 20 March 1999 ... Joined Rovers on 19th January this year and made his debut the following day, against Reading.

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RAILTRACK PRESENTATION

I would like to welcome our good friend Mike Sutton, of Railtrack Great Western, and his guests here today. I hope they all have an enjoyable afternoon with us at the Memorial Stadium.

At half time this afternoon Mike, on behalf of Railtrack Great Western, will present Bristol Rovers Community Department with a cheque for £52,500 for a three year sponsor partnership.

Railtrack's £52,500 will be partly matched by a similar award from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport through the Sportsmatch scheme, giving us a total of £83,125 to finance the programme for the next three years.

The programme involves us running football coaching courses in schools and showing the children a video which highlights the dangers of trespass and playing on, and around, railway lines.

We have been encouraged by the very positive response we have had from the schools who have already been involved in the programme and I'm sure that what we are doing will help educate children's awareness and the importance of playing in a safe environment for their future welfare.

rovers in the community



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The girls who took part in the Adidas Community Cup competition



The winners Brimsham Green

ADIDAS COMMUNITY CUP

A total of 28 schools entered our Adidas Community Cup six a side competition for girls which we held at The Beeches last week and we would like to congratulate Sahra Bufton and her team from Brimsham Green Secondary School, Yate who won the area final. They will now go on to represent Bristol Schools in the regional finals, which will be held on March 29th, also at The Beeches, Thanks to all the schools and all the girls who took part in the area competition for making it such a success.

am looking to increase the numbers attending, so if you would like to attend, please phone me for more details.

PETER AITKEN

BRISTOL ROVERS COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

Community Officer

Peter Aitken

Community Coaches

Tony Cornelius

Darren Priest

Pete Wills

Telephone

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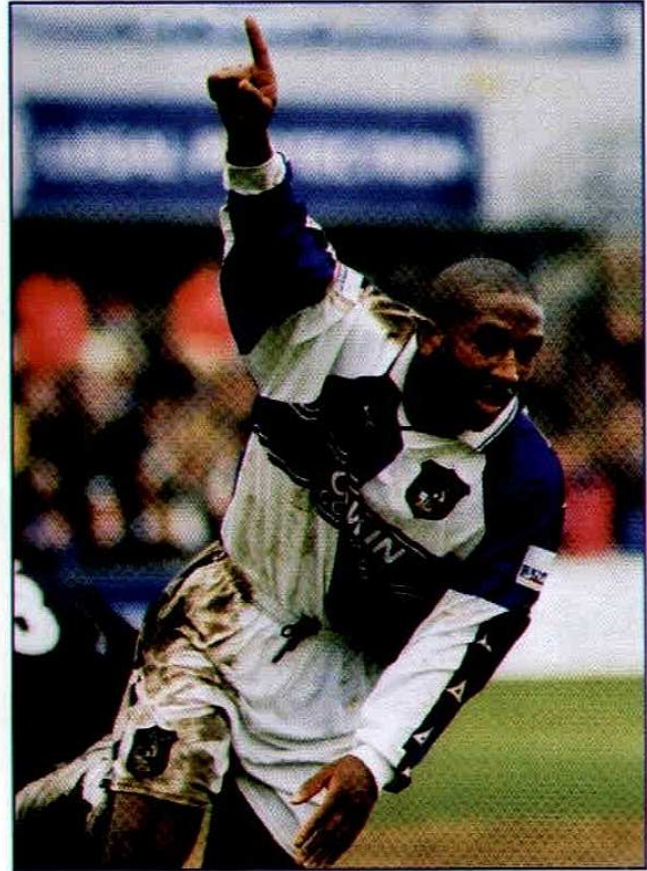


Another postponement on Tuesday means that we are striving to make up on as many as four games in hand on some clubs! It was disappointing to have to put back the 'Posh' clash again especially after a beautiful sunny spring day. However, it was the previous night's downpour which put paid to what would have been a rare treat here - a dry night for all our sellers! I must admit to turning up for the previous Saturday's fixture against Bury in similar weather conditions and to being amazed to find the pitch covered in pools of water and facing yet another inspection.

Again it was the previous night which did the damage but fortunately that one went ahead before the 'egg-chasers' got to work on it the next day! I say fortunate because the lads pulled off a well-earned second consecutive home win against the in-form 'Shakers'. 'Tommo' said it wouldn't be pretty and he was dead right - it never is against Bury. Rovers had to battle for every ball but won convincingly in the end and played some excellent football in view of the conditions. None did better than young Dwayne Plummer in whom Garry Thompson places so much faith and that faith was rewarded with a 'Man-of-the-Match' performance. I'm just sorry that so many members had left the Clubhouse before Dwayne collected his bottle but obviously he was in great demand by the media and all the other organisations and sponsors who also thought he was our top man. Well played Dwayne and a great goal too. The same again today would be nice!

Today we hope to complete a hat trick of wins to erase last week's defeat at Millmoor from the memory. I was not able to travel up to Yorkshire because of work commitments but listened to a fair bit of the game on Radio Bristol and of course saw the 'highlights' on HTV the following day. It seems like we were fairly beaten by a strong Rotherham side but very unfortunate to lose by a three goal margin. I suppose that is what happens when you have to chase the game against such a strong and well-organised team!

Today we have a really tough test in this vital local 'derby' against Swindon who, of course like Rovers, are battling to stay up. Swindon have points advantage over us but we have games in hand. The latter are no good of course unless you can win them and this is certainly one we need to win today. I dislike having to switch from the traditional Saturday 3.00pm kick-off time, (I never know when to have my pastie for one thing!), but today I think the right decision has been made to



bring the game forward a couple of hours so that we have the opportunity to watch the England game live on TV. You may be interested to know that we were consulted by the Football Club before the decision was made and I think the right decision was made. We gave some thought to what is bound to be a very large following for our visitors and at least they do not have too far to travel so therefore will not have had to get up too early this morning to cheer on their boys. I hope that you all approve of the compromised start time!

I'm sure there will be a lot of you returning here tomorrow to cheer on Rovers' Ladies team in the Semi-Final of the Women's F.A. Cup. The Supporters Club will be helping out with the programmes and we hope to have our sales points open. Then, tomorrow week don't forget our Annual Football Quiz which takes place in the Clubhouse, kick-off 7.30pm. Full details are in the accompanying advert and we look forward to a bumper entry and another good night out.

This is likely to be one of the most important games of the season for Rovers today so please get behind the lads and roar them back up the table.

Come on you Blues!

JIM CHAPPELL

looking to the future

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

A few weeks ago we received a call from Russell Tanner, a teacher at Hanham High School requesting an opportunity to talk to us about a number of educational possibilities that he felt we may be able to help out with. One of these programmes was the famous Duke of Edinburgh scheme that has been around for so many years now. Following discussion it was decided we would create a session at the Memorial which covered the element of general fitness planning.

This visit would be combined with a tour of the stadium which for many would be a first, and by the end of the day the appropriate pages in their individual logbooks would be able to be completed.

On the day 20 students, equally divided between boys and girls arrived all ready and eager to participate in whatever we had planned. Getting to the stadium was nearly the first initiative test as they all had to travel by public transport and it took a little longer than originally imagined. However once in place and welcomed to the



club the tour provided much by the way of question and answer. Drinks and a short break were followed by a talk on fitness issues with all pupils being given their own Rovers booklet on the subject. Hopefully this will provide much valuable information for other related courses back at Hanham High. The overhead slides certainly produced much well thought through responses from the pupils.

Packed lunch then followed in the Bristol Room during which time our guest lecturer Shane Cook

arrived and set up his equipment outside on the training pitch. Shane is a fully qualified personal fitness instructor who has recently been invited by Garry Thompson to work with John Gingell on individual programmes for the first team squad so we were delighted that his first work at Rovers was this particular occasion. During just under an hours session Shane took not only the pupils but their teacher Russell Tanner as well through some of the exercises practised regularly by the professionals. Enjoyment of the activities was high on the agenda and everyone who



took part clearly entered into the spirit of the occasion.

The day concluded with a presentation to Janie Noble and Luke Williams who won the girl and boy 'Player of the Day' awards along with everyone being given a goody bag of Rovers memorabilia courtesy of Pirate Leisure. All pupils will also now be guests of Rovers at a home match before the end of the season.

It was without doubt a very successful event with all the youngsters being a real credit to their school. We look forward to future projects with Hanham High





with anticipation. (As some will know Hanham High was the home of our own Simon Bryant when he was at school).

Any other school wishing to take part in a similar enrichment programme should contact Rod Wesson, Director of Education at the club.

pic 1 – The whole squad in the dugouts ready for action.

pic 2 – The girls swing into rhythmic action.

pic 3 – Russell Tanner struts his stuff. (but who is that watching in the background?).

pic 4 – Enjoying the view from high in the Centenary stand.

pic 5 – Still smiling after Shane's session.

pirate action pics

rotherham 3 rovers 0



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The service broadcasts live commentaries on Rovers games to 17 hospitals throughout the region and would like to thank the following sponsors:

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key to pics overleaf

- A** Ansah Owusu closes in on Millers keeper Ian Gray
- B** Gray safely gathers again, in spite of a lunging challenge by Micky Evans
- C** Ronnie Mauge shields the ball from Marvin Bryan
- D** This time Bryan is being wrong footed by Nathan Ellington
- E** Scott Jones races away from Paul Warne





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captain's column

with andy thomson

I thought we put in a very good first half performance at Rotherham last week and it felt quite comfortable playing at the back. We were camped in their half for much of the time and I thought it was only going to be a matter of time before we scored.

However, they got a goal at a crucial time for them and then, after we started well in the second half, they scored again on the break which killed the game off a little bit, as it gave them a two goal cushion, enabling them to sit back and defend.

We then conceded a late third goal, after injuries to Ronnie Mauge and Scott Jones which probably caused us to lose our shape a little bit. Naturally, there was a great

feeling of disappointment in the dressing room afterwards, but it should be remembered that we were up against a side who are having a very good season and who have a home record second to none. It was always going to be a difficult place for us to go but with so many games coming up in such a short space of time, I think it's important that we remain positive and not get too down about that one result.

I've been involved in relegation battles before and it's not a pleasant experience. When I was at Portsmouth, we had to win our last game to stay up twice in three seasons. Each time, that game was away from home and we managed to win both times, at Huddersfield and Bradford City. It's a strange feeling, because after the game, you experience a tremendous feeling and celebrate as though you've just won the FA Cup, when all you've done is remain in the same division for another season.

It's not a nice thing to have to go through and, fortunately, the position we're in means that we can get ourselves out of trouble without it going right to the wire and that has to be our aim.

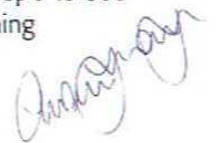
We are all still confident that we can pull clear of trouble and I think that having so many home games to come will be an advantage. At the beginning of any season, you expect to win the majority of your home games and look on points picked up away from home as a bonus. I know that we've won more away games than we have at home at the moment, but the fact that we've won our last two games here at the Memorial Stadium has given us all quite a lift and if we can keep things going, I'm sure we can get out of the danger area.

Today, we face Swindon, the club where I started my career and I'm looking forward to the game. There are only a couple of the office staff still at the club who were there at the same time as me and all the playing and coaching staff have moved on, so it's not as though I'll be meeting up with a lot of old friends this afternoon. It's another big game for us, against a side who are also in trouble and have been for most of the season.

Since my last notes, Marcus Bignot has left, to join Queens Park Rangers and we all wish him the best for the future. Marcus was quite a lively character to have around the place and he started the season really well for us. He would be the first to admit, though, that his form dipped after that. He was left out of the side on a couple of occasions, but got back in after Garry Thompson took over as manager and recaptured his early season form. Given that he was one of a number of players placed on the transfer list not so long ago, I suppose his leaving wasn't a surprise. It's a blow that he's gone, but we can't afford to dwell on it, given the position we're in. We just have to carry on and we have enough good players here to stay up.

Finally, on behalf of all the lads, I'd just like to wish Ray Williams a speedy recovery. As I'm sure you are aware, Ray suffered a slight heart attack a few weeks ago, though I'm assured it was just coincidence that it happened shortly after our first home win of the season! We all hope to see you back at the training ground soon, Ray.

I hope you all enjoy the game today.



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web watch

with ian cole

Tipped for a 30-year-old cracker by Swindon fan Gareth Buckland

There's no doubt that this afternoon is a massive game of football for Bristol Rovers. Not only is another three points at stake, but it's a West Country derby against another one of the sides battling around us at the wrong end of the league table. It's one of those days where you can feel the tension in the ground as the lunchtime kick-off approaches.

Swindon have certainly been up and down the leagues over the last decade or so. They've twice won promotion to the top flight, albeit if once they didn't actually go up, and they've been flirting dangerously with the prospect of Division Three football throughout the current campaign. Their supporters can certainly claim to have seen the highs and lows of English football.

It was ten years ago that the Robins were battling for survival in the old Division Two, finishing four places off the bottom spot ahead of long-ball specialists Leicester City, West Brom and Hull City. That same campaign, Rovers finished a full eight places higher, just below the might of Wolverhampton Wanderers and Newcastle Utd.

After a season in the Premiership and several campaigns in Division One, Swindon found themselves relegated back to Division Two at the end of last season, finishing bottom of the table behind fellow relegated sides Port Vale and Walsall. It was a drop that put Swindon back into the same league as their fierce local rivals Oxford Utd, but Swindon supporters will tell you that they don't expect to be playing the U's next season!

It was however only five years ago, that Swindon and Oxford were battling out the race for the Division Two league championship, in a

similar fashion to Rovers and City back in the 1989/90 season. Unlike then however, this time the team in red were victorious, and Oxford had to settle for promotion to Division One behind their local rivals.

Swindon fans Dave Hanley, Gareth Buckland and Richard Banyard all run unofficial fans websites for Swindon and remember some of ups and downs that their club has gone through in recent history. They agreed to take part in a feature we run on our website ahead of every Rovers match called 'Opposition View'. It allows supporters of our forthcoming opponents to give their shout on things.

Dave Hanley, who runs 'MyOnlySwindon' (www.myonlyswindon.com) remembers some of the funnier moments over the last ten years or so. In particular he cites a meeting with Newcastle Utd, when both sides were battling at the wrong end of the table, as featuring an especially funny moment, "Some years ago Swindon and Newcastle Utd were struggling in the relegation area. The Newcastle fans were singing 'Going down, going down, going down.' The Newcastle fans faces were a picture of puzzlement when Swindon fans responded with 'So are we, so are we, so are we.'"

Richard Banyard (www.swindon-town-fc.co.uk) says his least memorable match whilst supporting the Robins was a League Cup semi-final in the mid 90's,

"As a fan, my worst game was the 3-1 defeat by Bolton in the Coca-Cola Cup semi-final a few seasons ago. The first game was postponed on the day, and we had travelled well past Birmingham, and

had to turn back again. The second time, we scored to go 3-1 up on aggregate, Bolton scored twice to send it into extra time, and then scored again to win. It was bloody freezing, they locked us in the away end so we had to stand there and watch them celebrate and listen to the tannoy announcer rubbing it in, and then it started snowing. The car park was like a swamp, so by the time we got back to the coach we were soaked, and had the long coach journey home."

Finally, Gareth Buckland (<http://members.aol.com/gareth0584/Index.htm>) thinks that it will be his side that take the points today, "We don't want a draw - we only need victories against sides that are below us (there aren't many of them!). 2-1 to Town! Danny Invincible to come off the bench and score his first goal since Boxing Day. Walters to score a 30-yard free-kick!"

You can read the full version of 'Opposition View' on www.bristolrovers.co.uk ahead of every Rovers first team game. No doubt there'll be some interesting thoughts and opinions from Stoke City supporters ahead of next Saturday's match! Log on to www.bristolrovers.co.uk and select 'Opposition View' from the MATCHDAY menu for more. Don't forget there'll be reports and reaction on the website straight after the game today, so when you get home, and later this evening, be sure to pay us a visit. And of course, for the opposing view, why not try any of websites listed above, or the impressive official Swindon Town website that you can find at www.swindonfc.co.uk.

next up...



Potters, Robins & Swans

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Directions taken from the *Football Fans
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Aerial photographs of stadia
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- **The Supporters Club** are running coaches to Stoke leaving Horfield and Kingswood at 9.45am and Eastville at 10.00am. Coach fare: £9.50
- **By Car from South M6:** Exit M6 at Junction 15. At motorway roundabout go straight on (s/p Uttoxeter, Stoke-on-Trent A500, Stone A34). As there's no parking at the ground, decide here whether to head for the Great Fenton Business Park or the Bookers car park. **(a)** to Great Fenton Business Park. Take 2nd exit off the A500 after 1.6 miles (the Sideway Junction, s/p Uttoxeter, Derby A50). Where the road divides, keep right, following signs to the A50. At roundabout turn right onto the A50 dual carriageway. Take 1st exit (the Heron Cross Junction) after 0.7 miles, and at roundabout turn left into Burton Road. At crossroads after 0.1 miles turn left into Grove Road. The business park is on the RHS. It's a ten minute walk to the ground, and the club says there will be signposts. **(b)** To Bookers car park: Take 2nd exit off the A500 after 1.6 miles (the Sideway Junction, s/p Uttoxeter, Derby A50), also Campbell Road, Michelin). Keep in left hand lanes where the road divides (s/p Fenton, Longton). At the top of road all traffic turns left. At roundabout after 0.2 miles turn right, and the Booker Cash and Carry is on the RHS.

ROVERS v STOKE SATURDAY 31 MARCH CAR PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

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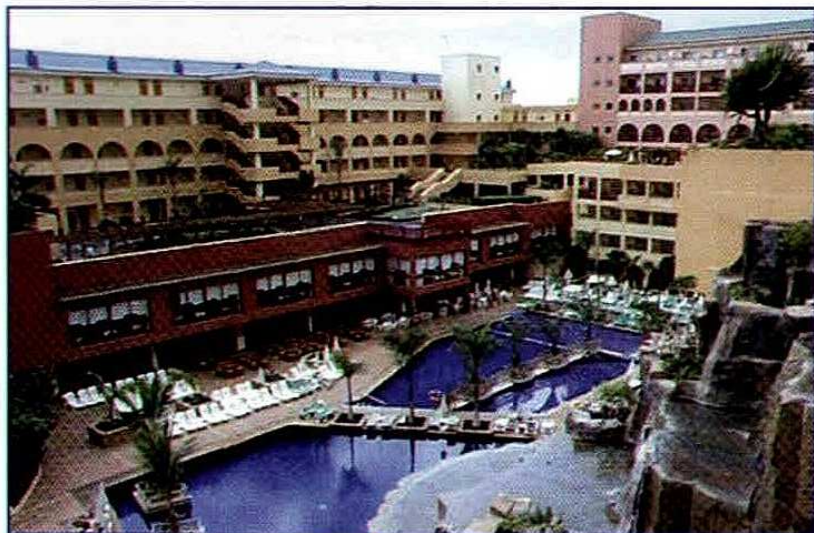
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pro contracts for Ryan and Drew

You will have read that Ryan Clarke and Drew Shore are the latest additions to the pro ranks and, naturally, both are delighted to have been offered contracts for next season.

Goalkeeper Ryan has had a taste of what it's like to be involved with the first team already, having been on the bench for most games since Christmas. 'Being with the first team has been good experience and a tremendous boost for me. It's made me work that much harder to earn a contract and now that I've been given one, I intend to make the most of the opportunity.

'Whilst I'm pleased for myself, I am, at the same time, disappointed for the lads who are being released. We've all been together a long time and some of us were in the Centre of Excellence before being taken on

as scholars. I think they will all want to go on and prove that they can play for other clubs, as they are all good players and unlucky not to have been offered anything.

Without a doubt, Chris Parker and Leon Cozens are the two most unfortunate, as they have been injured for long periods. Chris has just started getting his fitness back, whilst Leon was doing really well until he picked up his injury in a tournament in Aberystwyth two years ago.'

Ryan is quick to praise the people who have helped him get this far and hopes that his elevation to the pro ranks is just the beginning. 'My parents have been a big help in that they have supported me and been the biggest influence on my career whilst Phil Bater and Roy Dolling have helped make me a better player. In addition, I've had the benefit of working with Brian Parkin and Nick Culkin this year and learned a great deal from both of them. It's been a pleasure to be Nick's understudy and I'd love him to stay here, as he's great to work with and we talk a lot about the game.'

Drew is also delighted to have been offered a contract. 'I've got a six month deal, and if I do well, I hope to earn myself a longer deal. It means that I'll be working really hard in pre season training and though it means that I might be under a little bit of pressure to do well in just six months, it's a great incentive to go on and do better. My aim has to be to get a regular reserve team place and push on towards a first team spot.

Last summer, Phil Bater told me that I had to work hard over the summer and that I had to lose weight. I did that and, thankfully, it's paid off. Like Ryan, I'm disappointed



Drew Shore

for the other lads. I've played with some of them for seven or eight years and it will be strange not seeing them around here any more.

My Dad is almost as pleased as me that I've got a contract, as he's seen almost every game I've played since I was eleven years old and he's been a tremendous help to me and I wouldn't have got this far if it hadn't been for him. Just as they have helped all the other scholars, Phil and Roy have also been a big help to me.

I went on the pre season tour to Ireland with the first team and have played quite a few reserve team games this season and I'm looking forward to playing and training with the first team squad next season'

We wish both lads every success and will be watching their progress with interest.



Ryan Clarke

today's sponsors



Good afternoon everyone and I would like to welcome our Match Sponsors today – MACWHIRTER LTD – and in particular Jim Whittard, Managing Director, and his guests. William MacWhirter founded the company in 1882 and one of the first inventions patented in 1883 under his name was a voltmeter and ammeter for measuring electricity. Today the company is one of the pioneers of environmental engineering, with energy conservation always one of its top priorities. The most up-to-date techniques in providing multi-discipline services to the building industry are key to the company success and will continue to lead the way forward on environmental issues.

Our Matchball Sponsors are THE HOUSE OF PINE and we extend a warm welcome to Paul Buckingham

and his friends. Paul is a regular sponsor of the matchball and supports the club in other ways, such as sporting dinners and other events.

Also joining us today in the Sponsors' Lounge are Jencan Ltd, Bentley Jennison, David Nichols, and representatives from Martin Payne Television and Video - welcome to the Centenary Hospitality Suite.

Alex Parsons, aged 7, is today's Commercial Mascot. Alex attends Begbrook Primary School in Stapleton and has been a season ticket holder and a Young Pirate since the age of 3. His favourite Rovers players are Nick Culkin, Andy Tholmson and 'The Duke', Nathan Ellington.

I hope you all have an enjoyable afternoon and cheer on the lads to three points.

GRAHAM BOWEN



At the Bury game, Dwayne Plummer was picked as Man of the Match by our Match Sponsors Jencan (left) and also Matchball Sponsors CR Windows (pictured right), whilst Steve Foster was the Presidents Club choice



presidents club

I consider Rovers Directors, in particular Geoff Dunford, received some pretty unfair criticism in the media from a local commentator and from some so-called supporters for maintaining a silence for a while before making a statement following the departure of Ian Holloway.

Subsequent events lead me to believe that there are people around who owe Geoff and his co-directors at least an apology. Rovers Directors are, if nothing else, discreet in the way they handle the affairs of our football club. They do not 'blow their own trumpet' enough in my view, but equally they do not 'wash dirty linen' in public.

I am pleased to say I have heard no criticism from within the Presidents Club either, on the decision that 'Ollie should leave' and I am sure that our members will be giving the current Management team under Gary Thompson the same support that was afforded Ollie.

Of the eight remaining home matches no less than six are against teams in the bottom half of the table, most with a real chance of relegation including today's visitors Swindon Town. The other two matches are against teams

going for promotion

The prospect therefore is for some very hard fought matches to come and today's match with Swindon Town will no doubt be just that. Whilst cheering for a Rovers win today, let us hope that come May both Rovers and Swindon will be clear of relegation.

ROY COWELL



Good afternoon and welcome to The Memorial Stadium with our magnificent standard of turf which was laid last week, plus extra gravel bands. A special thank you to the ground-staff, Peter and Steve, with help from Bernhards Pitch Consultants. It was a decision taken due to the postponement of our game against Peterborough last week which I have to say was very disappointing but inevitable due to the weather we had on the Monday evening. This work would have been carried out in the summer, but thanks to the Board of Directors we were able to carry out the work last week. At a cost of £5.50 per square metre it proved to be an expensive exercise (550 square metres in total), using 40mm turf in 15m rolls (very heavy). If we had used 18-20mm turf it would have been ripped out very easily. Let's hope this enables Garry Thompson's team to

get maximum points in our last 8 home games!

After today's game, we have a great entertainment programme scheduled, starting with England vs Finland live on the big screen at 3pm. This will be followed by extended highlights of our match against Swindon, then entertainment by Bula Bula in The Memorial Room.

Tomorrow we host Bristol Rovers Ladies vs Arsenal Ladies in the AXA semi-final FA Cup with an expected attendance of 3,500. It is also Mothering Sunday and we have sold 10 Executive Boxes for lunch with 140 having lunch in the Centenary Suite at the time of penning these notes.

A very busy weekend for everyone involved, but it is all so much easier with a win today (you know what I'm saying Mr. Thompson).

Also some extra dates for your diary - on Wednesday 11 April we

are holding an Easter Draw Night, entertainment and drinks promotions in The Memorial Room. Everyone is invited and we have plenty of raffle prizes including tickets for the re-arranged Cheltenham Races.

To celebrate St. Georges Day we are holding a luncheon on Sunday 22nd. This will consist of a Carvery Lunch at £9.95 per head and has proven to be very popular in the past. Please ring Trish on 0117 9096648 to reserve your table.

Don't forget we are the venue for all occasions, with professional staff to cater for all your needs. Please call us on 0117 9096648 for any requirements.

Get behind the team today and cheer them as loud as normal to another three points. C'MON YE BLUES.

IAN HOLTBY, *Stadium Manager*

Helpline

Another postponed match on Tuesday. It seems as though we will never catch up all the games in hand we have on other teams in this division.

All through this season there have been various reasons for delayed fixtures through no fault of our own and now we will have a tremendous backlog during which we will be expected to pull away from the relegation area.

A close look at the team's record will show that there are only five teams who have let in fewer goals and only nine teams who have lost less games.

Then we start to think about "if only." However, this must give us good reason to believe that we shall soon be clear of the threat of relegation and hopefully can start to plan for better things to come.

One of the bright points of the season has been the goalkeeping of Nick Culkin who has really become a "gashead" during his time here even though he is on loan. Hopefully, that can be sorted out without too much delay.

You can join Helpline without too much delay

just ring Kate on 01454 321191

COMMERCIAL CONTACTS

Marketing/Sponsorship

Ian Holtby
Ralph Ellis
Graham Bowen
Trish Henderson
Mo Bell
Kelly Shipp

Telephone
0117 909 6648

email
commercial@cableinet.co.uk

Helpline Membership

Kate Radnedge

Telephone
01454 321191

Presidents Club

Roger Hynam

Telephone
0117 9760568

my first, my worst, my everything

with andy thomson





- **do you still look out for Swindon's results?**
 - Not really, though I have just recently, because they have been struggling near the foot of the table like us.
- **has Micky Evans paid you any rent yet, or has he been evicted?**
 - Evicted! We had a good set up to start with, when Evo was cooking for us, but he stopped for some reason, and had to go.
- **central defender or midfield general?**
 - I enjoyed the games I played in midfield, especially the one against City, but I think I'm more suited to playing at the back.
- **ever persuaded a referee to change his mind?**
 - No, never, but it still doesn't stop me trying!
- **what will you be doing in twenty yers time?**
 - If the numbers below come up, I'll be relaxing on my yacht!
- **give us six numbers for tonight's lottery.**
 - 1, 5, 17, 19, 33, 36.

● tell us about your debut

- It was for Swindon, against Leeds, at the County Ground in what was our last game in the Premiership and we lost 5-0.
- **what about the worst game you have ever played in?**
 - Apart from my debut, it would have to be the game against Cardiff at the end of last season, for very obvious reasons.
- **who has been the biggest influence on your career?**
 - My Mum and Dad, without a doubt, along with John Trollope, who was my youth team manager at Swindon and who also had a spell here at Rovers.
- **if you weren't a footballer, what would you be doing?**
 - Anything that involved the minimum of effort!
- **who would you be on stars in their eyes?**
 - I wouldn't do it, and if you've ever heard me sing, you'll know why!
- **name three things in your glove compartment.**
 - My mobile phone, money and the car handbook.
- **which three guests would you invite to dinner?**
 - Jennifer Love-Hewitt, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Charlize Theron, for the conversation, obviously!!
- **what was the last book you read?**
 - Paolo Di Canio's autobiography.
- **what was the last CD you bought?**
 - Coldplay - Parachutes.
- **how would your team mates describe you?**
 - Handsome, intelligent, witty and a liar!!!
- **you share a house with two other footballers, do they have any annoying habits?**
 - Foz is a bad loser at any games we play (and he makes some really bad smells!) and Trev just has too many to mention.
- **how good a cook is Trevor?**
 - Awful. How he doesn't suffer permanently from food poisoning, I'll never know.
- **has being captain been an advantage or a hindrance?**
 - It's an honour to be captain and although there are some extra responsibilities, I enjoy them.
- **has Robbie Pethick ever bought any decent clothes?**
 - Have you seen him today! Besides, his wife Vicky chooses them from the catalogue (she must have a sense of humour!)



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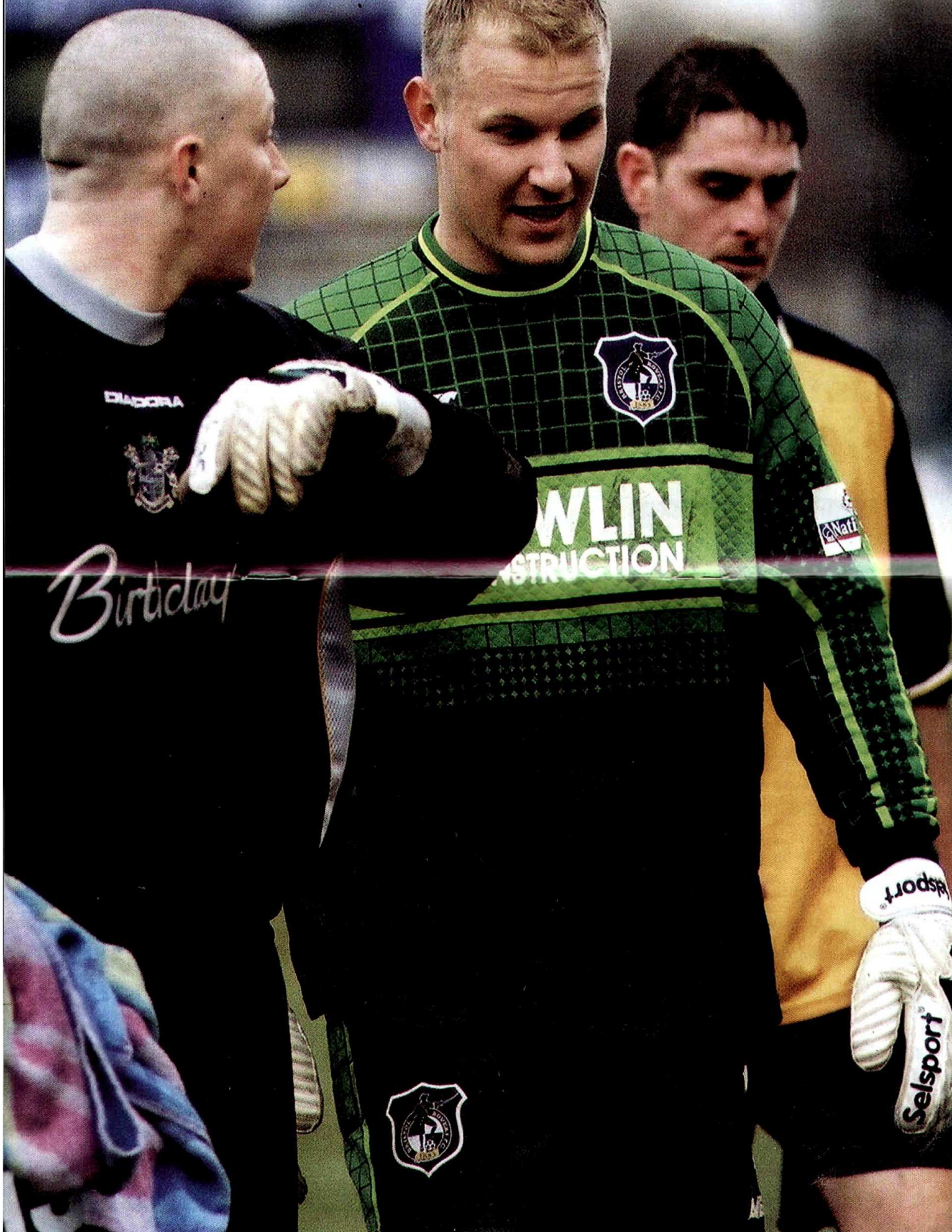
 HARDCASTLE 31 WEST STREET GLAZING	 CLARKE 39 STEVE & VENITA WILLIAMS (PATCHWAY) <i>Good Luck Ryan!</i>
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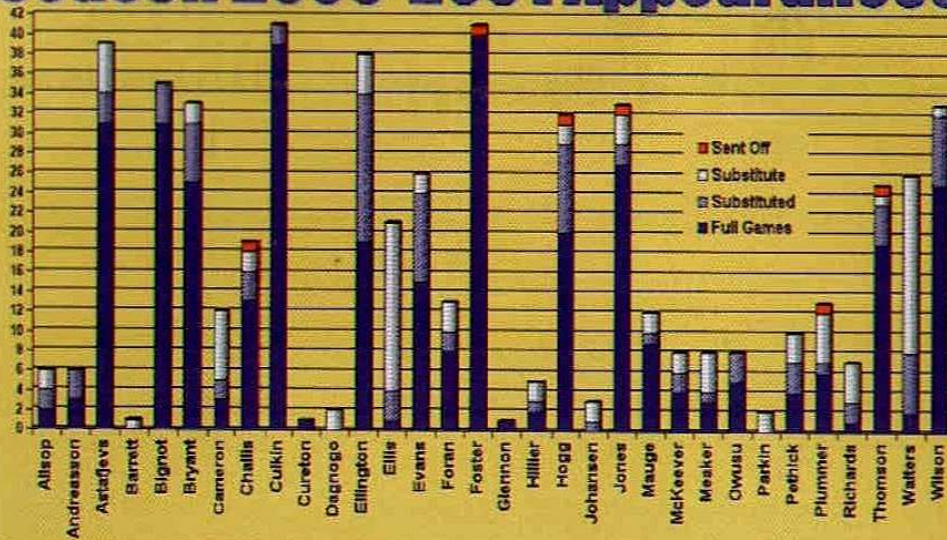
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Season 2000-2001 Appearances



Recent History of League meetings

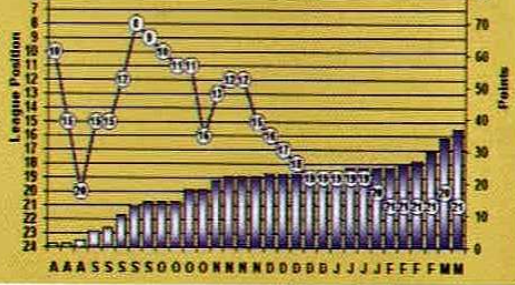


Rovers have had 75 league encounters with The Robins

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It seems as though we are destined never to play Peterborough this season, following Tuesdays postponement, the third against The Posh so far!

Several glances across the stadium over the past few days, watching Pete Prior and his able staff relaying turf battling against Old Father Time to ensure 'game on', has meant many anxious moments for everyone. Problems enough, seemingly insurmountable when rain, wind, snow arrived (on the first day of Spring to boot) to compound the situation.

There is always some humour to make glum faces smile, and this is a classic from none other than Barry Fry. He rang the stadium on Tuesday morning to speak to Ian Holtby (to check weather and pitch condition) and his first words were "Your admin people have just told me that conditions are good, just like Wembley! But Ian, Wembley looks like a building site!". Of course there were a few expletives in amongst those words, which I couldn't possibly repeat. However, the game having already been postponed twice does make for fixture chaos, so maintaining a sense of humour helps put things into perspective.

Fortunately the humorous aspect of the game far outweighs the more unsavoury stories we sometimes hear and the Bury website provided some light-hearted relief after their defeat against Rovers here a few weeks ago, which brought their 7 game unbeaten run to an end.

Paul and his mates came to Bristol by car, "Dom drove, so we actually arrived in Bristol before we'd set off such was the speed we achieved en route" recounted Paul. "We were accompanied by Martin,

who writes one of the fanzines for Burnley and it soon became apparent that we were in the presence of a comedy genius, so it was a pleasant drive down to Bristol".

"En route, we finally realised that the reason Bury are perceived as a small club is because of the name; Bury – 4 letters – and connotations of being underground and out of sight. Burnley, for example, is 75% longer letters-wise and consequently probably a 75% bigger club. So we've decided to start a campaign for a new name. Inter Bury would be excellent, for the juxtaposition of two words meaning "to put in the ground". We could adopt our media tag officially and become Battling Bury. So get thinking, we need some suggestions."

Typical perhaps of the banter to pass the time when fans travel miles to watch their favourite team and Paul went on to say how easy it was to find the Memorial Stadium "thanks to some skilful navigation and, indeed, some friendly road signs". Praise too for the local fish and chip shop and pub on Gloucester Road and friendly tete-a-tete with Rovers fans with good-humoured mickey-taking on respective accents.

Arriving at The Mem and continuing with comic, Martin (whom Paul accused of being a mine of useless information) he thought his mates should know that the head groundsman at the San Siro stadium in Milan is from Burnley! "Well I was shocked!" exclaimed Paul as he went on to talk about 'the tannoy guy' who was not only completely OTT about Rovers, the Mighty Pirates, he spun some great tunes, eg 'Wet Wet Wet' – "appropriate because we got



Ansah Owusu goes for goal in the game against Bury

soaking wet" and 'Going Underground' by The Jam....."inspiring."

On a more serious note, Paul had to confess that his team were poor and Rovers fans had good reason to be ecstatic. However, he couldn't resist one last 'dig' with a recommendation to view another report of the game by logging on to BRFC website –

www.worzelworzelworzel.bristolrovers.tractors.org.oohh.aah.

With the first of two local derbies in a short space of time, today we welcome Swindon who, like ourselves, are battling for points in the wrong half of the table. Having been relegated from Division I, they will want to avoid the drop yet again; however, we don't wish that fate on them, but nevertheless want three points for ourselves, so get those voices in trim and cheer on the boys in blue and white to victory. TO BATTLE QUARTERS! Come on you Blues!

Mo BELL

swindon



It has been a torrid few years for supporters of Swindon Town. After the dream of experiencing Premiership football, there have been few highlights to savour and last year the Wiltshire club almost went bankrupt.

TERRY BRADY is the man who stepped in to secure its future, bringing with him a bold plan to provide Town with a new stadium alongside the M4 to rival the Madejski Stadium in Reading. The chairman, father of Birmingham City's KAREN BRADY, is brash and confident and unlike Bristol Rovers he appears to have the backing of his local council in making his plan a reality. The only hurdle is the location for the proposed stadium, green land between the M4 and the town nicknamed the Front Garden. Environmentalists have promised legal action to prevent the peripheral residential and commercial buildings which BRADY needs to make the stadium plan a reality. He in turn has hinted that he may walk away if planning permission is not granted in the next two to three years.

BRADY assembled a new management team at the County Ground led by COLIN TODD. But TODD never really settled at Swindon

and left soon after his team's 3-1 defeat at the hand of Bristol Rovers' in October, lured by the prospect of a return to his beloved Derby County alongside JIM SMITH.

Former Everton player ANDY KING, who had been scouting for Sunderland before coming south with TODD, took over. He has kept former Sunderland manager MALCOLM CROSBY at the club as assistant.

Another member of the coaching staff at Swindon is PETER REID's brother SHAUN. And the Stadium of Light connections don't end there. Striker MICHAEL REDDY is currently on loan from the Wearside club as a favour to KING from REID.

When the Swindon manager asked about his availability as a permanent signing he was told he could have him for £5 million - and a good bottle of wine.

Needless to say, REDDY remains a loan player at Swindon and would be



ian woan

a certain starter today had it not been for a call up to the Republic of Ireland under-21 squad to play Cyprus last night. REDDY has scored four goals in five games since his arrival at the County Ground and his loss today will

SWINDON TOWN FC 2000-01



Back row, l-r: Paul McAreavey, Antoine van der Linden, Matthew Hewlett, Alan Reeves, Stephen Mildenhall, Adam Willis, Danny Invincibile, Sol Davis, Frazer McHugh

Middle row, l-r: Dick Mackey (Physio), James Williams, Sam Campagna, Andy Williams, Mark Robinson, Bart Griemink, Kim Heiselberg, Charlie Griffin, Giuliano Graziolo, Steve Cowe, Keith O'Halloran, Phil Cannon (Youth Development Officer), Malcolm Crosby (Reserve Team Manager)

Front row, l-r: Jamie Mills, Juan Cobian, Andy King (now Manager), Cliff Puffett (Chairman), Colin Todd (now left club), David Duke, Bobby Howe



andy king



Our Visitors' Last 8 Results

20-Mar-01	Colchester Utd	0	1	Swindon Town	Div II
17-Mar-01	Swindon Town	1	1	Swansea City	Div II
10-Mar-01	Oxford Utd	0	2	Swindon Town	Div II
06-Mar-01	Swindon Town	3	0	Oldham Athletic	Div II
03-Mar-01	Wigan Athletic	0	0	Swindon Town	Div II
24-Feb-01	Swindon Town	1	3	Luton Town	Div II
20-Feb-01	Swindon Town	1	1	AFC Bournemouth	Div II
17-Feb-01	Cambridge Utd	0	1	Swindon Town	Div II

be to Rovers' gain.

KING likes to alter his formation depending on the opposition, and has employed 4-4-2, 3-5-2 and 4-3-3 approaches. The policy appears to be working away from home, because the Robins have not lost since New Year's Day when defeated by high-flying Walsall. Assuming he sticks to two up front today, he is likely to opt for a starting partnership of GARY ALEXANDER and GIULIANO GRAZIOLI. ALEXANDER was a £300,000 signing from West Ham in August, a lot of money for a club which just weeks before was struggling to pay its players' wages. The 21-year-old has struggled with consistency and before Tuesday had netted just six times this season. GRAZIOLI, a likely replacement for REDDY, has struggled with a stomach tear and had scored just two in this campaign before this week's away

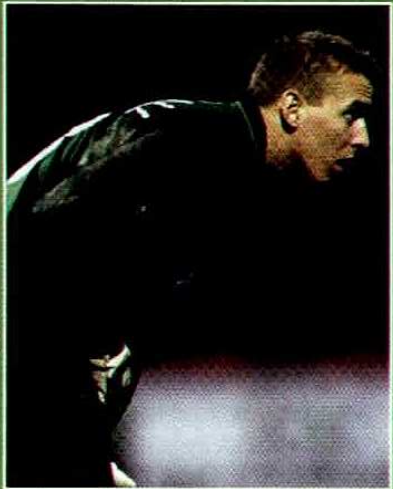
match at Colchester. He signed in June 1999 from Peterborough United, his only previous visit to Swindon being with Stevenage in the 1997 FA Cup tie in which he scored the winner and earned his side a fourth round match against Newcastle United.

ALAN YOUNG, at just 17, is highly rated by KING as a striker for the future. The England youth team player scored in his full debut against Ilkeston Town in the FA Cup and may make the bench today. Another striker on the books at the County Ground is STEVE COWE, currently sidelined with an achilles problem.

With goals from strikers hard to come by, other members of the team have chipped in, most notably STEVE ROBINSON.

Nicknamed 'Turbo' because of his incredible work-rate in central midfield, he became a hero after scoring two spectacular volleys away

keeper's column

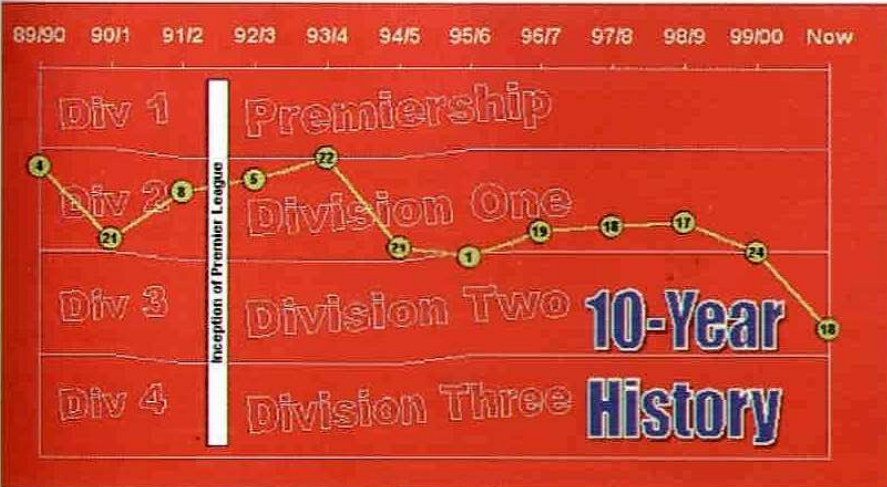


Local lad STEVE MILDENHALL had kept three clean sheets in a row before Saturday's 1-1 draw with Swansea. Not a great achievement you would think, but he was the first 'keeper to emulate the feat since the days of FRASER DIGBY five years ago.

One of those three games was the 2-0 victory at the Manor Ground against Oxford United, where he kept his nerve despite being pelted with missiles from home supporters, leading to the game being stopped for several minutes.

MILDENHALL is in his fourth year as a professional after coming through the club's YTS system. He made his two first team appearances in 1995-6, but had mainly been restricted to the reserves until this season. After promotion to the first team he has rewarded his manager with a string of impressive performances which has helped bring stability to Swindon's defence in the latter half of this season.

Substitute 'keeper BART GRIEMINK has the unenviable record of being sent off twice this season in first team matches for handball against Wycombe in November and for a foul against Brentford on Boxing Day. The 6ft 4ins Dutchman arrived from Peterborough last season and was signed by Swindon after impressing during a loan spell.





at local rivals Oxford United earlier this month. The efforts were two of just eight picked by Sky Sports as goals of the week, and more importantly gave Swindon a boost in their efforts to beat relegation. The 26-year-old signed from Birmingham in February and has already become a supporters' favourite.

Another crowd pleaser is the Australian attacking midfielder **DANNY INVINCIBILE**, who was signed by **TODD** after being spotted playing in a trial match for West Ham. A frustrating player who can show brilliance on his day but appears to drift from games on other occasions, he is likely to start on the bench today.

Flavour of the month at the County Ground at the moment is former Nottingham Forest midfielder **IAN WOAN**. **KING** could hardly believe his luck after he fell out of favour with Barnsley and became available, signing until the end of the season.

WOAN is rated by the Swindon



gary alexander

manager as the best player in the second division and he has shown enough of that quality on the left side of midfield to suggest he could still mix it at a higher level. He provides balance to the Robins with accurate

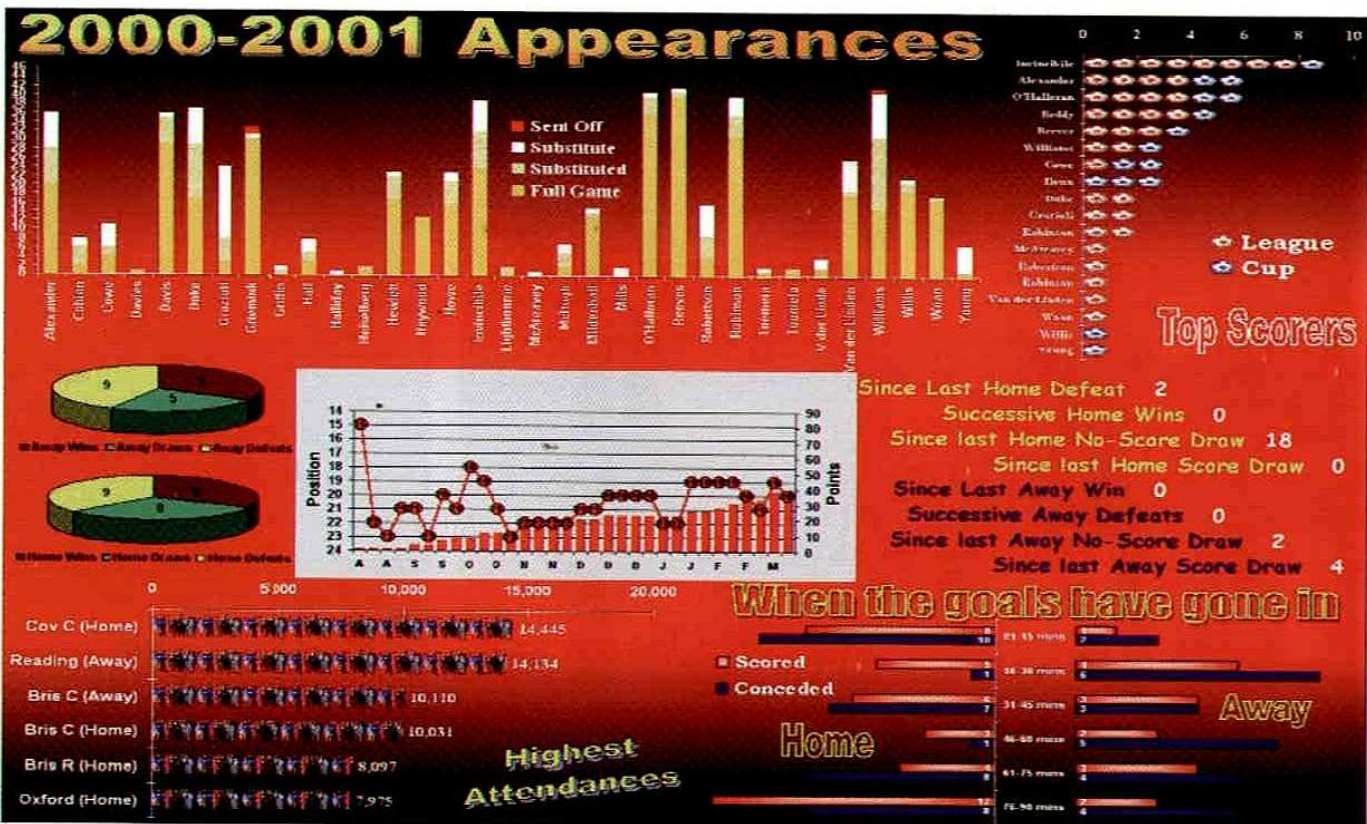
crosses from the left.

Former Bristol City player **MATT HEWLETT** is another likely starter today.

His career at the County Ground since signing in July last year has been hit by a knee injury, but he made his most recent comeback in the 1-1 draw against his old club last month and impressed in last weekend's draw against Swansea. Swindon's equaliser in Saturday's match was scored from the penalty spot by **KEITH O'HALLORAN**, a right-sided midfielder who has fitted into a position which became a problem during the relegation year. He signed on a free after refusing a new contract for St Johnstone, and has become a consistent performer.

Of the remaining midfielders at Swindon, three are battling with injury.

Left winger **ANDY WILLIAMS**, a £75,000 signing from Southampton, is set for a return soon after playing 75 minutes in the recent reserve

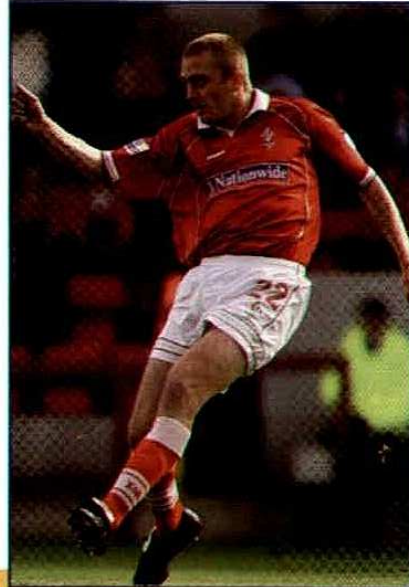




match against Brentford. DAVID DUKE, who can play in left midfield or as a left-wing back, has injured knee ligaments, and BOBBY HOWE has an achilles problem. That leaves former trainee FRAZER McHUGH, who is threatening to break into the first team and who may make the bench today.

If ever there is an example of a player who refuses to take no for an answer, it is ALAN REEVES. Told by TODD that he was free to leave, it appeared his Swindon Town career was over at the end of last season. But the former Wimbledon centre-half was called on in an emergency during a pre-season friendly and has never looked back. He has since won the backing of KING, who has made him club captain.

REEVES is likely to play alongside MATTHEW HEYWOOD if KING opts for two central defenders today. A solid player, HEYWOOD failed to break through at Burnley and KING snapped him up on a free transfer.



alan reeves

He has managed to keep former Coventry player ADAM WILLIS out of the side. Fellow central defender ANTOINE VAN DER LINDEN could join the partnership if a 3-5-2 system is preferred. The Dutch player has

also played up front in emergencies, and scored at Wrexham last month.

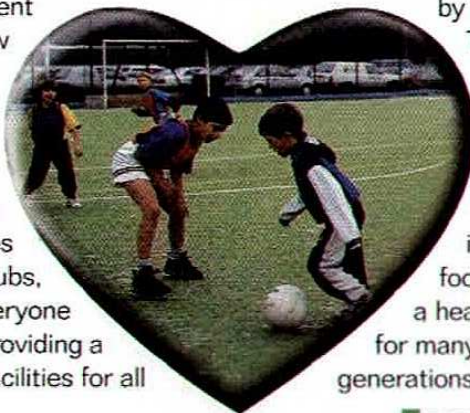
MARK ROBINSON and SOL DAVIS are first choice right and left backs respectively. ROBINSON is Town's longest serving player since signing for a club record free of £600,000 from Newcastle in July 1994. He has managed to fend off a challenge from Argentinian JUAN COBIAN, whose claim to fame is being at Boca Junior with Maradona. DAVIS, a former trainee, played 25 times last season as full-back and wing-back. His main weakness appears to be his disciplinary offence ? he was booked after just 15 seconds in Saturday's match against Swansea.

Other defenders at the County Ground join the squad's injury list. They include GARETH DAVIES, out all season with a knee injury, and JAMES WILLIAMS, a young player who can also fit into midfield but is currently out with a groin strain.

MARK DREW

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pirate eye

with john malyckyj

I think I can now claim "cult" status for Pirate Eye, as "fan mail" is now beginning to arrive! It seems that my trip to Wigan has caused more than a flutter in the heart of one individual.

Yes "dressing as a girlie" has proved too much for "Willie of Whorefield". First of all he

left a message at the match day office here at the stadium and then he sent a further "missive" to Supporters Club HQ.

"Willie" is either very misguided or rather unwell and in need of some urgent "help". In the interests of public safety I feel that the poor chap ought to "reveal" himself so that he can get the "attention" he so clearly needs. At the very least I can promise him a signed

photograph of yours truly which Club photographer Alan Marshall will be only too pleased to sell him.

I think that "Willie" once played his clarinet on top of his house in "Whorefield" to celebrate Rovers return to Bristol ... but of course I could be wrong and I have handwriting experts on the case ... Mrs Pirate Eye is VERY interested in your true identity Willie ... Me ... I'm just beginning to panic!

LEAVE HIS MALICE TO
A DAME FOR THE TEAM!
WIGAN WAS A GOOD RESULT,
BUT YOUR DEALERS WERE
EVEN BETTER!
AND BLACK STOKINGS
WOW!!
I HOPE TO SWIM INTO YOU
ON SATURDAY AND PERHAPS
I'LL FIND OUT IF YOU ARE
AS REAL A WOMAN AS I
THINK YOU ARE.
... TO YOURSELF, I HAVE
A GREAT BOTTOM AND
A GREAT MIND. A PERFECT
MATCH!
SEE YOU SOON SWEETIE.
WILLIE (OR WONT HE) OF
WHOREFIELD XXXX

HELLO AGAIN SWEETIE PIE,
YOU REALLY ARE MY KIND OF
GAL - A TEASER! WHILE I AM
STILL GETTING OVER BLACK
STOKINGS I'VE FOUND OUT VIA
THE PIRATE, THAT YOU ARE ALSO
INTO LATEX AND FOAM RUBBER!
I MUST SAY WHEN MY FRIEND
SULIAN AND I MOVED TO BRISTOL
AND I DECIDED OF ALL THOSE
(THE CRUSHED TOGETHER IN THE
BLACKHOZEN GHD WAS TO GOOD
TO PASS UP!) I DIDNT REALISE
FOOTBALL COULD BE SUCH FUN.
ALTHOUGH I AM REALLY A SHY
PERSON, I JEALY MUCH HOPE THAT
ONE DAY YOU AND I COULD GET
TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
HOPE TO HEAR MORE OF YOU
SOON. WILLIAM.
- WOULD TO MY GOOD FRIENDS, AS
YOU ALREADY KNOW -
"SWEET DREAMS" XXXX



blake's eleven

with tim blake

As someone born in Luton, and who grew up watching football there in my early years, I'd like to extend a very warm personal welcome to an old hero of mine, Andy King, as he brings Swindon to the Mem this afternoon. Andy was a great goalscorer during his time at Kenilworth Road during the mid 70's, and was always a pleasure to watch - Those of you old enough to remember the games against Rovers at that time may recall a stylish, Cureton type poacher, except with a much higher workrate! It's good to see he's still involved in the game, although obviously, I'm fervently hoping that he goes home empty handed this afternoon.

Our trip to the County ground earlier this season ended with an easier victory than most of us could have reasonably expected, against a very poor looking Swindon side on the day. In a game notable for the name 'Andreasson' appearing on the scoresheet, and a rather classy own goal, the only disappointment was the failure of Wally to get on the scoresheet, despite a 35 yard cracker which deserved better in the second half, if my memory serves me correctly.

As the season enters the final third, both teams will be looking for maximum points to assist their fight against the drop, so hopefully, we'll see an entertaining, attacking game.

Anyone who stands anywhere nearby in the West Enclosure will know that me and Referees very rarely operate on the same wavelength - I'm convinced some of the specimens we see down here shouldn't be allowed to work on the Downs, let alone in professional sport. However, credit where it's due - having already been impressed with him at Goodison, I thought Steve Baines' performance during the Bury game was equally good.

There was one particular incident

that deserves special mention. On the same day that some self-serving idiot sent off a Wycombe lad for celebrating the goal that took his team into the semi-final of the FA Cup by removing his shirt, his reaction to Dwayne's goal celebration was common sense at its best.

He simply said that he must have missed this heinous crime of shirt removal, because Dwayne 'had a T-shirt on underneath'. Now we all know exactly how far away from the goalscorer the referee was, and we all know that he saw the 'offence' as plainly as we all did. But his reaction just shows that it is possible for officials to handle things sensitively, and appreciate the fact that football is a game full of emotions. A gold star, Mr Baines - well done.

Finally, a true story. As a birthday present a couple of weeks back, 'Longsuffering' Su gave me a flying lesson. So, the other Sunday, off we went to Lulsgate. Having negotiated steering the plane along the ground (I 'taxied' to the end of the runway, as we pilots say), and then successfully taken off, I turned towards Bristol, because I wanted to take a photo of our street from the air.

So, go East from Lulsgate, and

where do you come to? Of course, the scary spectre of Traston soon loomed into view. Naturally, for a Gashead, only one thing comes to mind - a song we all know that begins 'If I had the wings of a sparrow...', mentions crows, bodily functions, and, sadly, cannot be reproduced in full in a programme article such as this.

I know you'd all be disappointed if I hadn't, so I'm proud to report I serenaded the airwaves with a full rendition as we flew over the Dolman Stand at 2,000 feet. I also probably don't need to tell you the punchline - yes, of course my instructor was a BCFC82 fan, and he fixed me with a steely glare as we headed over the docks towards St George.

After suggesting that possibly my birthday treat may be expanded to include a parachute jump as well, he turned the screws in a way that only people who work in this sort of game can. 'Later on, I think we'll let you try and land this....' he muttered sadistically as the colour drained from my face.

Your support over the past few weeks has been superb - keep it up!

Up the Gas!!!



Captain Blake gets ready for a sing-song!

taking the mike

with nick day

Wish you were here!!! I am, believe it or not, penning these notes from an Internet Cafe in Playa Blanca, Lanzarote.

We decided to get a last minute break to this island that is a very pleasant 76 degrees today, but is also volcanic and looks like the cast from the 'Planet of the Apes' might storm the Hotel bar at any moment. Holidays for yours truly are something of a rarity and have to be planned with military precision, with a travel brochure in one hand and Rovers' fixture list in the other.

No such problem this time around. Last minute deal, very reasonable price, quiet-ish time at work and The Gas play Peterborough on Tuesday 13 March and Swindon Town here today. Eleven clear days for me and the newly imported Irish bombshell to hot foot it to The Canaries - well, my sunglasses haven't had a run out for ages, have they Dan N from the Rivals Message Board??

Everything was going swimmingly well, until a phone call from Ralph last Tuesday. "The game's off, we had a downpour last night, Steve Dunn has inspected the pitch and he reckons it would be better if we held a synchronised swimming display."

"No problem Ralph," I replied "Yes there is," he said "we've rearranged it for next Tuesday and you're in Lanzarote - what do we do normally do in this situation?"

Well, that was a question and a half because that situation has never arisen before. I am (or was) very proud of the fact that this very month of March is my 10 year anniversary. In 10 years I have not missed one single home game. I might not be able to boast about being a 'Gashead of forty years' like



Blimey Phil, I wish I was in Lanzarote and not Rotherham

many of the people who we are asked to read out dedications for. I cannot wax lyrical about my youth spent on the Tote End at Eastville, purely because it was a little difficult getting from Trowbridge to the M32 when you're 12 years of age. I was however, very proud of my little 10-year-old record and I was keen to protect it at all costs!

After Ralph's phone call, I raced back to the office to speak to Bronagh (aka 'er indoors). "You'll never guess what's happened pet," I started, already logging onto the web to try and re-arrange the flight, "they've only gone and changed the game to next Tuesday."

It took all of a milli-second to realise, from the look on her face, that I had absolutely no chance of doing anything other than getting on that plane. And making damned sure I put a smile on my face about it. She had that look in her eye that I usually only see at 2am on a Sunday morning when I turn my key in the lock.

So that was that. I rushed to The

Mem to try and sort out a replacement and when I stepped onto the pressurised Spanair metal tube that was just about to blast me through the air at 500 miles an hour, I think we just about had it covered. Thank you for the combined effort from Chris Mills, Rod Wesson and Ralph who I'm sure covered admirably last Tuesday.

I'm back today, so are my sunglasses, I'm not going anywhere again for another 10 years, I'm looking for you Dan N, and I want three points here today against localish rivals Swindon Town.

I would like to thank both my parents who cast the only for votes for me in the 'should Nick Day be PA Announcer' on a certain website last week (!) and I'd like to encourage the rest of you to make as much noise as you can this afternoon. There is a 'double' available. Come On You Blues!

Eds Note: How lucky can you get? Tuesday's postponement means that Nick's 10-year record is still intact.

deadline day deals

new kids on the block

Transfer deadline day saw the arrival of three new players at the club and by the time you read these notes Garry Thompson will in all probability have signed a goalkeeper as cover for Nick Culkin. Unfortunately, our deadlines meant that we were unable to include any details of the proposed deal.

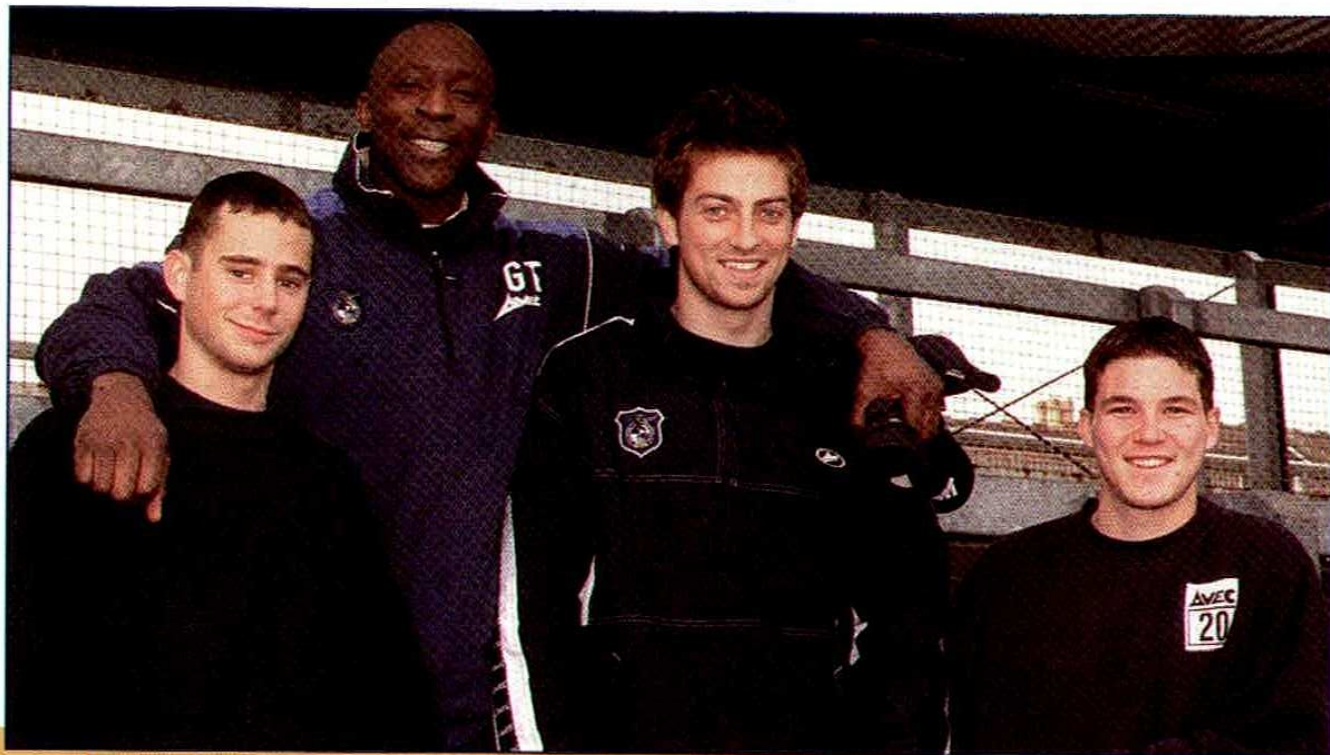
Christian Lee has joined us from Gillingham for the remainder of the season and he is looking forward to working again with Garry Thompson. Lee started off at Doncaster, then followed Manager Ian Atkins to Northampton where he got to know Garry Thompson. When asked about his pending move to Bristol Rovers, Lee said "I jumped at the chance, especially the opportunity to work with Garry again". Expectations will be high, especially in view of our situation in the bottom half of the table; however, Christian said that provided he gets the service "I will

do my best to knock the goals in and I'm looking forward to playing first team football and working with a Manager I already know".

Richie Partridge joins us on loan from Liverpool to the end of the season. He moved to Liverpool from Dublin, and having spent just over 4 years at Anfield is eager to play first team football for Bristol Rovers. Richie also know that Rovers have been interested in since the start of the season and was delighted that this interest was renewed with an opportunity to join us for the remainder of the season. "I made a first team appearance for Liverpool when we beat Stoke 8-0 earlier this season" said Richie and we certainly hope we can reflect a similar scoreline when we play there next week! He also knows the pressures and expectations when a team are near the relegation zone "but that's part and parcel of football and I'll do my best for

Rovers and hopefully we will get the results we deserve especially against Bristol City!".

19-year old Kevin Gall was due to sign a contract on Thursday afternoon. He has played at Newcastle for three years and has seen many changes in management during his time at St James's Park. Kevin has over 30 Caps playing for Wales at different levels and hopes to get the chance to represent them in the U-21's. He has signed for us till the end of the season and is hoping to prove he has a long term future with Rovers. His preferred position is up front, although he can play wide and has reaped the benefit of training with first team players at Newcastle, such as Alan Shearer and Gary Speed. "Experience in the Reserves against Premiership players is bound to rub off and I will certainly do my best for Rovers" said Kevin.



Manager Garry Thompson with his deadline day signing (l-r): Richie Partridge, Christian Lee and Kevin Gall



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AT THE MEM



BRISTOL ROVERS versus **ARSENAL**



at Memorial Stadium Filton Avenue, Bristol

Tomorrow Sunday 25th March 2001
Kick-off 3.00 pm

retro rovers

with stephen byrne
& mike jay

O FORTUNA

It may well be that, to opera buffs, the words 'O Fortuna' call to mind Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana'. In Düsseldorf, however, there can be only one Fortuna and they play at the Rheinstadion, a magnificent stereotypical stadium in a nation full of sports arenas constructed in the grey days of the 1930s. And so it was that, on the day Rovers finally won their first home league game since Easter Saturday, I was standing in the sun in Block 39, looking down on a snowy pitch where Fortuna Düsseldorf recorded a 1-0 victory over Dresden.

February is Karneval in this part of Germany, a period of prolonged festivities, dressing-up and carnival floats prior to the onset of Lent and a time when the local Altbier flows freely. Nonetheless, the vast quantities of alcohol apparently consumed could not detract from the family atmosphere. Two steps in front of me on the terraces, a blonde, pig-tailed three-year-old watched the game from the comfort of her father's shoulders, while a Franciscan monk, several downs and Po from the Teletubbies stood behind me. Was this the place to start singing 'Goodnight Irene'? Behind each goal, inflatable 25-foot-high men in Düsseldorf colours were blown up after every key moment for the 3,800 crowd watching the 1933 champions whose third consecutive win was crucial as they wallow uncomfortably close to the foot of Division Three.

It would, of course, be easy to recognise the sides. Fortuna fans stood in red and white striped shirts or, in some cases, red and white hoops, while the small, forlorn-looking band of travelling supporters from the former East Germany clustered in the shadows behind the far goal sported what, from a distance, appeared to be Newcastle tops. Then, as the sides ran out, my heart sank, for one team wore all white with red numbers and the other the red-and-black striped shirts reminiscent of Asa Hartford and friends in their 1970s Manchester City away strip. Dresden, in the stripes, come from a run-down corner of Saxony where, if I remember rightly, a vast McDonald's now dominates the once majestic high street in these post-reunification days, and

it was their goalkeeper, René Gross, in his flame yellow top, who was the busier before too long.

Indeed, Fortuna had already seen one 'goal' rightly disallowed before Marcus Marin, with the assured finishing of a latterday Marcus Stewart, casually stroked home right-footed from short range after only five minutes, following a right-wing break by their top scorer, the former Dynamo Minsk striker Oleg Poutilo. Marin, who boasts a long list of former clubs himself, must of course be termed a veteran, by dint of the fact that he is only eleven days younger than me. One goal to nil was how it stayed despite the midfield promptings of Fortuna's blond-haired captain Uwe Weidemann, as old as Ian Holloway and mehwesque in appearance. Fortuna continued to press and Dresden's only clear-cut chance was spurned by Rocco Milde, a red-haired striker, ever-present this season, with a propensity for falling over unchallenged whenever he approached the opposition goal. His colleague Ronald Schmidt, injured five minutes prior to half-time, was accidentally tipped, comic-book-style, from the mandatory stretcher by an over-zealous official in one of those classic sport comedy moments.

I had the good fortune to watch Jürgen Klinsmann's international debut for Germany, I saw Mark Hughes play for Bayern Munich and was one of a number of Rovers fans at the Italy-Russia Euro88 semi-final. However, my only previous attendance at a Fortuna game, a 2-2 draw with Oberhausen in December 1998, had featured a remarkable forty-yard goal from one Daniel Addo. The twenty-four-year-old defender has recently rejoined Fortuna after a spell with Bayer Leverkusen but, sadly, he remained on the bench throughout. His manager is Uwe Fuchs, the former Millwall and Middlesbrough player. My mind filled with thoughts of sun and snow, I was crossing the Rhine on the tram when Vitalijs Astafjevs finally slotted home that much-awaited opening goal against Cambridge United as Rovers, like Fortuna, make that essential push to escape the drop zone at the foot of their respective divisions.

24th March 1956 Bury 0 Rovers 1

On this day forty-five years ago, Rovers recorded their sixth away victory of the Second Division season, when Dai Ward's goal was enough to defeat Bury before a crowd of 11,569 at Gigg Lane. Remarkably it was the lowest crowd at a Rovers match for 12 months. Rovers were putting together an impressive run which brought them to the verge of promotion to Division One. This dream was shattered in the penultimate game of the season when Rovers, a goal up early on, lost 2-1 at Leeds United, the winner being scored by John Charles.

There was one enforced change to the side Rovers put out at Gigg Lane. Following the draw with Fulham, experienced left-half Peter Sampson was forced to miss out and was

JIM

Of many talented outside lefts to grace the Rovers sides down the years, one was a small, slight but speedy player born 107 years ago today.

Jimmy Lofthouse progressed through the clubs in his native St Helens and signed for Reading in May 1913 from Stalybridge Celtic. He made 102 Southern League games scoring seventeen goals before, after representing Manchester United

replaced by Scotsman Ian Muir, who was making his first appearance since early December. Bury had lost 3-2 at West Ham United in midweek and recalled the experienced Tommy Daniel for Don Wilson in an otherwise unchanged side.

Scottish-born goalkeeper Roy McLaren faced the daunting prospect of a powerful Rovers attack which boasted George Petherbridge, Barrie Meyer, Alfie Biggs and Peter Hooper.

It was Welsh International Dai Ward whose goal won the day. It was the second of eight consecutive goals scored by the talented Ward, which created a club record which has never been bettered.

On the same day in 1956, Swindon Town remained at the foot of Division Three (South) following a single-goal defeat at home to Gillingham.

CONSECUTIVE LEAGUE GOALSCORING FOR ROVERS

8 Dai Ward	17 March- 21 April 1956
7 Geoff Bradford	22 Aug- 17 Sept 1955
7 Geoff Bradford	24 April- 6 Sept 1954
7 Marcus Stewart	30 Nov 1994- 7 Jan 1995
6 Alan Warboys	24 Nov- 26 Dec 1973
6 Bruce Bannister	7 April- 25 Aug 1973



Dai Ward in action

born on this date: JIM LOFTHOUSE

in War Time football, he enjoyed league action with Sheffield Wednesday and Rotherham. On 1st December 1923, the 29-year-old forward joined Rovers in a deal worth £350 and he quickly established himself as a firm favourite with the Eastville faithful. In April 1924, a broken elbow sustained ten minutes before half-time in the home fixture with Luton Town ruled him out for the remainder of

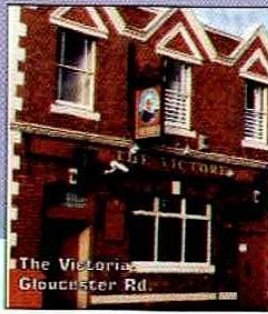
the season. But Jim returned to be an ever-present in season 1924-25. By the time of his free-transfer move to Queens Park Rangers in May 1926, he had scored fifteen times in 105 league matches for Rovers. Latterly with Southern League Aldershot, Lofthouse subsequently worked for the Post Office in Reading.

Born in the Spring of 1894, he died in Windsor in the Summer of 1954, aged sixty.





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pirate programmes

reviews and auctions

NEWS

Assuming the Peterborough game has gone ahead, the Programme Fair that I mentioned in the last programme takes place on Sunday 22nd April here in the Bristol Room of the Clubhouse Bar, 1100-1400. Jamie and I will be there with our old Rovers stock, but if you or a friend collect any other club's programmes then come along as there are several other stands with dealers from different parts of the country, including one that specialises in Manchester United for instance. **PHIL DRAPER**

Review

BRISTOL ROVERS v Everton 27/09/00 LC2/2 Size=The Same as the one you are reading 64 pages Price £2.00



As usual I review our programme for this column. I chose this game for the warm glow it gives me, the cover reminding us all of the night at Goodison, and the end result. But the standard throughout the season has remained constant and apart from a few printing glitches that standard has been high. The total number of pages has been increased but the cover price was not. Content has not been sacrificed on the altar of advertising, which amounts to only 17 pages (26%) in total. The poster has been replaced by a

centrefold, much to the disappointment of many kids who collected the offprint extras which I had in the shop! There seems to be the right mix of officialdom and humour, with many people giving an independent view in their columns. In my biased view is one of the best in this Division and could be a contender for an award this year again ... oh, sorry, of course it IS the Div.2 Programme of the Year that is official! Must be down to the great Pirate Programmes Page, which I never fail to read ... and spellcheck!

PIRATE PROGRAMMES

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All enquiries welcomed but must be accompanied by SAE for reply. Sorry, no current stock list available. Specialist stockist of Rovers programmes. Donations (any club) always welcome.

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Auction #13

Bristol Rovers v Swindon Town 19/08/50 Div3(S) Size 184x125mm 12pages Then price 3d (1 1/4p)

This was the first game of the 1950/51 season and the scan shown is the actual programme on offer. It has been folded in the past into four and has a very small stain on the cover but for its age it is in reasonable to good condition. Contentswise it is not a great read, the main feature is oddly Supporters Club Notes. There is a history of the visitors, a page of official information (fixtures, Season ticket details), a squad photo of Bristol Rovers and the usual PAK cartoon. Four and a half pages are advertising, the final bit is the Code for Half Time Scores. Among the adverts is one for

"Lyddite Chicks" who apparently are "Right on Top!" (HUH?)

Meanwhile Eclipsol Cream of Roses Hair Dressing is "the haircream for men that ladies love!" If you wish to bid for this item, send an SAE for reply with your bid (marked with Auction Number 13) to 199 Two Mile Hill Road. Alternatively you can Email me at pmdraper10@aol.com. The auction will close four weeks from today. Minimum suggested bid £4.



Past Pirate - On the road 57/58 (by Jamie Howarth)

West Ham United and Leyton Orient stuck to the same format as previous seasons. They were the largest (19x25cms) but had the least pages (4) and cost 3d. They also steadfastly refused to have any advertisements. Looking at the others it was not a good policy, it meant that they had to keep costs down and it showed. A definite "could do better" in the Past Pirate awards.

Top Dog in 57-58 was in my opinion between Notts County and one other club. The latter just shades it by reason of having less advertisements and more reading matter. It was the smallest (12 x 18cms) cost 4d but with a pre-printed colour cover it just about takes first place. This shows how unbiased I am because the award for best programme for 57-58 goes to !!**&@?! Bristol City, (sorry Gasheads). League matches total 21 plus a postponed one with Notts County. In the FA Cup we travelled to Burnley, Bristol City and Fulham in Rounds 4 (Replay), 5 and 6 respectively. The biannual trip to Ashton Gate for the G.F.A.Cup final brought the season to a close. Programmes from this season will cost you approximately £4-5 in reasonable condition.

Do you know of any I have missed? If so please write to me care of the Supporters Club, Two Mile Hill or e-mail me at pastpirate@netscapeonline.co.uk



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Hard to believe that it's almost forty years ago that Peter Hooper left Rovers after a career which took in 297 league games and over a century of goals for the club he joined in 1953.

He went on to play league football for Cardiff and Bristol City and also turned out for Worcester City, Glastonbury and Barnstaple Town before becoming a publican and then spending over twenty years working for the probation service. Now 68 years old and still living near Barnstaple, he still enjoys putting his boots on and spending time coaching the youngsters of Newport Primary School. 'I scored a great goal from the halfway line just the other day,' he says, with all the enthusiasm of a schoolboy himself. It's good to know that the left foot is still in good working order!

However, my reason for calling him was not to talk about his time at Eastville, from which he has many fond memories and a host of stories, but to ask about his support for the Prostate Cancer Awareness Week, which begins today. It's a subject close to his heart, as he was diagnosed as having prostate cancer himself some six years ago.

'When I was forty, I had a stone in my kidney and was in a great deal of pain. I was due to have an operation, but the stone passed through my system naturally and the operation wasn't necessary. I continued to have problems from time to time, and six years ago I experienced a great deal of pain in my kidneys and had to go to hospital for x-rays.

playing on

with peter hooper

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I went to get the results on the day of the office Christmas party and was relieved when the specialist pinned up the x-ray and proceeded to tell me that there were no stones in my kidneys. Naturally, I thought it was great news, but then he added, 'but you have got cancer of the prostate.' I went on to the office party, but, needless to say, I wasn't really in a party mood and I didn't want to tell anyone what had been said at the hospital, as I hadn't had the opportunity to talk to my wife.

To be honest, I didn't talk to anyone, apart from my family, about it for over two years. However, I now realise that it's nothing to be ashamed of and that's why I wanted to give my support to the Prostate Cancer Charity's Awareness Week. I became involved with them when I sent them a donation a few years back and when they wrote to thank me, they asked if I thought I could help them in any way, and it's just gone on from there.

I've been fortunate, in that I was

diagnosed when I was. If I hadn't had problems with my kidneys, I wouldn't have found out that I had prostate cancer. I've been fortunate also in that I haven't required surgery, either, but I know that if it flares up, I can have the prostate gland removed.

I've read many case studies about the disease now and it's a fact that one in thirteen men may get prostate cancer, so I would urge anyone feeling any discomfort to consult their doctor straight away. If diagnosed in the early stages, no medication may be necessary. It's not a virile form of cancer and it slows down as you get older. The important thing to realise is that you can die with it, not because of it.

I realise that everyone's story isn't the same, but I can only tell you mine and why I support the Charity. I hope you will as well.

Peter was going to be here today, but the team he coaches are playing in an important tournament, which he dare not miss. I suspect he's hoping to get on as a substitute!


adam

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our man in the midlands

chris chappell

Scoring a goal gives you an amazing feeling. I should know, as I have done it about five times in park football from a combined distance of some ten yards. Chris Waddle once described it as "not as good as sex, but it's a great feeling," but whether it still gets the blood going when he sticks one in for his current club Worksp is another matter.

Even if it's a two-yard toe-in consolation for your basement Sunday League cloggers, the adrenalin rush is immense, and in most of my glorious goalscoring moments I have yelled out with joy only to find my less bothered teammates trudging back to the half-way line behind me with no more than a thumbs up. We can't all score the winners in Cup finals I suppose.

In my minimal celebratory routine I must confess to never having the notion to tear my shirt off, perhaps more in caution than anything else, as I tend to play better with an old Rovers shirt beneath my club top, even if the temperatures are soaring. You usually get the odd nutter who always seems to support the other lot, and if I went around dancing in the quarters after a rare strike, I might not ever be physically able to do it again.

The 'whip-me-top-off' celebration seems to be by far the most popular celebration at the moment, even when there is nearly always a booking at the end of it, which begs the question why they do it in the first place. Dwayne Plummer was very lucky not to be brandished with a yellow a fortnight ago when he swept in the second goal here against Bury. Off came his shirt as he ran towards the Clubhouse, but luckily for him the ref kept his cards in his pocket.

Steve Brown, the Wycombe

player who didn't even score the last-minute clincher at Leicester, took off his top to reveal the name of his sick child Maxwell who was in the crowd, but saw the letter of the law and a second booking given to him to turn his day sour with an early bath.

It's not the referees' fault; they get enough stick from everyone just for applying the sometimes dodgy laws, and without fail they always get chanted at even when they have made the right decision. How can revealing a vest to your own fans be incensing crowd trouble?

It's definitely the law that sucks, and thankfully it's going back out of the window from next season after the FIFA big-wigs decided it was as stupid as the rest of us thought. Sure, book the player if he reveals a message to the opposing fans in the same vein as a two-finger salute, but baring your vest or your pectorals to your own supporters surely has no foul intention.

Whatever happened to the knee slide, or the Klinsmann dive? The

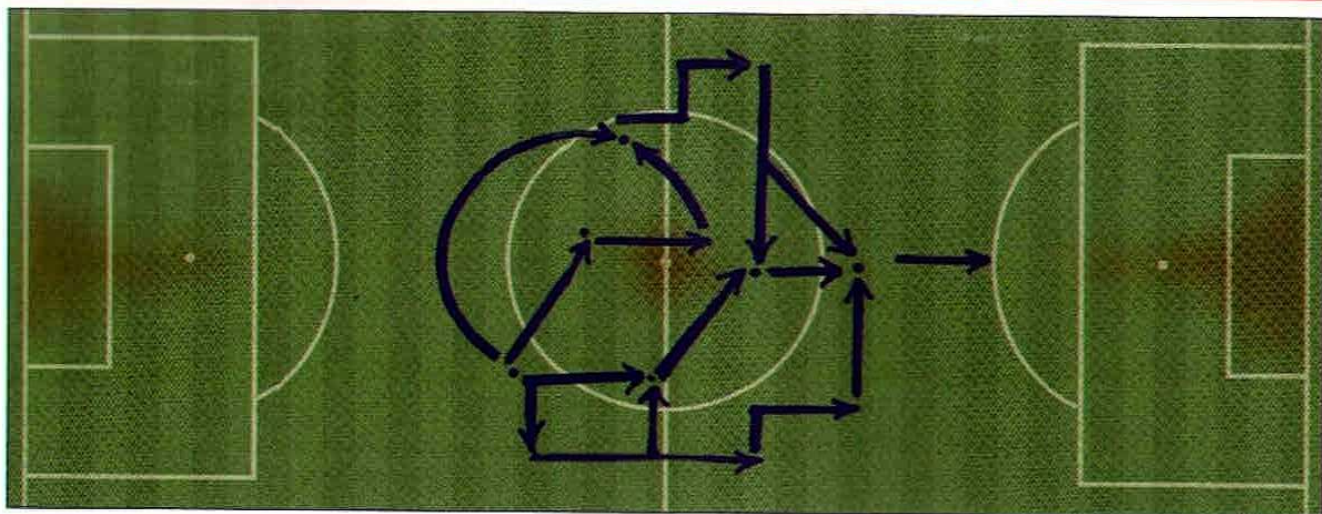
shirt-off routine probably evolved from Fabrizio Ravanelli's shirt-over-the-head trick about five years ago, which was then adapted by Ian Wright and his vest messages.

Nowadays the top comes off completely, but for me this celebration is pretty tepid. The best of all time was arguably Marco Tardelli running all the way down the pitch with fists clenched and a face weeping with ecstasy as he mouthed something in Italian, just after he had struck against West Germany in the 1982 World Cup final.

Lee Sharpe's corner flag antics for Manchester United were a bit of a copy of Roger Milla in the 1990 World Cup for Cameroon, but still more imaginative than Dwayne Plummer's; however, as I know all too well, scoring makes you lose control of your bodily functions, and sometimes you don't know what you're doing in the aftermath of sticking it in the back of the net. It's a great feeling, and I advise you to try it sometime.



keep your shirt on lads!!



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|--|--|
| England v Finland. Saturday 24th March 2001. 3.00pm ● | Albania v England. Wednesday 28th March 2001. TBC ● |
| Armenia v Wales. Saturday 24th March 2001. 5.00pm ● | Wales v Ukraine. Wednesday 28th March 2001. 7.30pm ● |
| Scotland v Belgium. Saturday 24th March 2001. 3.00pm ● | Scotland v San Marino. Wednesday 28th March 2001. 8.00pm ● |

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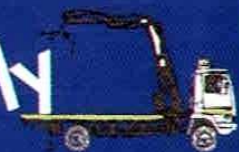
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Must be **Mars**

...so eat, drink and enjoy

Good afternoon and welcome to The Memorial Stadium for what is a very important game to both sides. Swindon, who were relegated last season, will be looking to avoid the drop again this year and like ourselves have had a change of Manager.

They have had a somewhat inconsistent season and will be looking to avenge the 3-1 defeat by Rovers earlier in the season. With both teams needing to win, we could see a very tense game and this is when the Rovers players will need your backing – let's hear you shouting them on to victory and three points. Welcome to all connected with Swindon Town Football Club, enjoy the game and have a safe journey home.

Our next away trip is to Oldham on Bank Holiday Monday, so if you are interested in travelling, please let Pete, Sue or Andy know in order that we can gauge the numbers



young pirates

wishing to travel. Please note that the cost of the trip does not include admission to the game.

We will also be running a trip to Walsall for our last away game of the season, so you may want to add the date of this game (28th April) to your diary.

It's been an extremely busy week for Garry Thompson and at the time of going to print, we have been unable to finalise a date when you can meet the players. However, Garry is looking forward to meeting you all and we hope to have confirmation of the date in the near future.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

None of our members have Birthdays today but we would like to wish a Happy Birthday to all those of you who celebrate your birthdays between now and our next home game, against Bristol City, on 3rd April.



Alex Parsons, aged 7, is today's Commercial Mascot. Alex attends Begbrook Primary School in Stapleton and has been a season ticket holder and a Young Pirate since the age of 3. His favourite Rovers players are Nick Culkin, Andy Tholmson and 'The Duke', Nathan Ellington.

fixture chaos

With the late postponement of Tuesday's match with Peterborough it may be a case of history repeating itself. In season 1986-87 Rovers had to play 13 league matches in the final 48 days of the season. Struggling to avoid relegation to Division 3, Rovers managed a last day win at Newport County to stay up.

Coincidentally Rovers have 13 matches left from today 24th March until 5 May Wrexham (home) which is just 44 days!

One other difference is that Rovers have nine home games in their current run, while fourteen years ago there were eight.

The fixtures & results 14 years ago were as follows:-

23/3/87	CHESTERFIELD	A	1	1
4/4/87	BURY	A	0	1
11/4/87	SWINDON TOWN	H	3	4
18/4/87	BRISTOL CITY	H	0	0
20/4/87	AFC BOURNEMOUTH	A	0	2
22/4/87	CARLISLE UNITED	H	4	0
25/4/87	GILLINGHAM	H	0	1
28/4/87	CHESTER CITY	H	3	2
30/4/87	DARLINGTON	H	2	1
2/5/87	DONCASTER ROVERS	A	0	2
4/5/87	BRENTFORD	H	0	1
6/5/87	DONCASTER ROVERS	H	2	3
9/5/87	NEWPORT COUNTY	A	1	0

The run concluded with just 4 wins, 2 draws and 7 defeats

MIKE JAY



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GREAT PIZZAS.



GREAT TIMES.



Every game is vital to us now, and with the amount of postponements recently due to the bad weather, surely the club need to consider investing in a cover for the pitch.

Twice, in the last two weeks the players have been prepared for an important match, only to learn that it has been called off just hours before kick off and I'm sure that they must be wondering if they are going to get a break before next season!

After the home win against Bury, our expectations were high as we travelled the 180 miles to Rotherham last week, on what felt like the coldest day of the year. Arriving at Millmoor at 1.30, we headed for the nearest watering hole (purely for medicinal reasons as I was suffering with flu!) We were made welcome by many of the

Rotherham fans who were very hospitable and even laughed with us as the kids drew Captain Gas and BRFC all over their chalkboard in the bar!

After a short walk to the ground we took our seats right behind the

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association would like to thank all Bristol Rovers' fans for their generosity at the last home game against Bury. Your support for the charity has always been excellent and we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of visually impaired people across the West country. We wish the club and fans all the best for the remainder of the season.

goal and joined in with the usual banter and predictions. The game in the first half was as expected, tough and full of enthusiasm, until the 43rd minute when Rotherham's first goal hit the back of the net. The Gas faithful fell silent, shocked and stunned. However, we continued to encourage the team as much as we could and tried to boost their morale.

In the second half, we still believed in our boys, but they didn't quite have the same edge about them. Heads dropped and it appeared that the team had, temporarily, lost the self-belief and fight that has kept them going all season.

When the second goal went in, it seemed as though they had almost given up the battle and surrendered to the enemy. The third goal came very near the end of the match and gave the home side a rather flattering 3-0 scoreline.

Personally, I thought that Steve Foster had another excellent game. He was his usual cool, calm 'Mr Unruffled' self and in my opinion he should be up for a few awards this season. He has shown true leadership and professionalism and put in a number of inspirational performances this season.

Congratulations are in order for Ryan Clarke and Drew Shore who have been awarded their first pro contracts with the club. Ryan is an up and coming star of the future, and with his cool head and maturity which belies his youth he will, I'm sure, go on to be a first class goalkeeper, whilst Drew is a natural left sided player, and there aren't too many of them about these days.

By the way, I'm still waiting for applicants for my 'Blues Band'! As yet, I haven't heard a trumpet, trombone or even a paper and comb!! We have 12 games left and



Steve Foster – his usual Mr Unruffled self

we need to show the same level of support as we have all season and let the team know that we are right behind them.

Three points today are crucial, as we have two more big games ahead of us, against Stoke and another team from Bristol, so let's make all the noise we can today and, hopefully, celebrate another home win whilst watching England on the box.

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second glance

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TRANSFERS

Cambridge complete the signing of Terry Fleming from Plymouth, whilst Notts County recruit Kevin Nicholson from Northampton, Fabrice Moreau from Airdrie and Colin Calderwood, on loan, from Notts Forest. There are two new loan signings at Ashton Gate, in the shape of Neil Maddison from Middlesbrough and Lee Matthews from Leeds. Jeff Minton signs for Rotherham, from Port Vale.

WEDNESDAY 7th MARCH

Stoke suffer a 2-1 home defeat at the hands of relegation threatened Swansea, who win for the first time since Boxing Day, whilst Dave Brammer scores the only goal of the game as Port Vale win at Colchester.

FRIDAY 9th MARCH

Wigan lose 1-0 at Reading, who go third in the table thanks to Jim McIntyre's goal.

SATURDAY 10th MARCH

Wycombe reach the semi final of

the FA Cup, as they beat Leicester 2-1 at Filbert Street. In the league, leaders Millwall retain their four point lead at the top with a 1-0 home win over Luton. Rotherham remain second, following their 3-2 win at Oldham. Walsall drop to fourth after a surprise 1-0 home defeat at the hands of Colchester, whilst Stoke draw 2-2 at Brentford, courtesy of a last minute equaliser from Rikhadur Dadason.

Oxford have Dean Whitehead and Matt Murphy sent off in their 2-0 home defeat at the hands of Swindon, for whom Steve Robinson scores twice. Swansea draw 1-1 with Northampton at the Vetch and Rovers remain in the bottom four despite a 2-0 home win over Bury. Cambridge squander a two goal lead against Wrexham and go down 3-2, with the visitors recording their third consecutive victory at the Abbey Stadium. Port Vale hammer Peterborough 5-0 at Vale Park and AFC Bournemouth record a convincing 4-0 win over Bristol City at Dean Court, with Wade Elliott notching a brace.

TUESDAY 13th MARCH

A Graham Kavanagh penalty is enough to give Stoke victory over Wycombe at Adams Park.

FRIDAY 16th MARCH

Lee Matthews scores a last minute penalty for Bristol City, to give them a 2-1 win over Millwall, in a game in which four players are sent off. City's Peter Beadle and Tony Thorpe and Millwall's Paul Moody and Neil Harris are the players who see red.

Colchester, meanwhile, come from behind to beat Brentford 3-1 at Layer Road.

SATURDAY 17th MARCH

Jeff Minton scores twice on his debut for Rotherham, as they beat Rovers 3-0 at Millmoor, and move to within a point of league leaders Millwall. Martin Butler scores twice for Reading as they win 2-1 at Wrexham and remain in third place. Wigan move back into fifth place after their 1-1 draw with AFC Bournemouth at the JJB Stadium, whilst Stoke slip to a 3-2 home defeat at the hands of Cambridge. For the second week running, Cambridge throw away a two goal lead and goals from Graham Kavanagh and Rikhadur Dadason looked to have earned Stoke a point, but a last minute goal from Marcus Richardson gives his side a much needed victory.

Swindon gain a point from a 1-1 home draw with Swansea, Keith O'Halloran's penalty cancelling out Stuart Roberts' effort for the Swans. Bury and Notts County share the spoils in their 1-1 draw at Gigg Lane, Adrian Littlejohn equalising for the home side following Danny Allsopp's opener for the Magpies. At Adams Park, goals from Michael Simpson and Keith Ryan help Wycombe to a 2-1 win over Oldham.



alright Scotty, read my cap!!

Campaign Records

Highest Gate
22,133
Stoke v Port Vale

Lowest Gate
1,584
Wrexham

vs Cambridge

Highest Aggregate Score

Brentford 2

Bristol Rovers 6

Bristol City 6

Cambridge 2

Luton 5

Swansea 3

Wrexham 5

Oxford 3

Biggest Home Win

Cambridge 6

Rotherham 1

Reading 5

Oldham 0

Millwall 5

Oxford 0

Millwall 6

Colchester 1

Port Vale 5

Peterborough 0

Biggest Away Win

Brentford 2

Bristol Rovers 6

Peterborough 0

Stoke 4

Consec. Wins

Walsall, Rotherham 5

Games Unbeaten

Wigan 18

Consec. Defeats

Bury, Swansea 5

Winless Run

Bristol Rovers, Cambridge 12

Nationwide2Stats

Statistics Compiled by
Football Information Services
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Div.2 Results Grid										Division 2 Ave. Attendances					Biggest Wins & Losses		Last 5 Home Results
HOME GOALS										3000	6000	9000	12000	15000	Win - vs.	Defeat - vs.	Results
AWAY GOALS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Grid shows the number of games ending with each result, e.g. 55 matches have been 1-1 draws and 47 games have ended a 1-0 away win.							
Bournemouth	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	4,158	4-0	Bristol City 1-3	Clyh/Rth	DDLWW			
Brentford	0	35	39	27	19	10	3			4,918	3-0	Oxford	2-6	B Rovers	DLWWD		
Bristol City	1	47	55	35	24	5	4	2		10,333	6-2	Cambridge	0-4	Col/Bmt	WWDLW		
Bristol Rovers	2	19	21	20	15	3	1			7,191	6-2	Brentford	0-3	3 clubs	DDDWW		
Bury	3	8	9	9	5	1	2			3,276	3-0	Swansea	0-4	Millwall	WWWWD		
Cambridge	4	1	4	4						4,317	6-1	Roth'ham	2-6	Bristol City	LLLWL		
Colchester	5									3,435	4-0	Bristol City	1-6	Millwall	DWLWL		
Luton	6									5,866	5-3	Swansea	0-4	Swansea	LLWDD		
Millwall	7									10,711	6-1	Colchester	2-3	3 clubs	LWWDW		
Northampton	8									5,749	2-0	4 Clubs	0-3	3 clubs	LDWWW		
Notts County										5,378	4-1	Roth'ham	1-5	Walsall	WWLWW		
Oldham										4,649	5-1	Wrexham	0-5	Reading	WWLWL		
Oxford										5,087	3-1	Nrthmptn	0-5	Millwall	LLDLL		
Peterborough										5,800	4-0	Swindon	0-5	Port Vale	WLWWD		
Port Vale										4,334	5-0	Peterboro	0-4	Cambridge	DWWDW		
Reading										11,636	5-0	Oldham	0-4	Bristol City	WWDWW		
Rotherham										5,331	3-0	5 clubs	1-6	Cambridge	WWWWW		
Stoke										13,394	4-0	Oxf/Stke	0-3	Walsall	DDWLL		
Swansea										5,646	4-0	Luton	1-5	Rdg/Wal	DDLLD		
Swindon										5,927	3-0	Bury/Oldh	0-4	P'boro	DDLWD		
Walsall										5,592	5-1	Nts C/Swa	1-3	Wy/Swa	DLWLL		
Wigan										6,583	3-1	3 Clubs	1-3	Millwall	DDDDD		
Wrexham										3,584	4-1	Bury	1-5	Oldham	WWWLL		
Wycombe										5,385	3-1	3 Clubs	0-3	Bmouth	LDLWL		

Referees Report

	G	RC	YC	Av. Yell
Fletcher	20	1	91	4.55
Olivier	21	4	88	4.19
Prosser	18	7	75	4.17
Hall	24	11	96	4.00
Mathieson	24	2	96	4.00
Dowd	22	8	83	3.77
Foy	22	5	82	3.73
Riley	10	3	37	3.70
Cooper	13	5	47	3.62
Jones P	12	0	43	3.58
Harris	7	2	25	3.57
Ryan	18	4	63	3.50
Knight	11	4	38	3.45
Winter	9	0	31	3.44

Hotshots - Div.2 Clubs' most prolific marksmen, inc. the difference their goals made

see key below	Leading Scorer	GS	1stGl	Sc1	Sc2	HT	Gms	Ave	W>L	W>D	D>L	Pts	Run	Dry	PU	CS	FS	Last 5 Away Results
Bournemouth	Defoe	13	4	9	2	0	20	0.65	1	2	2	9	10	6	30	9	4	LDLLD
Brentford	Owusu	7	2	7	0	0	24	0.29	0	2	3	7	2	6	28	9	10	DLLDL
Bristol City	Thorpe	17	3	9	1	2	33	0.52	1	2	2	9	2	5	32	9	10	DDLLL
Bristol Rovers	Ellington	10	3	6	2	0	29	0.34	1	1	4	9	3	10	32	11	15	DWDLL
Bury	Newby	5	3	3	1	0	10	0.50	0	4	0	8	1	3	27	11	11	WDDLW
Cambridge	Youngs	11	2	7	2	0	31	0.35	0	3	2	8	3	5	35	8	10	LLLLW
Colchester	Stockwell	7	1	5	1	0	37	0.19	1	0	2	5	1	16	27	11	13	DLLLW
Luton	George	5	0	5	0	0	31	0.16	0	0	1	1	2	9	30	6	13	WWLWL
Millwall	Harris	24	8	11	2	3	36	0.67	1	4	2	13	3	3	30	16	5	DDWLL
Northampton	Forrester	16	9	12	2	0	35	0.46	1	5	5	18	5	8	30	9	11	LDLLD
Notts County	Stallard	13	7	13	0	0	32	0.41	0	5	2	12	3	5	34	12	8	DWLDD
Oldham	Corazzin	8	3	4	0	1	31	0.26	0	2	0	4	1	10	27	10	12	LLLLL
Oxford	Beauchamp	6	1	4	1	0	31	0.19	0	1	0	2	1	7	38	3	14	LLLDL
Peterborough	McKenzie	10	3	6	2	0	20	0.50	1	1	1	6	2	3	25	11	12	DLLDL
Port Vale	Naylor	9	4	5	2	0	29	0.31	0	2	0	4	2	7	25	9	10	LLDWW
Reading	Butler	17	10	10	2	1	34	0.50	1	1	2	7	5	11	28	14	6	WWWDW
Rotherham	Robins	18	6	12	3	0	33	0.55	1	5	3	16	2	2	27	15	3	LDLWW
Stoke	Thorne	14	6	7	2	1	28	0.50	1	4	2	13	3	6	27	12	5	WDLWD
Swansea	Savarese	12	2	3	3	1	22	0.55	1	0	4	7	2	4	29	8	15	LLLWD
Swindon	Invincible	8	2	4	2	0	32	0.25	0	2	1	5	2	10	35	10	13	DWDWW
Walsall	Leitao	14	8	14	0	0	36	0.39	0	4	1	9	3	5	23	11	8	WDDLW
Wigan	Liddell	9	4	7	1	0	34	0.26	0	5	0	10	3	8	30	14	11	LWLLL
Wrexham	Trundle	7	0	4	0	1	8	0.88	1	2	0	7	5	2	27	7	9	LLLWW
Wycombe	Rammell	10	3	4	3	0	20	0.50	2	2	1	11	2	4	30	8	15	LDWWL

Key: GS=Goals Scored; 1st Gl=Games Scored 1st Goal; Sc1=Games Scored 1 Goal; Sc2=Games Scored 2 Goals; HT=Hat-Tricks; Each club's leading league scorer and their goals per game (Ave). Next 2 columns show taking off their goals, how many games change from Win to Loss (W>L), Win to Draw (W>D), Draw to Loss (D>L) and Points (Pts) lost. Last 2 figures show best scoring run, and longest dry spell in consecutive games. NUMBERS: PU=Players Used; CS=Clean Sheets; FS=Games Failed to Score

More teams take the field to 'Simply The Best' than any other song.

Who says the modern game lacks humour?



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pirates progress

roversquad 2000/01

PLAYER	BIRTHPLACE	BIRTHDATE	ROVERS LEAGUE CAREER	
			App	Goals
Marcus ANDREASSON	Liberia	13.7.78	16(1)	-
Vitalijs ASTAFJEVS	Riga	3.4.71	39(8)	5
Marcus BIGNOT	Birmingham	22.8.74	26	1
Simon BRYANT	Bristol	22.11.82	31(8)	1
Martin CAMERON	Dunfermline	16.6.78	4(7)	2
Trevor CHALLIS	Paddington	23.10.75	89(6)	1
Ryan CLARKE	Bristol	30.4.82	-	-
Nick CULKIN*	York	6.7.78	32	-
Nathan ELLINGTON	Bradford	2.7.81	39(39)	15
Clinton ELLIS	Brent	7.7.77	2(12)	1
Micky EVANS	Plymouth	1.1.73	19(2)	4
Mark FORAN	Aldershot	30.10.72	8(2)	-
Stephen FOSTER	Mansfield	3.12.74	149(5)	6
Mark HARDCASTLE	Gloucester	21.4.83	-	-
David HILLIER	Blackheath	19.12.69	55(1)	-
Lewis HOGG	Bristol	13.9.82	23(2)	2
Scott JONES	Sheffield	1.5.75	25(2)	2
Ronnie MAUGÉ	Islington	10.3.69	30(2)	-
Mark McKEEVER	Derry	16.11.78	11(4)	-
Michael MEAKER	Greenford	18.8.71	19(9)	2
Ansah OWUSU**	Hackney	22.11.79	8	-
Brian PARKIN	Birkenhead	12.10.65	243(3)	-
Robbie PETHICK	Tavistock	8.9.70	55(3)	2
Dwayne PLUMMER	Bristol	12.5.78	8(3)	1
David PRITCHARD	Wolverhampton	27.5.72	158(2)	1
Justin RICHARDS	Sandwell	16.10.80	3(3)	-
Stephen ROSE	Salford	23.11.80	-	-
Jamie SHORE	Bristol	1.9.77	18(6)	2
Mark SMITH***	Bristol	13.9.79	11(3)	-
Andy THOMSON	Swindon	28.3.74	83(1)	5
Mike TROUGHT	Bristol	19.10.80	8(5)	-
Mark WALTERS	Birmingham	2.6.64	36(14)	9
Che WILSON	Ely	17.1.79	24(1)	-

*On loan from Man United for the season ** On loan from Wimbledon ***On loan to Mangotsfield

PLAYER RECORDS 2000/2001

NATIONWIDE APPEARANCES
NATIONWIDE GOALS
CUP APPEARANCES
CUP GOALS
TOTAL APPEARANCES
TOTAL GOALS

KEY

- Played and ○ Goals scored
- Unused substitute
- Substitute and player replaced
- Own goal

DATE	TEAM	F-A	ATT	AWAY SUPPORT	POS	
Sat 12 Aug	AFC Bournemouth	H	1-1	8046	704	10
Sun 20 Aug	Peterborough (3.00pm)	A	2-2	6997	718	15
Wed 23 Aug	Plymouth WC1/1	A	2-1	3498	549	15
Mon 28 Aug	Brentford (KO 3.00pm)	A	6-2	5434	1580	11
Tue 5 Sept	Plymouth WC1/2	H	1-1	5228	207	14
Sat 9 Sept	Notts County	A	1-1	5511	835	15
Tue 12 Sept	Wycombe Wanderers	A	1-0	4718	596	10
Sat 16 Sept	Wigan Athletic	H	0-0	8109	216	12
Wed 20 Sept	Everton WC2/1 (KO 8.00pm)	A	1-1	25,564	3026	12
Sat 23 Sept	Cambridge United	A	3-0	4624	516	8
Wed 27 Sept	Everton WC2/2*	H	1-1	11,045	852	8
Sat 30 Sept	Luton Town	H	3-3	7901	333	9
Fri 6 Oct	Bury	A	0-1	3279	285	9
Sat 14 Oct	Northampton Town	H	0-1	7704	515	11
Tue 17 Oct	Rotherham United	H	1-1	6910	147	12
Sat 21 Oct	Swindon Town	A	3-1	8097	2400	11
Tue 24 Oct	Colchester United	A	1-2	2951	103	11
Sat 28 Oct	Oldham Athletic	H	0-1	6110	164	16
Tue 31 Oct	Sunderland WC3	H	1-2	11,433	1405	16
Sat 4 Nov	Oxford United	A	1-0	5407	1386	13
Sat 11 Nov	Walsall	H	0-0	7540	593	13
Sun 19 Nov	Cardiff City FAC1 (KO 1.00pm)	A	1-5	8013	564	13
Wed 22 Nov	Millwall	H	1-2	5502	462	14
Sat 25 Nov	Wrexham	A	0-1	2575	316	15
Sat 2 Dec	Swansea City	A	0-0	5363	576	16
Sat 9 Dec	Torquay (LDV Trophy)	A	2-0	1370	438	16
Sat 16 Dec	Stoke City	H	0-3	6838	588	16
Fri 22 Dec	Bristol City	A	2-3	16,696	1718	18
Tue 26 Dec	Reading (KO 1.00pm)	H	2-2	8029	1058	19
Tue 9 Jan	Plymouth LDV2	H	3-0	3781	220	19
Sat 13 Jan	Brentford	H	0-0	6933	417	19
Sat 20 Jan	Reading	A	0-1	11,767	1877	19
Tue 30 Jan	Southend United LDV3	A	0-1	2192	171	20
Sat 3 Feb	Millwall	A	0-3	10,828	599	20
Sat 10 Feb	Notts County	H	0-0	6914	236	21
Sat 17 Feb	Wigan Athletic	A	0-0	7271	565	21
Sat 24 Feb	Cambridge United	H	2-1	7079	195	21
Tue 27 Feb	AFC Bournemouth	A	2-1	3466	548	19
Sat 3 Mar	Luton Town	A	0-0	7405	788	20
Tue 6 Mar	Northampton Town	A	1-2	4552	423	21
Sat 10 Mar	Bury	H	2-0	7065	178	21
Sat 17 Mar	Rotherham	A	0-3	0000	451	21
Sat 24 Mar	Swindon Town (1.00pm)	H				
Sat 31 Mar	Stoke City	A				
Tue 3 Apr	Bristol City	H				
Sat 7 Apr	Swansea City	H				
Mon 9 Apr	Port Vale	A				
Sat 14 Apr	Colchester United	H				
Mon 16 Apr	Oldham (3.00pm)	A				
Sat 21 Apr	Oxford United	H				
Tue 24 Apr	Port Vale	A				
Sat 28 Apr	Walsall	H				
Tue 1 May	Wycombe Wanderers	H				
Sat 5 May	Wrexham	H				
Sat 12 May	FA Cup Final					

Marcus BIGNOT transferred to GPR
 Michael MEAKER transferred to Plymouth
 Daniel ALLSOPP now at Notts Co.
 Jamie CURETON transferred to Reading
 Matthew GLENNON returned to Bolton
 Rune JOHANSEN returned to Tromsø
 Moussa DAGNOGO contract terminated
 Brian PARKIN contract terminated
 Rob TREES transferred to Leigh RM
 Roger VAALER returned to Skeid
 Graham BARRETT returned to Arsenal

TBA Peterborough United H
 *Won on penalties 4-2
 WC - Worthington Cup
 All Saturday matches KO 3pm unless stated
 All midweek matches KO 7.45pm unless stated

last time at home

Saturday 16th September 1995 Attendance 7,025
 Rovers 1 Swindon 4
 Miller Horlock(3), Taylor
 Rovers: Parkin, Pritchard, Gurney, Browning, Clark, Wright,
 Archer, Miller, Stewart, Skinner, Taylor.

Nationwide division two

Team	HOME					AWAY					Pts	GD		
	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F			A	
Rotherham Utd	37	13	4	3	43	22	9	4	4	22	20	74	+23	WLVWVVVV
Millwall	37	12	2	4	36	11	10	4	5	34	25	72	+34	DVNSLVNL
Reading	35	13	3	2	46	16	7	4	6	20	21	67	+29	WVWVNDVVV
Walsall	37	12	4	3	41	19	8	5	7	21	23	63	+20	DVNLVNL
Stoke City	37	9	5	5	28	18	7	8	3	31	22	61	+19	LWLDVNL
Wigan Athletic	36	11	8	0	25	11	4	8	7	19	22	61	+11	LLDLDL
Bristol City	36	10	4	5	40	23	5	6	6	16	21	55	+12	LLDILLW
Notts County	35	8	4	4	28	21	7	5	7	18	27	54	-2	VVNLVDD
Northampton Town	37	8	6	4	24	20	6	5	8	18	25	53	-3	DVNLVND
Wrexham	36	8	4	7	26	24	6	4	7	28	35	50	-3	VVWVWVLL
Bury	37	9	5	5	23	19	5	3	10	15	27	50	-8	DVWVLDV
Bournemouth	36	6	6	5	28	18	6	6	7	32	29	48	+11	LVVLDVNL
Brentford	36	7	7	3	25	23	4	7	8	16	28	47	-10	VVNLDDL
Wycombe Wanderers	34	8	3	7	22	19	4	6	6	13	17	45	-1	LLDLVNL
Colchester	37	7	4	8	22	19	5	5	8	19	27	45	-5	LLLVVNL
Peterborough Utd	35	9	4	4	27	21	2	6	10	14	29	43	-9	DVWVNDL
Oldham Athletic	37	9	4	8	30	22	2	6	10	13	31	43	-10	LVVLLLL
Swindon Town	36	5	7	7	26	39	6	3	8	12	21	43	-13	LdVWVWV
Port Vale	32	7	6	4	30	16	4	2	9	10	22	41	+2	DVWVWVWV
Cambridge Utd	37	6	5	7	26	22	5	3	11	23	39	41	-12	LVVLLVNL
Bristol Rovers	33	2	8	4	12	16	6	5	8	23	37	4	-4	VVWVWVNL
Luton Town	34	5	2	9	19	27	4	5	9	22	33	34	-19	VVWVWVNL
Swansea City	35	3	7	6	15	16	3	4	12	20	41	29	-22	LLLVVDD
Oxford Utd	34	3	3	12	15	26	1	1	14	20	49	16	-40	LDLdLL

League Table as at 22/3/01

pirates progress

19(1)	8(2)	8(2)	3(1)	8(11)	3(3)	8	4(2)	6(2)	0(2)	4(7)	25(5)	19(2)	4	25(4)	22(2)	26	23(2)	-	2(12)	-	8(3)	-	2(3)	-	24(1)	25(2)	-	1	6(2)	-	1	0(2)	0(2)	
4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	4	1	10	1	1	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5	2(1)	2	0(1)	0(7)	0(1)	-	-	1(1)	-	1	9	5	2	9	9	7	-	2(4)	-	0(2)	-	2(1)	-	8	5(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4	24(1)	10(3)	10(2)	3(2)	8(18)	3(4)	8	4(2)	7(3)	0(2)	5(7)	34(5)	24(2)	6	34(4)	31(2)	35	30(2)	-	4(16)	-	8(5)	-	4(4)	-	32(1)	30(3)	-	1	6(2)	-	1	0(2)	1(2)
4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	6	1	13	1	3	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Player	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	39	10	10	33	
Steve GILLMAN																																							
STEVE CHALLIS																																							
Stephen FOSTER																																							
Andy THOMSON																																							
Mark FORAN																																							
Ronnie MAUGÉ																																							
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Ryan CLARKE																																							
Jamie CURETON																																							
Moussa DAGNOGO																																							
Rune JOHANSEN																																							
OWN GOALS																																							
Graham BARRETT																																							
Roger VAALER																																							

MATCHFACTS Compiled by Mike Jay

Rotherham: Gray, Scott, Bryan, Branston, Hurst, Watson, Minton, Robins (Sedgwick 82) Warne & Barker

Subs not used: Pettinger, Wilsterman, Hudson, Monkhouse

Roovers Subs used: McKeever for Owusu (59), Challis for Jones (73), Ellis for Maugé (80)

Roovers Subs not used: Pethick, Clarke

Goalscorers: Barker (44 mins) Minton (53 & 88 mins)

Match Facts: Recalls for Astafjevs & Evans for Hogg (suspended) & Bignot (who has now joined QPR). Second place Rotherham prove to be too strong for Roovers who remain in the bottom four.

opposition viewpoint

Travelling north to Rotherham last week we were full of confidence that we could bring back at least a point, and possibly all three, after recent performances and results had shown a marked improvement.

Sadly the rather comprehensive defeat that we suffered at the hands of a very efficient looking home side left us rooted in the relegation zone even though several of our rivals did not play that day thanks to the weather.

Rotherham were certainly not complacent going into the match. Having been promoted only last season, they were now riding high in a top two position and the Rotherham Star cited ourselves as an example of how things could go badly wrong. In his preview of the big match Les Payne of the Sheffield Star told his readers.

Should anyone around Millmoor even contemplate getting carried away over the club's present position, the perfect sobering antidote will be at the ground tomorrow.

It will be in the shape of their opponents, Bristol Rovers, who will serve as a timely reminder of how it can all go wrong.

This time last season, going into their 36th match (as Rotherham United will do tomorrow), Rovers stood proudly atop the Second Division. Leading Preston by two points, they were five points clear of third-placed Millwall and even had a game in hand. All reasonably comfy looking. They were eight points above Wigan and 10 points ahead of fifth-placed Burnley. As for the team outside the play-offs, Stoke... oh, they had a 13-point advantage over them.

So, it looked good for going up

automatically and they won that 36th match as well.

But, not only did they not go up they didn't even make the play-offs either after fading away badly over those final 10 matches.

Thanks for the memories Les!! Anyway, on to the match itself.

After matching Rotherham for most, if not all, of the first half we found ourselves a goal down at the interval following Richard Barker's late strike. Two further second half goals from loan signing Jeff Minton gave the Millers title hopes a massive boost and left ourselves with a great deal of work to do before we can consider ourselves safe. Sports.com summed up the match accordingly.

Rovers started well enough, despite their lowly position, and demonstrated why they have an impressive away record, picking up most of their points on the road. The home side survived some shaky moments early in the game, including a dangerous effort after 29 minutes from Mickey Evans. Two minutes before the interval Rotherham provided the best

move of the first half and grabbed the lead. A splendid angled pass from Jeff Minton found Richard Barker racing down the left. He cut into the penalty area and slotted in a crisp shot to claim his first goal for the club.

(At the time I personally thought that there was a foul in the build up to this goal but having seen the television pictures I am certain that it was a valid goal). We could not find a way through the home defence despite having a number of chances in the second half and Rotherham sealed their victory with two further goals.

Rovers made another bright start to the second half but it was Rotherham who found the killer touch.

Whatever the result of Tuesday's match against Peterborough, and the outcome of today's encounter with Swindon, there is still a long way to go and many points at stake. Encourage the lads to a maximum haul today and the pressure will lift just a little.

TONY MILLS



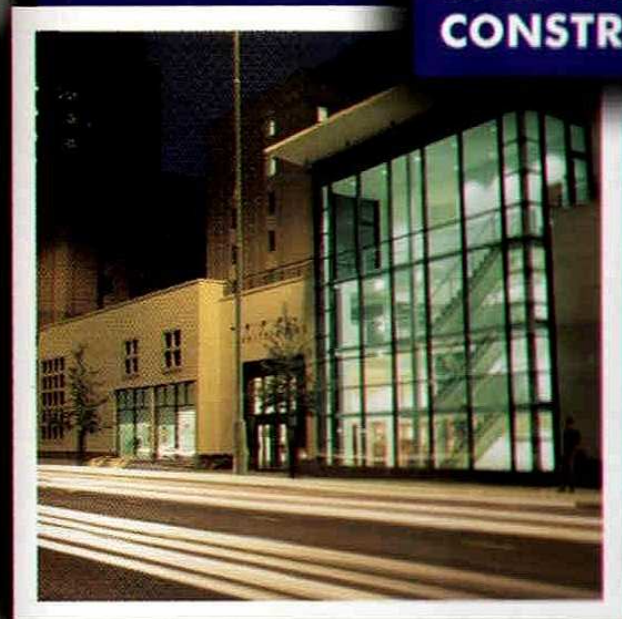
Nathan Ellington in action at Rotherham last week

Education ▶

Swansea Institute



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Whitefriars Bristol

COWLIN QUARTERS.

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bristol rovers



V



swindon

- 1 nick culkin
- 2 david pritchard
- 3 trevor challis
- 4 stephen foster
- 5 andy thomson
- 6 mark foran
- 7 ronnie maugé
- 8 david hillier
- 9 mark walters
- 10 justin richards
- 11 ansah owusu
- 12 robbie pethick
- 14 martin cameron
- 15 vitalijs astafjevs
- 17 marcus andreasson
- 18 nathan ellington
- 19 simon bryant
- 20 richard partridge
- 21 lewis hogg
- 22 stephen rose
- 23 clinton ellis
- 24 mike trough
- 25 dwayne plummer
- 26 christian lee
- 27 kevin gall
- 28 mark smith
- 29 che wilson
- 30 scott jones
- 31 mark hardcastle
- 32 alex o'reilly
- 33 mark mckeever
- 39 ryan clarke

- bart griemink 1
- mark robinson 2
- sol davis 3
- matthew hewlett 4
- adam willis 5
- antoine van der linden 6
- keith o'halloran 7
- bobby howe 8
- giuliano grazloli 10
- david duke 11
- juan coblan 12
- steve cowe 14
- andy williams 15
- michael reddy 16
- daniel invincibile 17
- gary alexander 18
- matthew heywood 19
- frazer mchugh 20
- gareth davies 21
- alan reeves 22
- steve mildenhall 23
- steve robinson 25
- alan young 26
- paul mcareavey 27
- james williams 29
- gareth hall 30
- ian woan 31

All matchday music
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THE OFFICIAL SPORTS DRINK

referee

Mr B. KNIGHT

assistants

Mr G. A. BEALE

Mr G. D. PEARSON

fourth official

Mr. A. J. PERLEJEWSKI

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MATCHBALL SPONSOR

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