

# MUDHUTTER

F O O T B A L L E X P R E S S

NO TURKEY

NO CRACKERS

NO PRESENTS

NO TREE



HAIR DID YOU PACK MY SNOOD?

NIPPED AND TUCKED PROMISING JUNIORS

HATE THE RUGBY OH WHAT A LOVELY CLASS WAR

AND ALL THE MISERY-GUTS STUFF YOU'D EXPECT AT XMAS



## 2010 WINTER SPECIAL



## R-E-S-P-E-C-T

It's only a seven letter word but it means the world. Or maybe it means very little in the crazy world of football these days. Since I last got into editorial mode we've seen Rooney, Hughton, Tevez and Allardyce splashed all over the sports pages just to finally prove, as if there was any doubt, that football at the top level has well and truly gone to hell. Spoilt brats acting like twats and decent men cast aside. Or airlifted aside in the case of Big Sam. Players and agents who have no respect and managers who get shown none. Maybe it's only right that the fans show such disrespect towards fans and managers alike. Or maybe that discontent was always there but is now cajoled along via the many online personae's keen to make a name.

We're getting sucked along with this episode ourselves, it is endemic throughout football and in particular in the Premier League. Those near the top are calling for heads because they haven't won owt. Those in the top half are moaning because they aren't in the European places. Those in the lower half are moaning because they are not in the top half and of course many Wolves, West Ham and Latics fans are calling for their manager's heads. There's probably only United, Bolton and Sunderland fans happy, and the Mackems were going fucking mad just a few weeks back when they got tonked by their hated rivals up the road. People demand change and improvement, all the time. Everyone expects better, everyone wants to be top of the charts and if you aren't delivering, well you're fired [points finger]

There is of course a very strong argument for sticking with your manager: the likes of Ferguson, Wenger & Moyes are all viewed with respect by a large number of their fans and by football fans in general. But then Bobby to date

is hardly shaping up in that category, even the most optimistic of fans have found themselves stroking their chins wistfully in recent times as results and performances have fallen short of a minimum standard. However, should we be comparing Bobby to the above three anyway, when he's in charge of a club with a small fanbase, a wage bill which is being squeezed (and rightfully so, if you've read any of my financial pieces) and a chairman who is one of the poorest in the division now?

So there is an argument for sticking with Roberto Martinez long term and getting some stability into the club, which can't be easy given the hysterical reaction to every point dropped. You look at the youth team and reserves and it's easy to see what a positive influence he is having on the club as whole. Unfortunately it isn't translating into first team performances. Is this because it is taking longer to develop, because we haven't got the players to do it, because the manager is too inexperienced or lacks authority over the pampered preening players? I don't know but I've asked the question despite the internet accusations of sycophancy aimed at yours truly. "He's had eighteen months now" seems to be the cry, like the fan who uttered it has wasted eighteen months of their life. Watching football is a long-term investment my friend and it is one most football fans up and down the country rarely get much back out of.

What's that? You've spent how much? Well you know what so have I and thousands of others over the years. Do you really divide the price of your season ticket by the number of goals we score at home and somehow come out with a value equation and compare it to a trip to the pictures? Do you have the first idea what football is about? It's about making friends, enjoying the craic, moaning about the game,

sharing in the atmosphere, having a few beers and just occasionally, very occasionally getting an extra special day or season amongst months and seasons of mediocrity. Stuff you can't put a price on. Sadly, the "me, me, me" generation don't see it this way and demand instant success, look for a scapegoat or threaten to take their ball home.

### **SO SACK HIM THEN....**

IF that's what you want. Who's next? Sam Allardyce? Give over! For one, I doubt he'd come here and secondly if you think his football is going to attract the fans back you are much mistaken - it'll just be different excuse, same outcome. Even Big Sam is out of our league and can be filed alongside the other ridiculous suggestions such as O'Neill & Jol. Ian Holloway? Yeah it'd be great but we're eighteen months too late and I'm pretty sure that he would have been passed over in the same way as Bob by a large section of our fanbase as 'never having managed at the top level' and would not be able to do anything like the same job when it comes to keeping a bunch of established players in the Premier League as he has done turning a team of lowly paid no hoppers into siege mentality grafters.

Which leaves us with the talented Mr Curbishley. The magnificent Llewellyn Charles Curbishley, intended saviour of Wigan Athletic. It's funny how little people actually know about Alan Curbishley. This would be the Alan Curbishley who got relegated with Charlton a season after getting them up? The Alan Curbishley whom Charlton fans gave stick to because they wanted to be further up the league after they would regularly get to 40 points soon after Christmas only to get the deck chairs out from February to May. The Alan Curbishley who was manager of Charlton for

seven years before they even got into the top flight. Yes they finished 7<sup>th</sup> one year but that was one year out of the fifteen he was associated with them and that was back in the day when the millionaires were running football not the billionaires.

I'm sure he would relish the challenge of taking a team with 12,000 home fans, many with unrealistic expectations and a tiny transfer budget up the table but don't be surprised if it never happened. But whether you want Martinez or Curbishley, there needs to be a general acceptance that this league is simply getting too wealthy for us and sticking together as fans to ensure that we stay strong and generate respect will help that. Do we really need to be like the others braying for change because our perception is that our club is under-performing? All of which unfortunately means respecting the man in charge be it Martinez, Curbishley or heaven forbid Allardyce.

The one thing all this malaise is doing is sorting the wheat from the chaff within our fanbase. Yes our fans expect us to be much better on the pitch than West Ham and Wolves but at least in their case 30,000 of them are still turning up to moan even though they can't be happy either. Well they're not happy to be perfectly honest, but they still go because it's in their blood. Here at the DW, we've lost somewhere between a quarter and a third of our fanbase for any number of reasons or excuses despite the knock down price of a season ticket. What's that you say? West Ham and Wolves are much bigger clubs with larger fanbases and an illustrious history. Yes I know all that and acknowledge it and that is precisely my point. So why on earth do we have an entitlement to a mid to lower table place with the fanbase and financial restrictions we have?

Sure you can hold out Bolton as a shining example, but they again, are (whisper it quietly) a bigger club than us in terms of history and fanbase. They've also just racked up an additional £35m in losses. Hmm yes a really well run club that is.....

### **CLAUDE'S GREENER GRASS**

As for those wanting to go back down so they can have a jolly day out again, well I'm sorry but there is no way it's going to be as much fun on the way down as it was on the way up. And I don't know if you've seen much of the lower leagues recently you Prem snob you but they all have foreign players as well, some of them dive and wear gloves and the fans often chastise their teams for being full of overpaid wastrels too. Oh and if you're looking to get much change from £25 when you start going to away again in the Championship well prepare to be disappointed. The grass isn't greener anywhere unless we start again with a big bag of seeds and a desire to undertake hard work a la Wimbledon or FC United. We'd get that much sought after respect then of course.....

So is our fanbase dying or are people making their excuses. People talk of fans staying away because of the manager. The fact is that we played Wolves for Roberto's first home game in charge, there was just over 16k on then including 4,600 Wolves fans and we had only played one league game before that, winning 2-0 at Aston Villa. I remember that night: the homecoming of a former legend and the home crowd was 2-3,000 down. Did we really lose 3,000 fans because we let two in against St Mirren or only beat Villa by two goals. Or was the novelty wearing off especially after having Cattermole and Valencia sold that summer? Come on be honest!!

There's three clear camps at the minute as evidenced by this little multiple choice I'd like you to attempt:

1. Roberto Martinez is destroying Wigan Athletic, I want him sacked
2. Roberto Martinez isn't doing very well and I'm not arsed if he's sacked but I don't really see a better option
3. Roberto Martinez is doing OK given the circumstances and I have the patience to stick with him because I feel he has a long term plan for the football club

If I'm honest, I'm 3 all the way although I've probably flitted with 2 after some of our particularly woeful performances but 3. is where I want to be and I get a slightly distasteful feeling when I slip into 2. mode like I've put results over morals. Whatever the case, our fanbase needs to regroup. There is plenty happening on this front by the club itself and amongst the fans sites so watch this space.

We need to accept that every fan will have one of the above three opinions, yes even number one and embrace it - some people articulate their 1. position better than others although don't seem to have an answer in terms of the 'who else would you have' quandary. But even if you are a number one, try and show the manager a tiny bit of respect. He's at worst guilty of being a bit naïve and stubborn and wants the best for the club even if he's not getting it. And as I say because I've yet to see a credible way forward without him. In any case, respect your fellow fans and remember that we've got real enemies out there....

We don't get much respect at the Mudhutter from Wigan Athletic fans either any more: deluded, cliquey, insular, elitist and self-righteous being among many of the terms aimed either at me personally or the organ that is

Mudhuts Media in general. It hurts after all the efforts myself and many others have put in over the years but hey we've always been guilty of shooting from the hip I guess. We do however continue to get plaudits off fans of many other clubs. Fans who understand fan culture, whether they are Spirit of Shankly or FC United or from any other club up and down the country, fans who have been through the mill and know that a football club is a solid, beating heart not 442 v 451.

It doesn't mean we're right or deserve a pat on the back but their praise and respect means a lot when all around us Wigan Athletic fans are engaging in one big soul destroying game to try and prove each other wrong. Personally I'm a bit fed up with it, yes we've had a go at our own fans in the past but generally we've called stuff correct and it's only hurt people because they don't like hearing it. I'd rather put a stop

to it: I don't know about you but I care too much about this football club to want to see it torn apart. So do your worst web detractors, just remember you've only got one fanzine, which thrives despite the erosion of many such publications up and down the country. You'll miss it when it's gone.

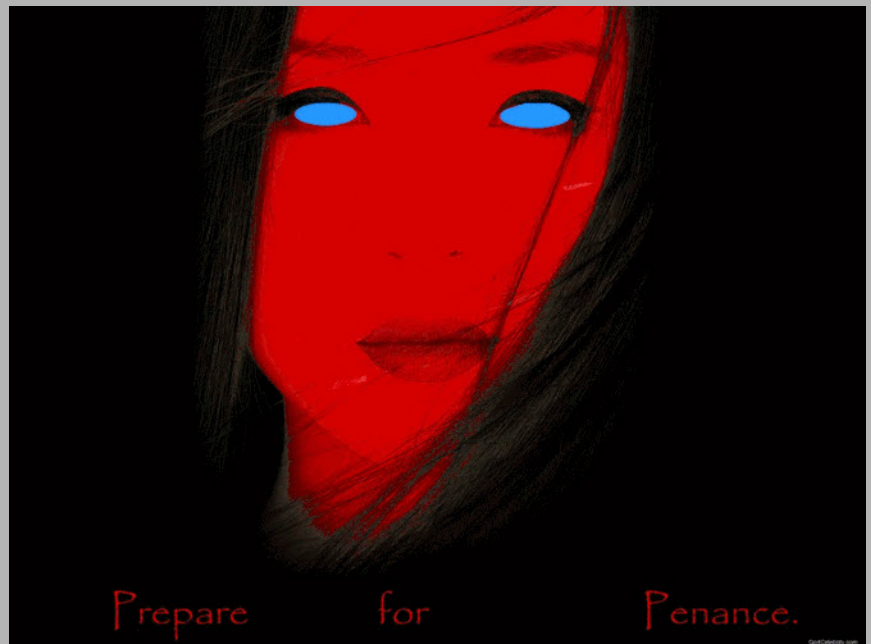
Quite frankly I don't care whether our fans respect us or not but I wish they would respect this football club of ours. When all around us clubs in the lower divisions are being threatened with administration and getting booted out of their grounds, we really haven't got as much to moan about as you think. Come one day, we might have and who will stand up and be counted then?

Enjoy this freebie anyway. The last one has had nearly 900 downloads so we must be doing something right.

## **Penance**

Well I don't have much to give,  
but take it with my blessing.  
Strangle love I need to live,  
choke the lies that I'm confessing.  
I'm a sinner, please forgive me,  
for I know what I have done.  
Vent your fury as it should be,  
'til I am history and gone.  
Futile reasons don't exist,  
I won't hide 'neath pointless lies.  
Nor the truth will I resist,  
that's reflected in your eyes.  
This is my eternity,  
a fitting lifetime sentence.  
An accolade of purgatory  
repenting is my penance.

• Dirrrrtyoldman



## **STOCKISTS & CONTRIBUTORS**

Thanks to all our contributors: Jimmy, Migs, Finton, Les Bagg, Ken Barlow, Sean Livesey, OPM, Dirrrty Old Man, Johnny Bogroll, Neill Rimmers Perm, Vaughanie, Tat, Laura, Uveq

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The views and opinions contained herein are those of individual contributors and not of Mudhuts Media. Any resemblance to any characters living or dead is purely coincidental.

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**Elusive purchasing points:** The MFE incorporating the Mudhutter can be purchased on the bridge or outside Rigaletto's on match days. Mind the horse shit if you do venture over. In addition, it can also be purchased online at [www.mudhutsmedia.co.uk](http://www.mudhutsmedia.co.uk) including a selection of back issues

It can also be purchased from Sparks Newsagents, Wallgate, Wigan, Waterstones, Grand Arcade, Wigan or The Brickmakers on Woodhouse Lane, Wigan.

Next issue due out on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February v Man United

Shit, wasn't this meant to be a Christmas special and there's no mention of it in here? Ho ho ho Merry Christmas, Have a good one - oh that'll do!

## **Martinez In!!! (snowed in, that is)**

Yesterday's game at the DW Stadium was postponed due to a cold snap throughout the region and icy roads making access to the ground practically impossible. It was initially thought to be those lazy chutes at Wigan Council gritting department still in bed recovering from Mad Friday at fault but as games elsewhere subsequently got called off, many fans realised that this was not the fault of the club or the council. No it was probably Roberto Martinez's fault.

One fan commented: "It's all the Spaniard's fault, he had the option to use two ploughs in tandem to attack the ice and snow but chose only to use one, what sort of forward thinking is that. I wouldn't mind but he had at least three other snow ploughs at his disposal and

had one of them hopelessly out of position trying to clear Aldi car park"

Another diehard Latics fan commented: "It was tactically naïve and a complete joke of a decision. We wouldn't be in this mess if Alan Curbishley had been in charge. Curbs would have cleared all the snow, gritted all the roads within a 25 mile radius of Wigan and laid out complimentary fleeces and Baileys' coffees for all the paying spectators"

Another Latics fan, also expressed a similar opinion: "Roberto Martinez didn't even know how to operate a snow plough, meanwhile Big Sam is up the road doing nothing. Whelan could have got on the dog and bone and offered Sam a three year contract and he'd have been down here in a flash. How do think they managed to clear the snow around

Ewood Park? The Indians simply fed Sam a bucket of one of their special curries and gave him a crate of Speckled Hen and he was farting away the snow in no time.”

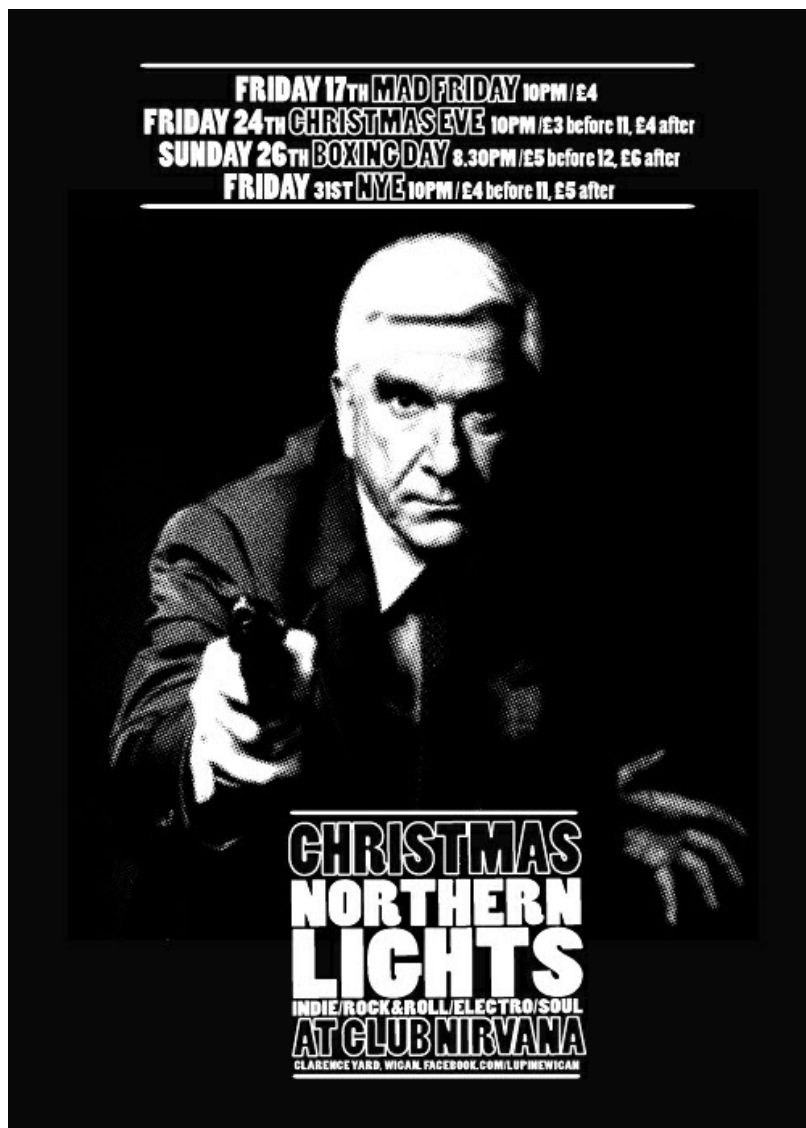
Another fan suggested Steve Coppel might be able to make a better fist of it: “I can’t actually remember the last time he managed anyone, although I do seem to recall he walked out on every single job he’s ever had, and everyone knows he is fond of council gritters”

A confused Roberto Martinez decided to focus on the positives: “We’ve not managed to get the game on but the Hondurans have managed to make a cracking snowman in the centre

circle and I’ve sent the Jocks in the squad back up north for a week to go and get rat-arsed. This will prove character building as we head into a tough period.”

Asked about criticism that he had failed to adequately deal with the inclement weather, the manager added: “Bollocks to ‘em they blame me for everything else around here so they may as well blame me for the weather too. And just for the record, it’s me who’s nicked all the bread and milk off the shelves at the Co-Op as I’ve got some family coming over from Balaguer. So there. Merry Christmas to all Latics fans. Europe here we come!”

• Jimmy



## THE BEGINNING OF THE AFFAIR!

It all started rather painfully on a lovely summers day in July 1978 as a group of young lads were strolling down past The Wash at Beech Hill on their way to watch Latics play Birmingham City in a friendly. We got chatting, about girls and stuff, like you do when you're 14, and I just happened to let it slip - "Them Nolan Sisters are reet dogs aren't they?"

And it hit me like a bloody hammer. CRACK! across me ear, then another on the side of me head, I turned round to see Nedbers fist heading towards me face. I ducked & he swiped at fresh air. "What did yer do that for yer big fat twat?" "You insult the Nolans boy, and you insult Nedber!" he replied. Nedber was a Standish legend, a Latics mad 16 year old who looked 20 but knocked about with 14 year olds, I didn't know him that well, certainly not enough to know he was the North West's maddest Nolan Sisters fan.

We arrived at the ground. Springfield Park looked magnificent in the sunshine, Birmingham look cool as in their yellow and blue Adidas kit and the game was a 0-0 draw. That day I got Trevor Francis' and Jim Montgomery's autographs and I fell in love. I fell in love with The Latics and I think I still am. I also still think The Nolans are dogs!



After a couple of friendly victories over top class European opposition ( SP Erkenwich & St Johnstone ) Tranmere Rovers got dusted over 2 legs in our first ever League Cup tie. Frank Corrigan scored two and had been on Kick Off before the season started talking about how him and a few of the other lads were taking a drop in money to turn pro. Gerald Sindstat - in between visits to specialist cinemas - reckoned we were far too good for the Fourth Division & that was good enough for me!

"Mam, can I go, can I go?"

"Where? The moon?, Australia?, Timbucktu?, give us a clue and I'll tell yer"

"Hereford, watchin' t'Latics"

"No"

"But Philip Martindale's goin'"

"I'm not bothered about Philip Martindale"

"You are when you say how smart he looks when he goes to church in a shirt and tie.."

CRACK!

"No, it's too far for you be mauling about on yer own at your age, now be told will yer?"

I couldn't go so we played football all Saturday afternoon then at half past four went home to watch Grandstand and hear Wigan Athletics' name read out on the classifieds for the first time ever.

"Hereford Uniiiiiited nil, Wigan Athletic, nil"

We decided Grimsby Town would be our first victims at Springfield Park. BANG! - Did you hear that? That was the sound of Latics being brought back down to earth! Grimsby were bloody good & their little posse of supporters went barmy every time their lads hit the back of the net. All 3 times. Coming off the ground, in a season of many firsts, I heard something for the first time. A sound I've heard countless times in the 32 years since then rang out loud and shrill across the heads of the people

streaming out of the Town end at 10 past 9....  
“Bloooooody Rubbish Wiggin!”

By the time Newport County came to Town we'd been knocked out of the League Cup at Luton and got beaten at Reading without even scoring a goal. By twenty past four we were 3-0 down. Then it happened. Joe Hinnigan scored our first ever league goal then Ian Purdie scored our second. Unfortunately we ran out of time and lost 3-2. To top it all some bastard nicked me bob hat at the end and legged off down First Avenue with it.

Rochdale at home, midweek, up next. We'd lost 2-1 down at Wimbledon but Rochdale were crap. We'd do 'em easy. I never found out how easy we did actually do it. I'd got caught smoking at school and as well as not being able to sit down for a few days I was grounded for the Rochdale game. I climbed out of me sisters bedroom window at the front of the house, started to slide down the drainpipe and then heard me mam's voice underneath me.

“And just where does Sir Edmund Hilary think he's going?”

So I missed the fantastic 3-0 win. In't life a bitch?

The following Saturday a new Latics song was born. You know the old Land of Hope and Glory song about following the Latics over land and sea? We added the end line.... “AND BRADFORD”! Bradford brought a couple of thousand with them and they were MENTAL! There was no segregation and these scruffy Yorkshire buggers ran the show. They were all over the place up Wigan smacking folk and then they did it again in the ground every time they scored. They ended up winning 3-1 and I spent the game with me silk scarf stuffed down me kecks and a Bratfud gruffer breathing down me neck! No way was Sammy the Seal coming out and going the same was as me bob cap!

I was still banned from away games and this was the days before mobiles, the internet & even teletext. So when the trimphone in the hall made that ringing noise that all them people on “That's Life” tried imitating, at about 10 to 5, I thought nothing of it. Me Dad answered it and came into the front room.

“I've geet a message for yer,” he said “that was your mate Boothy. He said fot tell yer “We've done it, we've gone and bloody done it” then he rang off.”

Yep, Boothy, me mate who wasn't banned from away games, had just watched us beat York 1-0. He'd legged it straight out of Bootham Crescent and found a phone box. In our lives, this was our first President Kennedy moment!

Tommy Gore, 1-0 GET IN!

Things were picking up. We lost narrowly at Pompey who were big favourites to go up then beat Scunthorpe 1-0 at home with a goal from a new hero, the blonde bombshell that was Derek Brownbill. Derek was an ex Port Vale mon & I scoured my old SHOOT'S for a picture of him to go with the Ian Purdie ones on me bedroom wall. I eventually found one. It was about 3 inches square & hardly a wall filler but at least it was something. He scored again at Huddersfield in the next game, a 1-1 draw at Leeds Road. My away ban was still in place, but there were signs that the terms of it could be easing. I hadn't been caught smoking or doing anything stupid for weeks, and I'd got meself a paper round, so the signs were definitely good!

The scalps fell thick & fast. Doncaster and Halifax both got done 1-0, we claimed a fantastic 0-0 draw at Allan Clarke's trailblazing Barnsley and then an Ian Purdie inspired 2-0 home win over Northampton pushed the team up the table and pushed our heads up in the clouds at school. With all the mither that was

going on on the terraces, there'd been talk in the papers about whether England would ever hold the World Cup again. There was no doubt in our minds it would. And there was no doubt over the venues. "Springfield Park would deffo be one o t'grounds" we told the Liverpool & United fans at school "By t'year 2000 we'll probably have two stands and a cover over t'Town End" It seemed a reasonable enough aspiration in our juvenile minds.

It was a Sunday morning and St Wilfs church bells were ringing when me Dad broke the good news. The ban was over & I could go to away games. There were strings of course. Any nonsense like pinching toffee from Tom Robby's shop or smoking or anything like that and the ban was back on!

Stockport away on a Friday night was next up. There was nearly 9,000 under the floodlights at Edgeley Park and at least 3,000 of em were from Wigan. The first thing we noticed as the Smiths Happiways Spencers coach got into Stockport at about quarter to seven were the acoustics. You know, that unique sound of half knackers hitting the windows? How we didn't get air conditioning fitted that night I'll never know! The next thing that struck me, apart from a brick, was how unfriendly the locals were! We'd only been in their town for 10 minutes and they wanted to help us back onto the coaches, mostly by using their fists and docs!

The shadiness of the night was nullified by Joe Hinnigan's winning goal and the 3,000 Laticsmen going ape at the end after a magnificent 1-0 win. As one owd chap eloquently said as the half pavers rained in again after the game, "Tha' con klomp me wi' bricks all bloody neet, but it'll still be us wi' t'two bloody points!"

Another Friday night away at Newport saw us get nowt points as we got beat 2-1. Only the real die hards made it down there - whacking school to go to away games was still a thing of the future for me - but things were buzzing for the next home game, against top of the League Reading. They were good, but we were sure we were better. Their goalie was called Steve Death, and I loved them for that. How brilliant would that be? Putting on a Vincent Price voice & saying : "Hello, my name is Death. Steve Death!"

It was that day that the rain came down and two "Sirs" made their mark. Sir Peter Houghton scored two and Sir Noel Ward got the other as we trounced Reading 3-0. We went berserk when the two second half goals went in to finish em off. Nedber ran on the pitch and went arse over tit in the mud in his slip on shoes, Sir Peter Houghton laughed as Nedber touched him on the shoulder. When he got back onto the St Andrews terrace he looked at the hand that touched the legend, covered in mud, & said : "I'm never, ever washing that hand again!" "You never do anyway yer scruffy bastard!" said his mate, Backy, who was never one to hide from the truth! It was the best I'd ever felt watching the Latics & it was also the wettest as it pissed down for more or less the whole ninety minutes. Tragically, my programme & the Newport programme I'd got from the hut earlier were both wrecked. It took a full day on the radiator at home to turn them into a more manageable mush!

Things are different now. Football fans don't care as much about it, players don't seem to give it priority any more, but in 1978 the FA Cup was special. It was a different type of butterflies in the stomach for the Cup, the games were more intense & nobody wanted to lose an FA Cup tie.

We'd drawn 3<sup>rd</sup> division Bury at home & pulled ourselves up to 9<sup>th</sup> in the league. Today was going to show us how we'd manage next season against better teams because, of course, we were absolutely certain that we were going to win promotion! Amazingly, it pissed down yet again but over 10,000 turned up, Bury brought more than they've ever done before & I'd just bought a new flag - blue and white checks with a sort of Latics badge in the middle. I wore it on my head to keep the rain off and stood on the Town End as I watched a mob of Bury walk calmly up into the middle of the St Andrews. They stood there for a couple of minutes then just before the teams came out started singing. The terrace parted & I reckon Moses must have had a similar view at the red sea. The pause seemed to last for ages before the gap closed again & both sets of fans got stuck in. The Bury mob stayed there for the rest of the match, the terrace kept opening and shutting & the match grew more exciting, Bury started taking the piss when they went 2-0 up but we weren't finished. Sir Tommy Gore ( that's 3 Sirs now, if anyone's counting ) and Sir Peter Houghton sent us daft as they pulled us back to 2-2 & the Bury lot finally got chased off the St Andrews in the euphoria of the equalizer. They thrashed us 4 -1 in the replay but that's neither here nor there.

Darlington away next. Nothing of note save for the locals who spoke an almost unrecognizable brand of English & were the scruffiest people I'd ever seen and a goal from Mickey Moore. I liked Mickey Moore, but like Sir Ian Gillibrand ( that's four ) the League had come a bit too late for him. However, I was inconsolable about not getting a programme. They'd sold out & Darlington away became the holy grail for Latics programme collectors from that first season. Dave Clarke managed to get me one a few

months later. It cost me £3.50. For a 15p programme. In the days when a season ticket for 23 games was only about a tenner!

Over the Hill to Halifax, and Wigan once more took an away ground over. We went in their end and took the piss at their lack of fans, about their shit ground and how they got more on watching the Speedway.....any of that sound familiar? Another goal for Mickey Moore and Ian Purdie put The Shaymen safely to bed by half time. They got one back in the second half but we were in no danger of anything but frostbite & I got me comeuppance when I got a sneaky crack on the side of the head coming out of the ground from an irate local : "Get back ter Lancashire yer little twats"....."Yeah and Merry Christmas to you too sir!

Two home games over Christmas. We beat Crewe on Boxing Day and Aldershot a few days later & things were motoring. We got seven and a half thousand on for both games, we were scoring goals for fun, I'd got programmes signed by Peter Houghton and Noel Ward, and me Dad said me and our Trev could have a bottle of cider at the New Year's Eve family party. Could life get any better than this? As New Year came & went, the weather turned dreadful. We had a Big Freeze before the tabloids invented them & only played one game in January. Jeff Wright scored at Port Vale but we lost 2-1, Jeff used to get it in the neck from the forerunners of the "Bloooooody Hell" brigade for making mistakes that other players got away with. His problem was that he always made himself available for the ball & the more possession a player has the more likely he is to make a mistake. It's not rocket science & the more they picked on Jeff Wright, the more I liked him!

Next, the Big One with promotion favourites Portsmouth came to Springfield Park. They

## ***Mudhutter 2010 Winter of Discontent Special***

were top of the League & packing 'em in at Fratton Park, getting 14 thousand plus in the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. Their fans were mad as wasps and I couldn't think about anything else for a week at school and it was showing! I liked German. Mr Grimshaw was a good teacher and he loved his football. He supported FC Koln and I supported Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga but he'd seen my work go down the pan a bit and asked to see my Mam. She told me he'd said to her "If he could learn to speak German as fluently as he can speak about football then he could get a job as an interpreter when he leaves school, He can do it, I know he can, but I can't run my class around your lad's obsession with football" I was given a one month away match ban on the eve of the Portsmouth game! The weather was still bad with games off up & down the country. Leicester had their famous hot air balloon but Latics had a much simpler solution - straw and lots of it! So the call went out from the club : "we need bodies down here on Saturday morning to clear the straw off the pitch. The game is definitely on if we get it done, and you can get in the match for free later on if you do". That was all we needed to hear. I always ended up starving at home matches, cos the money that me Mam slipped me to get a pie always got spent on 10 embassy and something from the programme hut. Free entry to the game meant I could get the cigs, the Port Vale away programme AND feast like a king on a meat and potato with a coffee as well. Result!

Loads of us turned up and the pitch was cleared before dinnertime, just as the machine arrived that was meant to be helping us! So we got our tickets and hung around waiting for the players to arrive outside the ground and try to get some autographs. They all came & said hello or had a natter about the game and none ever refused an autograph - Frank Corrigan always looked a bit embarrassed when you asked him, as if he

wasn't really famous or summat - & a few of em were smoking. I got plenty autographs that day - John Brown, Joe Hinnigan , Tommy Gore, Dave Fretwell, Ian Purdie for about the 20<sup>th</sup> time and then finally the player I called "Der Kaiser" after Franz Beckenbauer, the great Noel Ward. Soon enough we got into the ground and took a spot on the wall near the corner of the Town End and St Andrews. You knew there was going to be a good crowd on & the main lot of Pompey fans took the Shevvy End but a group of 'em all dressed smart in Harringtons, jeans and docs with silk Pompey scarves knotted tightly around their necks stood on the terrace behind us. Now, we thought Springy was better than Wembley but our visitors weren't impressed! "Look at the state o this place, its 1950's this is." They were laughing at the piles of straw all around the pitch and one rather large geezer came down and spoke to me and my mate Boothy, "Here boys, where's the horses then?" And then the teams came out. There were just over 8 thousand on but it sounded like 12. The Pompey fans did an Argentina style ticker tape thing. They'd travelled up in numbers, been in all the pubs up town, sprayed PFC on the wall of The Wheatsheaf and started making their presence felt in the ground, belting out the Pompey Chimes. It was the first time I'd heard them and it was mesmerizing. The Pompey lads behind us started making their presence felt in a completely different way and kicked off with the Wiganers on the corner of the St Andrews. At one stage the Wiganers had got behind them and came battling all the way down the terrace towards the perimeter wall where we stood, nearly knocking us over the wall into the straw. On seeing this, the big Pompey lad from earlier stopped fighting for a second or two & said "Oi, Oi, watch art for the kids will ya?" I'm ashamed to say he meant us.

Whilst all this was going on in the background, the much maligned Jeff Wright hit a beauty past

Peter Mellor into the back of the net. The place exploded, me and Boothy went mental and it was the first of many, many times in my later life that I got hold of a person I've never met before and hugged him! Unfortunately he was a Portsmouth fan and none too happy about it but there was no harm done and it made our big new Pompey mate chuckle! My half time meat and potato pie never tasted as good. This was fabulous. They were a big club, a famous club, & their supporters had travelled all that way to see them being outclassed by Wigan Athletic. When the second went in and Frank Corrigan ran away chased by the rest of the Latics players we were in a right old state. We ended up over the wall and in the straw with everyone around us going doolally. The Pompey fans were totally silent for the first time all day & at the final whistle we just had to get onto the same pitch we'd been clearing earlier. In those days, running onto the pitch wasn't a hangable offence and as 14 year olds we did it as much as we could. It's something I've carried on into my adulthood, but that's another story! We tried to get to every single player we could & in my exuberance, I even managed to pat Peter Mellor on the back, cos I like goalkeepers. He told me to "Fuck Off" but that's fair enough, we'd just knocked 'em off the top of the League!

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## **Why I Hate the Rugby**

*Reason #437: They illegally dispose of dead bodies*

It was around the turn of the 1990's and myself and a few mates had finished school and had gone out for the night, scaled the wall of Central Park and got busy ~~vandalising~~ exploring the ground.

At the time, the new Whitbread Stand was being built. We'd had hours of fun inside there, especially one night when the workers had left all their tools behind. Leaving hand held circular saws behind for a group of 10 and 11 year olds to find is just asking for trouble and needless to say, when they arrived in work the next day to find days of work had been 'reversed', they learned not to leave anything behind again.

This night however, we would find something left behind that will stay with us for the rest of our lives.

We'd headed over to the side of the ground

where the work had now moved to after finishing off the Whitbread Stand. They were now building a car park in the corner, behind the Popular Side. We were roaming around the site, in between big fertilizer bags of rubble, inspecting them for anything worth taking when my brother started laughing.

***"What the fuck is that in that bag over there, it looks like a giant potato! Have they dug up a vegetable patch?"***

He walked over to it, proceeded to pick it up and the next thing we heard was a loud ***"AAAAARGGGHHHH!!!"*** and he jolted back falling to the ground and just lay there shaking.

***"What is it, what was in there? Stop fucking around"*** I said.

He just lay there speechless.

I walked over to the bag, looked inside and couldn't believe what I was looking at. An image that is still to today burned into my mind. It was full to the brim of human skulls and bones.

A couple of minutes later after the other two had managed to brave a look inside and we'd just about composed ourselves, we started looking in the other bags. They were all full of the same. Scores of bags of human remains.

What the fuck was going on? Was this for real? It'd be one thing finding all this nowadays but as 10 and 11 year olds you can only imagine at all the scenarios that were going through our heads. Had Maurice Lindsey murdered a load of Latics fans and asked the builders to bury them under the new car park patio?

There was only one way to find out. We'd have to come back down the next day and confront the builders.

We all marched down there in the morning and as we arrived the remains were all being dumped into a skip that had by the looks of it had just been delivered.

***"Where have all these skulls and bones come from mister?"***

***"Dunno cock. They must have something to do with the church there. We dug them all up yesterday."***

***"So what are you doing with them now?"*** I asked.

***"They're just being dumped with the rest of the rubble"***

***"Just being dumped?! You can't do that with them! Do the police know about it? Do the church know you've dug them up?"***

***"Listen lad, it's nothing to do with me. I'm just doing what I've been told by the rugby***

***club. Apparently they're probably a couple of hundred years old, the police aren't going to be bothered about them."***

This didn't sit right with us. If you dig up human remains, you can't just dump them can you?!

On our way home we bumped into a neighbour and we told him the whole story. As you'd imagine, he didn't believe us so we took him down to see for himself. He stood there shocked for about 5 minutes before arguing with the builders on site. He then rushed back home and got on the phone to his daughter who worked for the Evening Post.

The next day it was front page news. ***"Skulduggery!"*** was the headline with one of my mates holding up a skull in one of his hands.

It turns out the rugby had bought some of the back land off St Marys church to build their car park. Under this land though was an old paupers graveyard and this is what had been uncovered.

The problem is though, This is the only bit of truth that the article contained. It went on to say the bodies hadn't been found when we uncovered them but we'd alerted the rugby club to our discovery. The rugby had then gone on to make arrangements for the bodies to be buried elsewhere on consecrated land.

Except this wasn't what happened was it? The rugby had made the discovery themselves and were getting ready to dump them. We'd seen them being chucked in with the rest of the rubble with skulls being crushed with the weight of it all.

The builders were later to tell us that a certain former bookmaker was furious about being

found out and had to spend a small fortune on relocating the remains to other burial ground.

The whole episode just went to show the arrogance of the club during this period. To think they could uncover a mass burial ground and get away with just dumping the bodies without recrimination. Never mind the legal side of it, what about the morals of doing something like this! In the end though they DID get away with it. Just like they've always got away with stuff due to the council, police and papers turning a blind eye to it.

The fabrication by the newspaper over the story was infuriating and several of our parents were on the phone to state the story was not true

and to ask why our side of the story hadn't been put across. I guess you could say who would believe a group of kids? Well I suspect if we'd uncovered this at Springfield Park the paper would have put a very different story across:

**'Goon squad victims uncovered: Wigan Athletic secrets exposed'**

• **Johnny Bogroll**

## **BE PREPARED**

### **We've Got a Lot of Promising Juniors....**

The Wigan Athletic Yoof team beat Stoke 3-0 on Tuesday night at the DW Stadium in the FA Youth Cup to earn a 4<sup>th</sup> Round tie away at Watford. You can read the full details of the game [here](#) or an independent view from Vaughanie [here](#).

It seems that when Roberto talked of building a club



from top to bottom and having a long term plan he meant it. It really is a shame that the first team isn't delivering as well, but by definition it is the first team which is playing at the highest standard and has to face the greatest level of opposition.

This really shouldn't be a surprise, it does mean that 'the system' will eventually deliver benefits. Whether a large chunk of Wigan Athletic's support possesses the patience to hang around, especially if the R word ever happens I really don't know. I like the idea of having a football club, and a sustainable one at that in twenty, thirty, forty years time though so I'm all in favour of it.

Back in the day, these games used to mean something and with the way that the club is going, who knows, maybe they will start to again. I mean that in a positive sense as both the Youth team and the Reserves are performing well in their respective divisions.

Now we used to watch these games because we knew that it would give us an early glimpse of soon to be first teamers. Is that still the case - clearly not and the fact that Leighton Baines is still held out as a shining light of our once fruitful youth policy is more of an indictment of the flaws in our youth system than a success story.

Is it fair to blame the club for this though? Definitely not. If I was looking to point fingers, there is a lot to be said about the education policy run by Wigan Council. Even in our heyday of bringing players through, more than a few of them were in possession of a Scouse twang and this remains the case. Why is this?

Well it's a fair assessment to say that until recently many schools in the town didn't even have a football team, thanks to the pro-rugby Council who have recently again shown their true colours. It was a case of 'play rugby league as part of your education and if you want to play puffball, find somewhere to do it after school'. It's a sad state of affairs when there are skull caps being thrown on five year olds and nearly every week in the local press we read about another 15 year old kid with another broken neck from playing the 'Greatest Game' but this is the town we live in. We can only hope and pray that it one day gets dragged into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and those people in the higher echelons start to realise the benefits of playing all sports, not just the minority one which will return the occasional trophy because hardly anyone else in the country plays it.

But back on track and you know what though? We do have LOCAL LADS now - IN YOUR FACE Rugby detractors!!! Indeed a product of the Yoof policy Callum McManaman recently came on in a Premier League game, after playing previously against Pompey a year or two ago. Fair enough, there are a lot of Liverpudlians if you look at the Ressies profiles [here](#) amongst the young pros (McManaman, Mustoe, Routledge, Holt etc) although Kevin Langley's lad is hardly that. But checking out some of the Under 18's if you check the [Yoof](#) section of the official site you will see that many of them actually come from Wigan.

Although having said that one of them is called Chow so they'll probably discount him and make some joke about his dad running a Chinky's in Poolstock as that is the mentality of these small minded fools whom we have the misfortune to share a town with. One of the more exciting developments in pre-season was seeing a young lad called Tom Oakes from Beech Hill banging in a few goals for the "young" Latics, as many of us know, he really is one of our own and comes from a Latics family. Sadly, his season got curtailed with a cruciate injury but being so youthful he is already on the road to recovery and if that recovery is full we may well see a young Wiganer wearing the blue and white, at least in the odd cup game to start with

This is our vision and this is Roberto's vision but it is going to take time. You can't just produce Premier League players overnight and for a town like Wigan, 80,000 people out of a world of five billion, all of whom love and a wide proportion of whom play football, supply and demand means that it may never be possible and achieving anything should be celebrated as a real success against the odds.

The mouthy tossers from the RL Community, who have recently resurfaced after a quiet period over the last few years delight playing on this “local lads” thing. Indeed, many Latics fans have questioned the ‘foreign legion’ but it is symptomatic of the Premier League in general. Manchester City are the exception - they had seven lads in the England team recently. The point is though that none of them had been brought through the Youth policy, they had paid around £120 million quid to acquire them. The possible exception being SWP but he was bought and sold for £20m in the meantime.

We can’t afford to buy English lads because there is a premium on them and we struggle to bring them through as well because the bigger clubs consume the best of them and spit them out none the wiser because they can afford to sign better foreign players and the English youngsters never get a chance.

The fact is that there are 500 professional footballers eligible for Premier League squad selection at any point in time amongst a pool of an estimated 150 million people who play football worldwide. The town of Wigan has 80,000 people in it. What chance of any of them being in that top 500? About 0.00033% according to my rudimentary calculations.

Let’s briefly compare to Rugby league seeing as our chubby friends seem to be so keen to do so. Rugby league is played seriously in Wigan, St Helens, Leigh, Warrington, Hull and to a lesser extent, Hull, Bradford, Leeds, Leigh and Cumbria. I doubt any of these places with the possible exception of Wigan and St Helens give RL preference over football, let alone have the ingrained anti-football agenda the Education and Sports departments of Wigan MBC have inflicted on schoolkids over the years.

Why should we be so proud that Wigan produces so many RL players? It’s one of only half a dozen places which plays the sport at any sort of competitive level. If, as the RL fans have it, they won’t support Latics because they have no local lads and shouldn’t even be allowed to call themselves a Wigan team, then why should the RL be allowed to call their international team England seeing as their players only actually represent the 1% or 2% of England that plays the game. It’s not representative of England, it’s representative of a handful of Northern towns and nothing more.

The comparative RL gene pool as opposed to football is no more than a few thousand, most of which originate from Wigan - so of course the players should come from Wigan. You aren’t going to get many lads from Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bristol, Sunderland, Nottingham, Norwich, Plymouth, Stoke or even Bolton playing professional rugby league because they don’t even acknowledge the game. What bit of this is so hard to understand? Surely the fact that so many players come from Wigan demonstrates just what a failure this sport is as hardly any other parts of the country are producing any players? Where ELSE are rugby league players going to come from??

The fact of the matter is that Wigan Athletic are producing good young footballers but in a much more competitive market, these lads will always struggle to make the Elite 500 players who make the cut for the Premier League squad. The same rugby fans who slag Latics off for this are fully aware of this and are just repeating an argument parrot fashion they’ve got into their tiny brains as if somehow, excelling at a sport with a non-competitive market which most of the country and the world never bothers to even acknowledge is somehow better than trying to take the name of the town

forward to compete in the biggest sport in the world is somehow seen as a bad thing.

Of course these are the same people who then go and support United or Liverpool, both teams who typically will be made up of 80% foreigners (especially when this seems to include Scottish, Welsh and Irish). Go on then, what was the name of that Bulgarian gentleman who scored five for United or that Spanish chap who plays up front for Liverpool, or indeed remind me where that prematurely balding chap who plays up front comes from, would it be a city the Mancs all love to hate.

Does the local lads rule apply there? Because when Giggsy & Scholesy and Carra and Stevie G retire in a few years, you'll be on a very sticky wicket the way things are going. Liverpool and United in their prime were riddled with Scotsmen and again just remind where that good looking chap who liked a drink was from who all the United fans idolised in the Seventies. Do the rules not apply then?

It seems that there is some kind of campaign which has been planted by the local RL Community to discredit Latics every way they turn and this "we don't watch them because they're not local lads" thing is a cornerstone of their argument. If that is the case, then where were they all at Springfield Park when the likes of Atherton, Aspinall, Greenall, Parkinson were all wearing the blue and white? Or did they have another excuse then to not support their local football team?

I've seen Latics referred to as a team full of Africans by their fans when there's only been one African in the squad - maybe the number of players with dark skin is confusing them? It's a tragedy that we need to live and breathe the

same air as these small minded, insular hypocrites and their campaign of hatred against our football club.

People in the RL Community may crow about RL players from Wigan 'representing their country' but are they really? In reality it is no more of a headline grabber than the cheese rollers of Gloucester or the Scottish curling women calling themselves Internationals. Technically they are - but only because they are the only ones who've bothered to play it.

It is exactly the same at youth team level as it is at first team and is the same for local footballers trying to make it in the game. We're taking on the world, they're taking on St Helens, Warrington and a few parts of Yorkshire. It's no competition but not in the way they see it.

We need to accept that RL is big in Wigan and in all likelihood it always will be. I personally have seen enough junior RL games when playing football on the next pitch over the years to see that it brings kids up to be brutish thugs with parents who aren't much better. I've seen far worse violence at a St Judes Under 14's game than I've seen at any football game in 25 years on or off the pitch. Millwall was a cakewalk in comparison but this is what youngsters in Wigan are encouraged to be, little skullcap wearing hoodlums who grow up into steroid fuelled, shit tattooed, jaw breaking behemoths all in the name of sport and calling the nation's sport (and Rugby Union) all kinds of names in the process.

Given all this we are always going to be up against it on a football front to bring through talented players as even those born with basic football skills are 'got at' relatively young.

Despite what I have said above, I have no problem with them playing rugby league but this attitude is often drummed into kids that rugby league = good and football = bad by the over-enthusiastic RL community when nothing could be further from the truth in both cases.

It's our town as well with our children. Whether the RL Community likes it or not.

• **MINGA THE WINGER**

## IT'S ON ITS WAY

### JORDI-HENDRY

Lots of teams have players that puzzle their fans, either because they don't think the fancy dan millionaire has got enough ability, because they don't show the passion to deserve their place in the side or because they don't understand the tactical role that they play in the side. At the risk of sounding patronising, the same fans often have difficulty separating these reasons from each other.

Take Jordi Gomez (no take him...) a player with bags of quality but, at best, a bit of a marmite player in the popularity stakes. I've heard plenty of suggestions as to why people don't rate him (lack of pace, passion or sense being amongst the most popular), I've heard plenty of criticism of what he does on the pitch, but not much real talk about why he does it. Having given it some thought, I've pretty much come to the conclusion that Jordi Gomez is a pioneer of a new position (or at least one I've never come across before) what I'm going to call the 'withdrawn target man'.

At this point you're either laughing out loud or thinking about turning the page, but let's have a think about it before you do.

What does your typical target man do? He runs the frontline, holding up balls, winning free

kicks or giving other players the time to join the attack, generally laying the ball off to those players as they get there. He usually plays with his back to goal and plays a defensive role in keeping the ball away from his own box as much as he can. The biggest problem for a target man comes when he's just asked to chase down balls and his team mates don't do their half of the job.

Move that line back ten or fifteen yards and you have Gomez 'toiling' away, generally taking the ball in, winning free kicks and laying little passes off to his team mates. I can't think of anyone similar in the English game but maybe the role is ten a penny elsewhere. To some extent he's like a pivot, the other players rotating around him like and his passing moving us further up the pitch. He holds his line and the theory is that other players run past him creating space, or trying to evade their markers.



Bobby once said that you will be able to tell when Latics are starting to play the way he wants them to because Jordi Gomez would start to look like an important player. I think we've

seen some flashes of that this season, his presence has brought some stability to our play and his role has become clearer, but there's remains a lot of frustration around him. Still, he's always keen to be involved and always looking for the ball which maybe suggests that the frustration might be less to do with Jordi than it is other factors.

Consider this fairly typical Latics interchange.

Thomas picks the ball up in the centre circle, he plays a ten yard pass to Gomez. With no options left or right and a man on his back, Gomez lays the ball back to Thomas who's stood exactly where he was previously. At this point one of two things is common, 1) Thomas plays another ten yard pass to Jordi who has moved left or right but is even more tightly marked and still has no options on or 2) The player that Thomas took the ball off in the first place has recovered and in a position to put Hendry under pressure as he receives the ball.

The point is hopefully clear, Thomas should have broke forward away from whoever he took the ball off and probably creating a 2:1 advantage somewhere in the opposition half.

Then again, Hendry is about as far away as you can get from Gomez in the "what does he do stakes". Maybe fifteen years ago he wouldn't have been but we didn't have the "Makelele role" then. Thomas does the simple things, the dirty things and he does them damn well. Tackle, pass, tackle, pass, tackle, pass you could set your watch by his regularity and his reliability.

Last season, his presence in front of a more traditionally 'English' centre back pairing, in essence leading to us having a solid triangle in our defensive third of the pitch, stunted the

team a little bit. This season the defensive set up is more 'fluid' and Thomas has started to come into his own.

The problem, tactically, is that whilst the whole world now understands the "Makelele role", hardly anyone uses it anymore, increased use of wingers, wide forwards and a move to 4-3-3 or 4-5-1 based formations mean that there is less need for a "destroyer" in the middle of the park. Mainly because the "creators" that they exist to counteract now play out on the flanks. Big teams have started to adapt to this and the vogue now is much more for a holding midfielder that conducts the pace and direction of play.

I may be over egging things a little with some of these examples, but think of Alonso, Carrick, Huddlestone, Song and Barry. All sat in front of the back four but with a much wider role in terms of starting and directing attacking moves. For all his benefits, Hendry has little of the passing or creative abilities of these players and for Latics to have a player purely in that purely defensive rather than holding midfield role is again in danger of stunting the freedom of the team to do what Bobby's 4-3-3 line up is supposedly designed to do.

He's also become something of a necessary evil. Latics started the season, against Blackpool in a mode, with Diame, McCarthy and Watson made up the midfield three, that seemed a little more attacking. Amongst the many faults that afternoon perhaps the biggest was that none of the three had the discipline to protect Alacaraz and Gohouri, a pairing of which you would never use the words "traditional" or "English". Thomas' inclusion in the next game may not have had an immediate effect, but it's easy to forget how dominant Chelsea were looking back then.

Since then, of course, even though they've had the odd moment of defensive weakness, Latics have looked more solid. But, to bring Gomez back into the equation, they've also looked more stodgy and Thomas' role, as opposed to the role of say a Carrick or Alonso, explains why Latics might be struggling to get things flowing. With Gomez operating in an area roughly in the middle of the opposition half and Thomas in an area in the middle of ours, the Latics midfield has two fairly fixed points and fixed points don't generally make for flowing football.

If you take away one of those fixed points then things might become more fluid and whilst the make up of an ideal Latics midfield three is an article in itself, our defensive frailties and the absence of a viable alternative in the holding role probably mean that Gomez is the one that needs to step aside (and indications from the Stoke game are that we will now see this happen) but in the longer term a reliance on Thomas is likely to leave Latics looking short compared to other sides playing similar formations.

In the meantime I guess we need to view him as a necessary evil and go back to wondering whether Jordi Gomez is doomed never to make it big at Latics.

- Neill Rimmer's Perm

### The Return of a Cult T-shirt!!

Well it only took nearly twenty years but Mudhutter is now proud to present the digitally re-mastered Bryan Griffiths/Rude Kid classic t-shirt first launched in 1991.

The t-shirt features the original photo and caption on the front and the Rude Kid cartoon on the back and although the t-shirt is available in a variety of sizes, numbers will be strictly limited.

The t-shirt is priced at just £9.99 plus shipping and postage charges and is available to buy online at [www.mudhutter.co.uk](http://www.mudhutter.co.uk). You can pay by Paypal or directly by Debit card and make sure to specify the correct size. Also, look out for more t-shirts to come from our collection on the website over the coming weeks including our Harry Lyon 'Legend' T-shirt.

**Front**



**Back**



## HAIR WE GO

Given the name that I've been hiding behind for the last ten or so years it was inevitable that I'd get around to talking about hair at some point, in fact it's more amazing that it's taken so long but then again, apart from the odd indiscretion, Latics have survived most of the more outlandish hair fads over the years with even Alan Mahon managing to stick to the single hair-style at once during his time at the JJB.

In fact, it's been reasonably difficult to pick out a top five of the notable hair styles of Latics players over the years, but that's what I set out to do and I don't give in easy. The net result being that there are some fairly staid crops in here and a few that missed out that, on another day and with better results from Google images, could have made the.. wait for it... cut.

Honorable mentions go to the Don Page flat top, David Thompson's baked bean, Bran Griffith's Paul Calf lite, Carl Bradshaw's number one, Jorg Smeets' bleached crop and Colin Methven's "bald? not me guv" but in the end they fell out of the running behind the following



### **5. The Scouser**

Look at the squad photo from 78/79 and it's amazing how many of them have got the same hairstyle, it's a proper style as well, not a crop or a short, back and sides that might be the norm in later years. Here you have grown men, a few of whom would have been working in factories months earlier. The style is the sort of collar length bouffant that would later give way to the stereotypical curly perm, but wasn't quite there yet.

Of course that was all a bit girly for the typical northern types that were called to play for Latics so it had to, almost without exception, be offset with a 'tache the bushier, apparently, the better. In retrospect it's easy to say it didn't work, but back then it would have taken a brave man to walk up to Graham Barrow and tell him he looked a bit gay.

### **4. The Greg Strong**

Strong's bleach blond, soon to be bob was very of its time, but combined with the permatan and polished white teeth it did him no favours when he buggered off to Bolton before he'd even really established himself in the Latics team. All he was trying to do was look like Brad from Neighbours and it got him stuck with a reputation as a big time Charlie who thought he was better than he was.



Obviously that's something I should have got over by now, but having checked out Wikipedia and found out that Greg is currently managing Rhyl Town, I can't decide whether it means he's finally got his comeuppance or that I was wrong about him all along.

### **3. David Lowe**

Lowey's floppy fringed, grown out short, back and sides was a staple for mid-eighties, north-western lads who couldn't quite get their head and their hairdresser around to a full on wedge. Often copied (see Paul Jewell circa 1988), it's on the cool side but otherwise unremarkable so how come it makes the list? For sheer bloody persistence that's how come.





The length at the back may have varied (did someone say mullet? Not me!) but the fringe was there when he made his debut in '84, when he left us in '86, through Ipswich, England U21s and Leicester. It was still there when he came back in '96, when he joined the coaching staff a few years later and since then it's done Derby a service and popped up at the Masters tournament.

Over 25 years service deserves a certificate and a clock, but as we've neither it can have third place in our list instead.

## 2. Neill Rimmer's Perm

The username itself was just a throwaway reference to the m o p - t o p p e d midfielder, chances are that he's never seen a hair-curler in his life, but just had a nice ring to it and it stuck. Sharing the affliction of curly hair, I'd probably never have come up with the username if it hadn't been for the story that followed him about how his haircut (or lack of it) prevented him from making the grade at Everton and how at one stage Howard Kendal basically made him have his locks cut off.



Now, the story of a man so committed to his hairstyle that he'd give up a top flight career for

it is worthy of a place in this list on it's own, but without it the hair in it's prime was no less impressive. It was never clear whether it was inspired more by Waddle and Hoddle or Brian May and Anita Dobson but it was a flowing, billowing mess of curls and it surely must have got in the way when he was playing.

## 1. Thanx

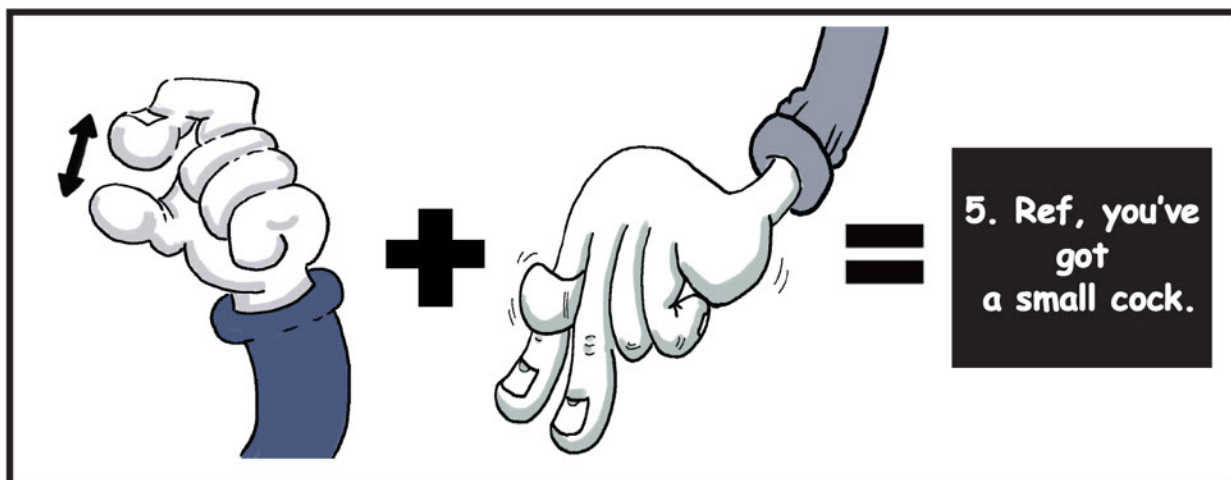
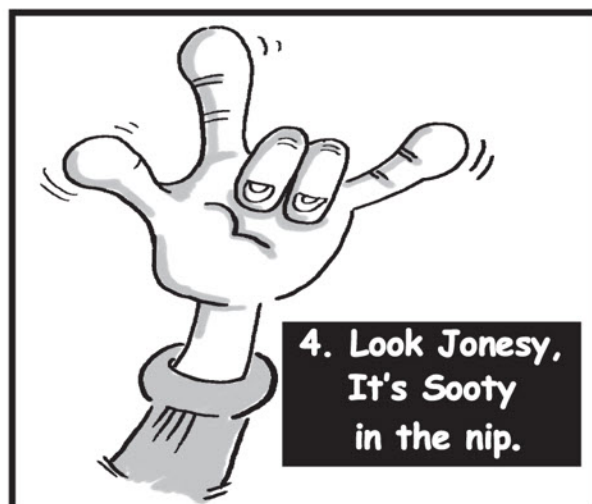
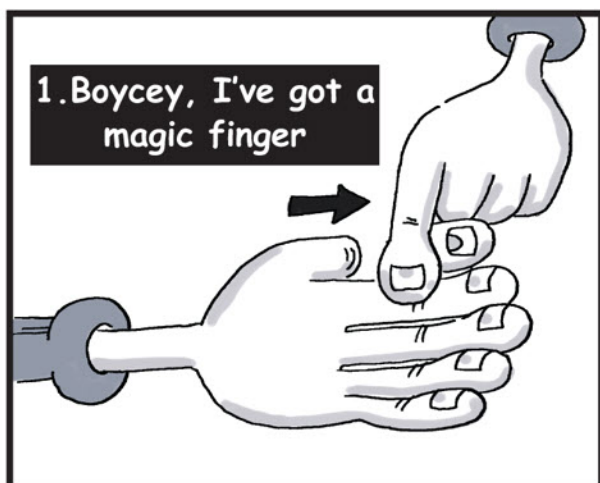
Surely you knew that this was coming? A page and a half on hairstyles and no mention of my favourite Austrian mifender (that's a new position just for him, because "he deserves it").

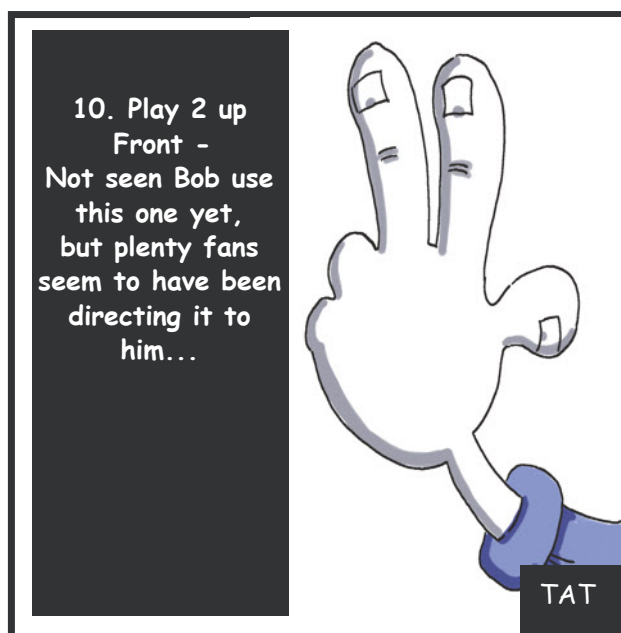
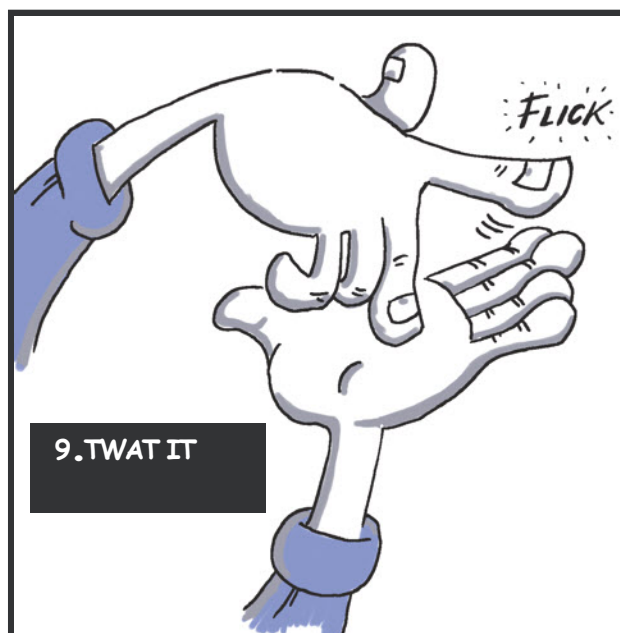
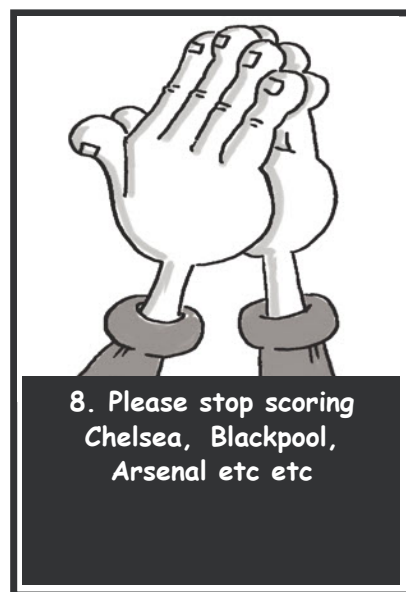
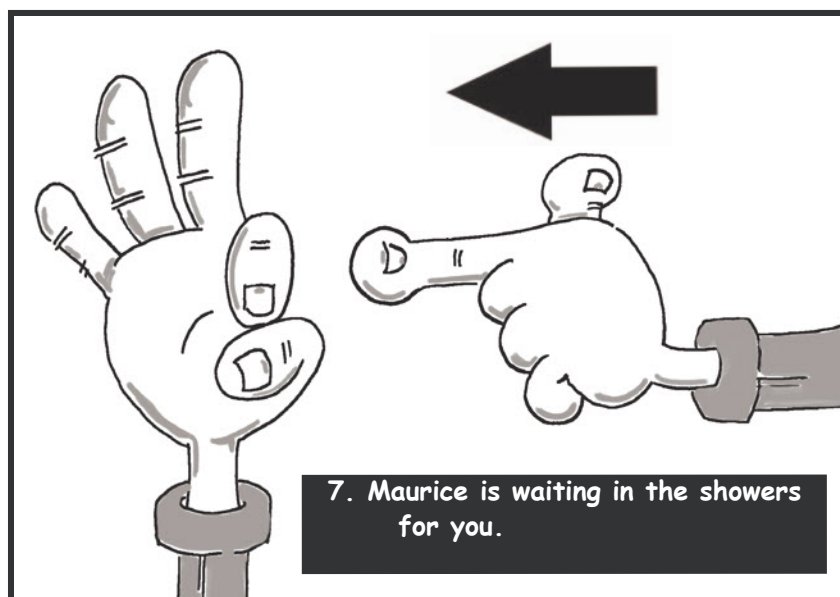
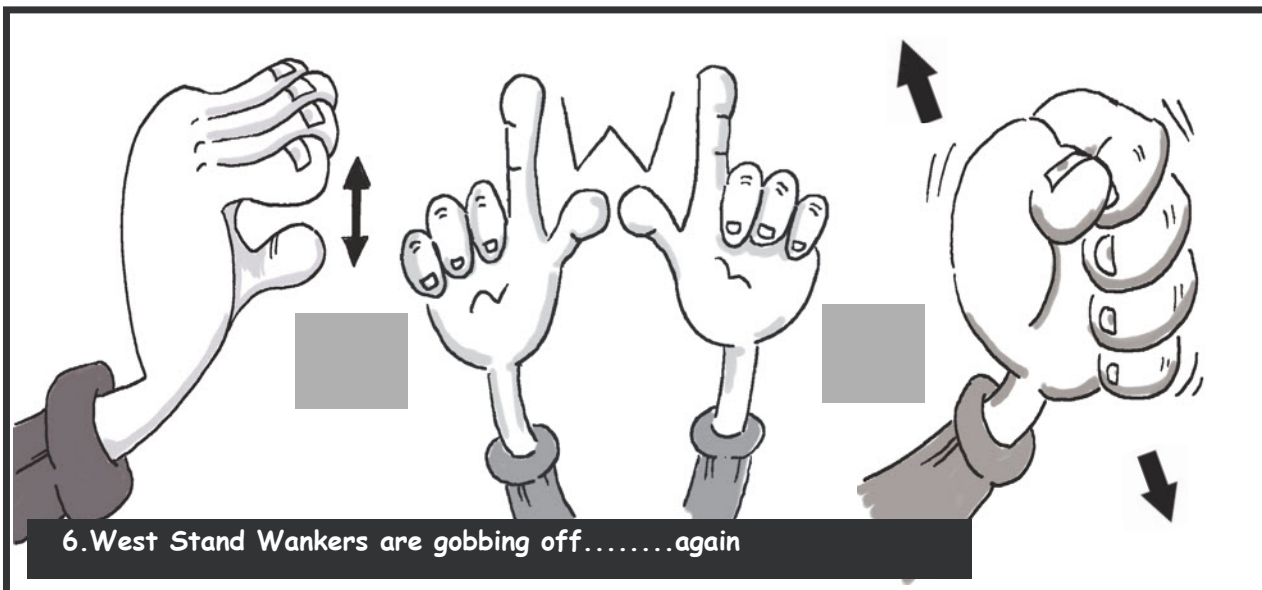
Where do you start? The pre-latics Bran Bergen Mohican? The multi-purpose Latics/Birmingham stripes he had dyed when he came to us? The mad badger? Or the, 'just go will you?' goodbye effort from last season's Hull game? Not that any of them made him look any less like a Sacha Baron Cohen pornstar character than his bog standard crop and goatee.

Despite what people might think now, Scharner is destined to be known more for expressing his personality purely through the medium of hair than anything he ever did on the pitch and for that reason alone he tops this chart, no matter how much I still haven't got over my dislike of the man.

## • Neill Rimmers' Perm

# MUDHUTS GUIDE TO ROBERTO'S HAND JIVES

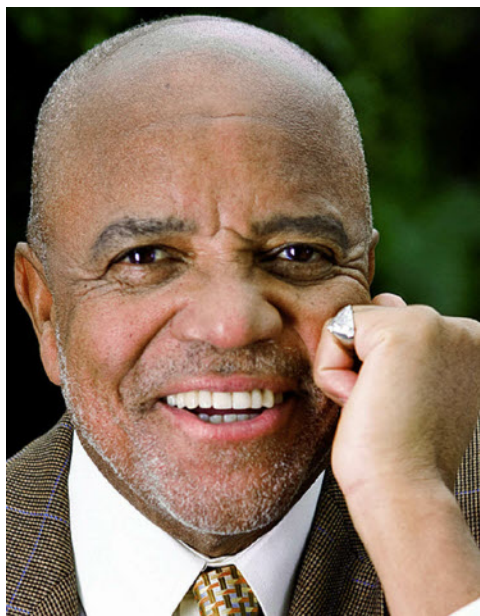




## **There's A Definite Change In You -** **Motown in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

***Sean Livesey looks into the Motown label today and 50 years after its launch whether it can still be considered an active label that appeals to the Soul Scene.***

In January 2009 Motown celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the labels inception and it got



me thinking about the state of the Motown records of today. Motown Records or The Universal Motown Group as it is now known is a totally different prospect to that of the one that Berry Gordy and some of the greatest ever talent assembled launched out of a

house on West Grand Boulevard in Detroit back in 1959, but is there still a presence of creative talent and the sense of what went before at the label?

Motown and Detroit finally went their separate ways in June 1972 with the move to Los Angeles. Motown had established offices both in Los Angeles and New York throughout the mid 60's as the label grew in stature both nationally and internationally. The big push to Los Angeles came about through a number of burgeoning factors, there was always the sense within Motown that the label had grown at a much quicker rate than anybody had ever expected and as such had outgrown the small beginnings that had seen the company flourish

on West Grand Boulevard. As a result of this growth spurt Gordy purchased Golden World Records in 1968 and the studios of Golden World became known as Studio B in direct contrast to the legendary Hitsville Studio A. During the same year he purchased the Donavon building in down-town Detroit and moved the majority of operations to this high rise office building.

During the late 60's and early 70's as Motown was taking care of itself musically Berry Gordy began to stretch out into TV and later film. Motown began to commission their own TV Specials including TCB: Taking Care of Business with Diana Ross & The Supremes with The Temptations, G.I.T on Broadway, the Temptations Show and the Smokey Robinson Show. The development of these TV Specials coincided with the arrival of Suzanne De Passe to the company her main roles within her position at Motown surrounded the production of these shows. Motown Productions the TV and Movie Production arm of the Motown division was created and De Passe became the head of that division.

The writing was on the wall for Detroit when Berry Gordy began to spend more and more time working with Suzanne De Passe but more so when he began to spend weeks on end in Los Angeles at the LA offices, whilst leaving the smooth operation of the Detroit office and still at that times Motown's official base to vice President Smokey Robinson.

Although Music was his first and foremost love, Gordy had always wanted Motown to be more than just a music label. He had wanted the label to be versatile and a fighting force in the American Entertainment Industry; he wanted Motown to be the biggest entertainment company in the world, much more than just the biggest music company in the world. Early

examples of this can be found within the pairing together of The Temptations with Diana Ross & The Supremes for numerous TV Specials. In addition there was a live album of TCB produced whilst a year previously both The Temptations and The Supremes had performed a series of successful dates at the Copacabana Club in New York. The two groups represented the height of success possible at Motown and to push the groups further TV and in Diana Ross' case Movies was the way forward for Gordy, and his team.

The move to Los Angeles was completed almost over-night in June 1972, with a number of high profile acts staying behind including The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, Gladys Knight & The Pips, The majority of The Funk Brothers and of course Holland Dozier Holland who had left the company in 1968 following court battles over Royalties. Speaking to the Guardian in October of last year Smokey Robinson speaks of how against the move to Los Angeles he was "I was the biggest protester about us moving,' stresses Smokey.'I was born here in Detroit. Motown was born here in Detroit and I told Berry this. I explained all of this to him: "Berry, this is our roots, we started here" and he explained to me that he wanted to become a record complex. He said we could stay in Detroit and be a record company but LA is where entertainment is centralised. I bought him books on earthquakes and smog and everything you can think of, trying to get him not to move, but finally he said, "Look, you're vice-president of the company, get your family, come on out here because you've got to" and so I moved out there.'"

The move to Los Angeles and Motown becoming an all round entertainment company was finalised later that year as Diana Ross starred

in the Billie Holiday biographical film 'Lady Sings The Blues' (1972).

Motown's early days in Los Angeles were deemed a success as the company kept up the high standard of hits and material that it had produced in Detroit. But despite this healthy facade the company had been in a terminal decline since it left its spiritual home of Detroit.

During the mid 70's and early 80's Motown entered a new phase of recording talent with the likes of The Commodores, Lionel Richie, Rick James & Teena Marrie sat alongside long time label mates Stevie Wonder, The Temptations and Diana Ross. Despite this success it was reported in a number of quarters that Motown was beginning to lose money. The effect of the company not being able to cope with its enormous growth over the past two decades along with a changing trend in music likes and music buyers habits.



Fewer singles were being sold alongside a change in musical tastes across America; Disco had come and gone whilst Rock was now the popular music of choice for much of the states. As a result this left Motown in a difficult position, did it continue as a primarily black music label or did it try to move with the times and re-invent itself. Whether Gordy ever found the answer is debatable with mounting debts surrounding the company he finally relinquished his hold on one of the few remaining Independent Music Companies in the world and by far the most successful.

In 1988 Gordy sold Motown to MCA and Boston Ventures for a reported \$61 million a fraction of its price a few years before. A year later he sold the TV and Movie Production section of Motown to its original instigator Suzanne De Passe, who later re-named it De Passe Entertainment.

As soon as Gordy left Motown, the label entered an even more difficult period and Gordy's immediate successor Jheryl Busby continually quarrelled with MCA over their treatment of Motown and its products. Motown successfully sued MCA and had its distribution deal terminated and later signed up for a distribution deal with Polygram Records, three years later Polygram purchased Motown outright.

Ironically, Gordy began *To Be Loved*, his autobiography published in 1994, by reflecting on his misgivings about selling Motown to MCA.

**"That night, 30 December 1986, I passed on the deal even though my company was losing millions," wrote the boss, who spent a further 17 months wavering before eventually reaching an agreement in May 1988 and selling Motown for \$61m (Jobete, the**

**lucrative publishing arm of the company, was finally wholly acquired by EMI Publishing in 2004). "For years, we had shown the world what we could do with talent and ingenuity at our base. And now these new corporate entities were showing me what they could do with money and power as theirs... I was just tired. I didn't want to do it anymore. It had long stopped being fun for me. When I started out, I was doing about 90 per cent creative and 10 per cent business. As the years went, the percentages more than switched. Now, I was doing 98 per cent business and 2 per cent creative. I was stuck and I hated it."**

The mid to late nineties saw an upturn in fortunes for the label, as urban and contemporary R&B came back into focus the label performed the masterstroke of signing Boyz II Men who amassed a huge number of successful singles and over four multi- million selling studio albums. The Temptations one of the few remaining original acts left on Motown linked to the Detroit days recorded somewhat of a comeback album for the label in 1997 'Phoenix Rising' the first album for the group without original member the legendary bass singer Melvin Franklin. Phoenix Rising became one of The Temptations best-selling albums being awarded Double Platinum status, the lead song from that album 'Stay' hit number one on the R&B charts and stayed there for over 11 weeks during this period. Other successful acts linked to the label in the late 90's included Erykau Badu, Brian McKnight, Michael McDonald and India Arie.

Following on from this successful period saw the label begin to struggle for an identity once again, two of the mainstays of Motown namely Smokey Robinson and Diana Ross left the label for good in 1999 and 2002 respectively whilst Polygram was acquired by The Universal Music

Group and as such folded into part of The Universal umbrella. In 2005 Motown was merged with Universal Records to form the Motown Universal Records Group.

Despite the promise of the creative and successful black music acts signed to the label in the mid to late nineties and early 2000's Motown was sidelined further by its parent group Universal and from being one of the most successful record labels of all time its current state is a sorry state of affairs.

The only remaining member from the label's early days is Stevie Wonder, but his distinct lack of albums over the last decade makes him seem more of throwback to the Motown of old without being considered a 'current' artist. The Temptations left the label in 2005 following the release of their final album for the label namely 'Legacy'. The album was given such a poor amount of promotion by the label that it became the final straw for Otis Williams and the group. They left and signed with a new label set up by Universal entitled 'New Door Records'.

Reviewing all of this, the question could be asked, is Motown even considered a Label anymore? Perhaps the executives at The Universal Records Group would argue yes, and in the modern sense it may well be. But is there any link to the Motown we all know, love and respect? Not in the slightest, perhaps the name is still there as is Stevie but like the worker who was asked to turn the light out at the end of a shift it seems Stevie isn't there for any creative purposes but just because he has always been.

Motown's current roster features the likes of Lindsay Lohan (enough said), Busta Rhymes, Nick Cannon, Q-Tip, Damian and Stephen Marley, Lil Wayne, Ashanti. It would be wrong for me to disregard every artist signed to the



label and of course the likes of India Arie, Erykah Badu and Stevie are some of the finest black music artists present and recording today. Motown is the largest music conglomerate present in today's industry holding

any number of label groups such as Black ground, Casablanca, Republic, Cash Money. As a result the majority of acts on Motown in 2009 are actually artists from other labels, hence the likes of Lil Wayne, Akon and Lindsay Lohan being on the Motown roster in 2009.

Sadly that is the true reflection of Motown it is now a group of labels with no clear identity. Now based in New York the label is a reflection that the company that Berry Gordy created was a once in a lifetime event. Never again will anybody be able to harness the talent that Gordy managed to in that little house on West Grand Boulevard Motown is simply a brand in 2009 and sadly not one for the better.

There are some positive aspects to Motown in the new century its back catalogue is finally being utilized but on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Motown's legacy is that of Berry Gordy and what he created, not what came after him.

- **SEAN LIVESEY**

## A NEW LOVE

When I recently fell in love with a boy from Wigan little did I know that part and parcel of being in this relationship would also mean watching his beloved Wigan FC. Im actually a Bury FC fan and have been all my life so when he took me to my first Wigan match it felt ever so slightly dirty and wrong, like I needed a shower. Premiership football, I thought, as I walked to the DW along the canal, ha not like the real football of league two I laughed. How wrong could I be; frustrated fans, wobbly defense moves to the midfield, space of what feels like miles on the wing, bad beer, abusive songs about Bolton...never have I felt so at home. Just like Gigg Lane I thought, only with 11,000 more fans, a bigger stadium, oh yeah and being able to watch repeat on Match of the Day.

What I did notice though was that the Wigan fans were very much made up of guys, so where are all the girls?? On my few trips to Wigan to meet his family I've noticed many women in Wigan rugby tops just not many in Wigan football shirts. I just don't get why? Ok I suppose it could be to do with the distinct lack of mirrors in the toilets or maybe the lack of cocktails at half time (beer in plastic cups just doesn't cut it for many women). Whatever the problem is I think an answer needs to be found and fast. Therefore boys I put to you an idea, an idea so clever, you won't believe its come from a Bury fan!! The idea is this, lets choose a match where every guy brings their girlfriend/wife/mistress. Now before you stop reading hear me out...not only do you get to watch the match but you kill two birds with one

stone (pun unintended) by spending the 'quality time' that us girls are always banging on about! The girls also get to see there guys being all manly by confronting the ref/linesman from 50 metres away, which is always a turn on. You'll also get to go to the club shop as us girls always love the souvenirs. Half time sorted as if your date doesnt drink with you then you've got your designated driver home, or if they do then you've got a girl tipsy by 4.30 on a saturday afternoon...good times. We could call it, 'bring a girl and score week'. The puns are endless.

What I loved about the two Wigan matches I've been to so far are the fans. As my boyfriend was busy shouting and gesturing at the away fans, I took some time to look around, and the genuine affection of the fans, even when thoroughly frustrated is clear to see. As a supporter of a league two club I usually sit on the bandwagon full of people going on about how Premiership football isn't real football, the footballers dont care, and theres no real fans. Ok so there are many Premiership teams like that but Wigan FC isn't one of them. From the youngest to the oldest, to the sober to the drunk, all the fans care, a rarity in football these days. From the Wolves match when Wigan won to the frustrating draw to Bolton, fans kept their sense of loyalty and dignity. Wigan FC should be proud of the fans!

I'm hoping my relationship with the Wigan boy lasts, but even if it doesn't, my new found love for Wigan FC will (I'll just have to find a different stand to sit in)

- **Laura, a Bury/Wigan fan**

# THE REVOLUTION IS NIGH

## Oh What a Lovely Class War

A few years ago, Robbie Fowler incurred the wrath of the middle-class media with a string of controversial acts on the football field. The transgressions weren't, however, a Kevin Davies elbow, a Karl Henry suicide tackle, nor even a Mikel Arteta stamp. No, the three incidents which captured so much attention were 1. Fowler bending over and showing his arse to Graham LeSaux, 2. Fowler crawling along the 6 yard box, simulating the snorting of a line of beak and 3. Fowler lifting his shirt to show a mock Calvin Klein t-shirt, supporting the Liverpool dockers.

Now, curiously, the fuss about the first two actually died pretty quickly, warranting only a cursory reference or two in the depths of the odd football column, but the third, well that was a different matter altogether. The fuss about Fowler having the temerity to show support for 500 dockers who had been sacked was mind-boggling. The incident happened during a European Cup-Winners Cup tie, immediately landing Fowler in trouble with UEFA. You see, there are rules against that sort of thing.

When I say "that sort of thing", I mean making a political statement. It appears that, as a professional footballer, it is within the rules to make homophobic gestures to a fellow professional, or to simulate the taking of class-A drugs on the field, but there will be much throwing of books if a player dares to express an opinion on a political matter. It is UEFA's - and indeed FIFA's - opinion, that politics has no place in football. Yes, two organisations whose machinations are more political than even Brussels can muster, consider football to above such petty inconsequential. It's little wonder that a game which was once the staple exercise

of every working class male across almost the entire world is now reduced to a corporate mess of thing, dominated by official sponsors and stadium debentures, where the object even of the World Cup is not to discover who the best team on earth is, but to make lots of money.

If football isn't political, someone needs to tell the good folks of St Pauli, or SV Salzburg, or even those unruly ruffians 15 miles to the North in Bury (or, if you're reading this in a few years' time, 15 miles to the East, at Ten Acres lane). A study of just those three examples shows that football isn't just political, but that politics is the only thing currently holding the game together. If it wasn't, the slide into corporate meaninglessness would already be complete. That these three clubs, and a handful of others, have the will to stand up and be counted means that there may just be a glimmer of hope for this bloated, glutinous mess of a thing which used to be our - and just about the rest of the world's - national pastime.

Whilst FC United were scoring a gloriously dubious last minute winner at Rochdale in the 1st round of the FA Cup, the NUJ members in the BBC were staging a strike over the corporation's plans to plug the pension deficit hole by, well, by telling the journalists that they couldn't actually draw the pension they'd been paying into for donkey's years, but they could have one which was worth about half as much. In a move that one might expect from a club formed and run along firmly socialist principles, barring one or two who, according to our friends over at the FC fanzine 'A fine lung' "...danced in the lights", the massed ranks of the FC travelling support refused to speak to any BBC camera crew who were looking for interviews.

It's this stance, purely based on principles and

## ***Mudhutter 2010 Winter of Discontent Special***

a desire to support their fellow working men, which sets the likes of FC United apart from the rest, and which shows that football *is* political. It is still the sport of the working man, it's just been well hidden since Thatcher declared war on us all. The FA would like nothing more than us all to turn up, faces painted, and heads jester-hatted, spending our hard-earned on buying into the Premier League brand. A brand which they simply can't afford to become working class. To allow such a thing would mean an enforced investigation into things like ticket prices, player wages and the subject which terrifies every member of the FA - the bringing back of terracing.

For as long as football remains in the clutches of pricks like the City fans who "starred" in a recent film about their exploits in a van painted with City slogans, and all wearing their replica shirts, then the FA will be happy, and the rest of us will be fucked. Even our very own club, who seem to have had an epiphany in recent months and have started to look at involving fans groups in discussions on taking the club forward, haven't been immune from trying to control every aspect of the match going experience. Sellers of this very fanzine have been approached more than once, with an order to stop selling the magazine, as we were on stadium property. We're still there, by the way.

It takes more than a couple of fat, sweaty rugby fans in steward's coats to frighten us.

But, y'know, the tide may be turning, albeit as slowly as the average Brummie schoolkid learns the English language. The bank-initiated recession means that people don't have the disposable income that they had a few years ago, and clubs have had to reduce ticket prices in order to arrest the tidal wave of empty seats which is crashing over stadiums the length and breadth of the country. It also means that businesses don't see football as the easy corporate entertainment it once was. History shows that, once a match-going fan abandons the game, it takes several years for them to drift back. The drop in revenue may argue the case for revolution better than any banner. And certainly better than any green and yellow scarf is ever going to do.

We will get our game back, one day, but it's likely to be an often painful journey. All it needs is more brave souls to say enough is enough, and someone will eventually have to listen. We need more football players like Robbie Fowler. Players who are willing to laugh at the meaningless fines meted out for such unsavoury behaviour as showing support for a group of workers who have been poorly treated, and do it anyway.

• Migs

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### **'Did you pack my snood darling?'**

So we didn't get the World Cup. Were you surprised? Were you even that bothered? Did you, like me, not even know when the decision day was till the day before? I found the entire campaign a farce from beginning to the dummy spitting, bitter and twisted end. It was a representation of everything that is bad in

English football today and to quote Les they did, inevitably, 'Choke on their own vomit!'

The reaction in the following couple of days was one of shock and bewilderment throughout the media. The conspiracy stories began immediately. Promises of votes not kept. Russian mobs. The influence of Blatter. They certainly portrayed us as the victim very well.

But what they could not see is that for once they had got a taste of their own medicine and guess what? They didn't like it one bit. They felt cheated by the alleged corruption within FIFA. The media openly expressed it and many of the bid team wanted to say the same but knew it was more than their job was worth. The hypocrisy of it all was laughable. For once they experienced the impact that power, favouritism, bribes and backhanders can have in football. The same shit that clubs like ourselves have had to put up with for years from The FA, The Premier League, SKY and the most ironic one of all, the media. The same media blamed by FIFA for the failure in Zurich.



I have to admit that we did have the best bid in terms of its technical aspect. It would have brought in the most dosh. Our stadiums would have provided the comfort, and most importantly, the security that is necessary in today's world. Our transport links are pretty decent in comparison to Russia which are by all accounts nowhere near ready. So I suppose for these reasons they had cause for disappointment. It was the way in which they attempted to sell it to the voters that had me baffled. First off were the so called 'Three Lions'; Cameron, Prince William and Beckham who were recruited in an attempt to wow the judges by saying 'We can get bigger names than

you can!', whilst sticking their tongues out at the other bidding countries. It stunk rotten of this countries obsession with celebrity image and unbelievably the bid team, apparently made up of intelligent men and women, sold out to it.

In what way did they think these three would be representative of this country as a passionate, working class, sporting nation? Cameron and Prince William couldn't be any further from the typical representation of your average football fan. And as for Beckham, despite the commendable speech he made, lives in America. So forgive me for doubting your understanding of what it is really like to support a football club in this country 'Becks'. On the face of it these three may have lucked pretty, smiled for the cameras, shook the right hands, kissed the appropriate arses but inevitably it would have been the likes of us who would be expected to fork out for the WC and us who would be expected to take the day off work and fill the stadium for Cameroon vs. Denmark on a Wednesday afternoon. I could see right through it and would hazard a guess that one or two judges did as well.

Whilst on the subject of disillusion, what pissed me off the most was the video used in the final presentation of the bid. It attempted to show how passionate we are about our football, how fantastic the atmosphere is in our stadiums and the quality of football being played in them. Now guess which clubs were shown in this video? I'll give you 10 seconds...That's right, you guessed it; Yoonited, 'The' Arsenal, Chelski, Liverpool and Citeh. It was as if no other club existed. As though no other club mattered. It was in no way a representation of football in this country. It was hardly a stroke of genius using the same teams that Blatter has publically criticised on numerous occasions either. In

those couple of minutes they managed to widen the gap between them and us even further. And for what? The opportunity to widen the gap EVEN further in 2018.

Now I may be wrong but if we are looking to host the WC in ENGLAND then shouldn't we be showing the world that ENGLISH footballers can play a bit? You'd think that wouldn't you? But no, not these lot. They decided to show goals scored in the Premier League by Tevez (Argentinean), Torres (Spanish), Drogba (Ivorian), Nani (Portuguese) and Vela (Mexican). Added to this they showed Crouch's goal against France which would have reminded the good folks at FIFA how we were outplayed in that match but still looked to stifle the credit the French deserved by bragging about a consolation strike in injury time. Once again they failed to show an honest and fair representation of English football, English footballers and English football fans. A theme that seemed to run through the entire bid. The

FA had every opportunity to claw back some dignity after years of oppression against clubs like ourselves in favour of the 'product' on offer at other clubs but sold out to the 'Greatest League in the World' cliché.

They got it wrong; it couldn't be any simpler than that. And I doubt anyone is going to admit that they got wrong and will continue with this pathetic charade of blaming others until they get bored. And I'll take a wild guess that the end of this will immediately precede another event that our media will twist, control and manipulate to make out that English football is the victim of corruption.

As the saying goes; 'They didn't like it up um!!'

## • OPM

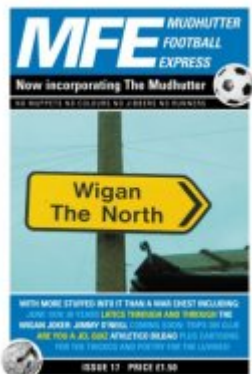
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## **GREETINGS FROM KAZAKHSTAN**

*The issue of low attendances isn't just a local one. An overseas Latics fan, Uveq, translates the story of how Shakhtar Donetsk grew it's crowds Yes, it's true, the MFE has gone global....*

**Maria Klimova: “We gradually taught people to pay”**

Maria Klimova has been working at Shakhtar Donetsk from 2007 to 2010. She was Head of Department of Marketing and Communications. In this interview (to NFPM.ru – Translator's Note) she talked about how Shakhtar increased attendances and made money through fans.

### **About the structure of Department of Marketing and Communications**

There were three sections in our Department. Four men worked in the section of marketing and advertising, they did “pre-match advertising”, “match advertising” and other advertisement stuff - new kit, new technical sponsor etc. five men worked with fans, they mainly did direct work with fan-groups and masses. They also worked on a big project - “School Club”.

In addition, the Department of Marketing and Communication included press office. There were 8 men; then, after we moved to the Donbass Arena, their number increased to 12 men: designers and writers who made the club editions and applets. At least they began from that kind of work; then they made all the projects that have been used in our advertisement campaigns, a lot of different stuff.

### **On how to increase attendances**

When I came to Shakhtar, the old Olympic Stadium was filled using this method: the club paid for buses and in voluntary/compulsory manner they brought people from regional mines and schools (Oh yeah - it's a very soviet method ☺ – Translator's Note).

Of course they didn't pay for tickets. I think there were only three thousand people at most, who walked through with tickets.

So my main goal was to attract people to the Olympic Stadium, and then move them to the new Donbass Arena, which was built near the old one. I was given the aim to increase average attendance. Of course aims were very ambitious. The goal for the 2007-2008 season was the average attendance of 23,000 (Capacity - 25,600). In that moment of time it was rare to see even 21,000.



In the second season, when we stopped paying for transport and began to take money for a tickets the number of average attendance decreased but still was fairly decent - 18,000. I think for an old, uncomfortable stadium it was good.

Now, in the Donbass Arena, the average attendance (including Eurocups) is 37,000. At the same time we always suppressed the special-offers like “Come to the football - get money” as Arsenal Kyiv did - they paid two or five grivens (12.8 Ukrainian Grivens is One Pound Sterling – Translator’s Note) to everyone who came to a match.

We didn’t have money to pay for transportation from the local region, so we moved the vector to the centre of the city. We tried to attract the general public, so-called “ticket-people”. Plus we worked with season ticket holders - people bought tickets, but came only to watch highly-rated matches - versus “Dinamo Kyiv”, “Dnepr” and “Metallist”. That was our main problem - when Shakhtar played with Barcelona, the stadium was breaking, when Shakhtar played with “Vorskla” - we had only 5,000.

About advertising campaigns of matches - our problem was how to get people to come to the stadium themselves. We made the advertising concept for each round (Half of the season – Translator’s Note). Firstly, we tried to start with patriotism and love for Shakhtar. We found out that it didn’t work very much - the mentality is different. That’s why we started with the rivals. For example, we had very successful campaigns, when we tried to attract people, basing on historical parallels. There were some good television commercials - we tried to make it cheaper.

### **The work with the fans from the local region.**

- We didn’t have the money to spend on fans from the local region. So that’s why we gradually reduced subsidies to get people to pay. We expected that when you go to football, with subsidies or not, you will get used to it.

And then you’ll get that habit to continue to develop, without our financial support. Visitors from the region made up a fairly large group of about about five thousand people. That has reduced to around three thousand. And it’s a decent result, because if we’d cut off subsidies at once, it would probably be down to five hundred people.

### **The work with schools**

- Global project, more social, I guess. What is it? We have chosen a certain number of schools, about 135, held talks with them - through the Department of Education and themselves. Developed methodical materials about the history of Shakhtar FC and about rules of the game to kids.

Teachers became leaders of school fan groups. We paid for the buses for such fan-groups because the children cannot come to the stadium alone, he should either go with a parent or with a teachers (guides). Naturally, teachers were paid some sort of salary, not very big. Frankly, the work involved in keeping 30-50 children behaving in football is very heavy, very. We had children from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> (ex-USSR countries have 11 grades in school, not 12 – Translator’s Note), but most of them were between the age of 11-14: parents of too young children didn’t allow them to go and older ones may have had other interests.

We also conducted The Shakhtar Cup - football championship among all schools of Donetsk and its region. The creator of this project is Rinat Akhmetov (The chairman (owner) of Shakhtar FC – Translator’s Note) himself. Age of participants 9-11 years old. Firstly, it’s championship in the region and different areas of the city, then the winners meet each other and the Final in May - just like Shakhtar’s season.

In addition, we made a lot of various activities, quizzes, press-conferences for children. Our football players were always happy with that sort of stuff. Under “Donbass-Arena” the project transformed a bit. For the first time children have started to pay us money. Yes, we still pay for their transport, but now they pay for season tickets. When I suggested that for the first time no one believed that it’s possible. Now we see that it is.

There are some very interesting stats - we’ve done research on our school graduates, and we found out that 75% of them are either bought tickets or go to the football on a regular basis. This is a very good number for the target project. Because in this sort of thing 30% is very good, 50% - amazing. So the school project - is a great investment to the future for a club.



### **On the participation of players**

There was a tradition on September the 1<sup>st</sup> (The beginning of the educational year in ex-USSR countries – Translator's Note), that the players or the coach came to the former Rinat Akhmetov’s school. We chose five schools

where we had the most active fan clubs, and at the same time a player or two went there and gave a master class somewhere. Or in another place a player picked up a kid to his shoulder, and made a circle with him jingling a bell. It made a big influence - two years have passed, but the kids still remember. Honestly, players were ecstatic themselves. Plus, I agreed with the television - in some cases even pay them to be in the evening news. The resonance was very good.

The club made a press conference for children. Children from school fan clubs, the most active, asking questions. Just like adults, in the conference room. Then we chose the best questions, and played futsal with them.

Master classes, of course. The best fan-groups played with the players of Shakhtar FC. This is, of course, amazing for kids, a win-win situation.

### **On the Internet activity**

My experience says: as soon as people notice that club wants to earn some money, people perceive that very bad. Our people are used to freebies. On the other hand, for the management it’s fine if the Donbass Arena wants to make money. That’s why it was decided to divide the sites and to remove commercial references from Official Shakhtar’s site. This strategy was adapted from Barcelona:

- [www.shakhtar.com](http://www.shakhtar.com) - all news of the team;
- [fan.shahtar.com](http://fan.shahtar.com) - interactive: new forum, project themes, specialization, internet-shop;
- [www.donbass-arena.com](http://www.donbass-arena.com) - about activities and commercial services.

Of course all these sites are connected, and the generator of traffic is at [www.shakhtar.com](http://www.shakhtar.com)

Why have I written this? Because I think that the fans are the most valuable thing for the club. The club should kiss the fan's ass. Whatever it may be - give him or her what he wants. Whether he's rich or poor. He has his little bit of money to spend on you.

Of course, individual contact is very important. Our season ticket holders get congratulations

on their birthday, discounts, special promotions, information about transferring games and so on. For our VIP's birthday our courier came to them with a bottle of champagne as a gift from the club.

- **Translator: Uveq, Latic from Aktobe, Kazakhstan :)**  
**Specially for The Mudhutter and Wigan Athletic Football Club**



**Shakhtar.com**

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON THAT MOST USEFUL COMMODITY... 'SUCCESS'

Just what is that many Wiganers, football pundits and Dave Whelan in particular, don't understand about Wigan Athletic FC and their support?

Simply this...Latics are NO different from any other football club, indeed any sporting organization come to that. Sports fans thrive on success. It is their oxygen. What makes clubs successful is...success. It really is as simple as that. A simplistic theory lacking substance? Let me elaborate...

*"Seven teams in Wigan, there's really seven teams in Wigan"*

Wigan has only had top flight football team for the past 5 years or so. Yes we had relative success clambering up the leagues on the back of Uncle Dave's financial clout and some astute coaching and player purchases. But apart from two lower league cup wins, (winning the Freight Rover Trophy and Sherpa Vans Trophy,) thoroughly enjoyable and exciting at the time as they were, but hardly likely to make a Wigan youngster throw away his red scarf for a blue one and have *"I Love Latics"* tattooed on his backside.

Latics are competing with top level, internationally recognised, long standing success. A level of success that has become a cultural norm, and in the case of some clubs, institutionally expected, simply a state of being. Just take a look at the embittered face of Liverpool or Wigan Rugby fans over the past few seasons when such success has not been forthcoming, as examples.

For support, Wigan Athletic essentially compete for success with...

Wigan Rugby,  
Man City,  
Man Utd,  
Liverpool,  
Everton,  
Bolton,

(And very often sadly, themselves. Have you ever tried to phone the club shop and speak to the manager?)

Why did Wiganers turn out in such great numbers for FA Cup games as a non-league club? Answer = we were underdogs and we were successful. Why did we get bigger gates in the



first EPL season? Because just getting there was a massive success in its' own right. Success is relative and when, like Latics at the present, you can't get any higher, no more successful in terms of promotions, the fickle fans fall away.

Of course many of us recognise that for a small town club like Wigan merely surviving in the EPL is 'success' but few

of the floating Wigan sporting fans see it that way. In their eyes they pose the question *'what have you won?'* This crude measure of success viewed in light of contemporary English football utterly ignores the fact that the same question can be asked of the vast majority of all other teams in the EPL. Only four clubs have ever won the EPL since its inception for Heaven's sake!

But, I hear you ask, Sunderland, Newcastle Utd, Everton, Derby County, Leeds Utd and many other clubs have lacked recent success yet retained the loyalty of their fans so why can't Wigan? I submit that are three main reasons to explain this.

**One** is that the likes of Newcastle, Sunderland, Derby, Ipswich etc are one city clubs. They don't have rugby clubs in the city nor nearby football clubs competing for fans loyalties. They also have much higher populations to draw from. Wigan as a town boasts a population of just 81,000. The population of Newcastle upon Tyne is 260,000, (and Gateshead, on the opposite bank of the Tyne, 190,000) whilst Leeds has 715,000 hardy souls within its boundaries.

**Secondly**, such clubs have a history of success no matter how far back you have to go (in the case of Newcastle, a long way back.) Winning league titles and cup competitions, forays into Europe, open top bus parades and all the trappings of success, creates a firm bond between the club and the local population for generations to come.

But it wasn't always this way. Liverpool struggled with gates of 12,000 until the Shankly era. I have personally been at a half empty St James's Park watching a poor team get relegated in front of 16,000 disgruntled fans. Leeds are a classic example of fickle fans. Until Don Revie rejuvenated the club they too had average attendances of less than 14,000 as they languished in League Division two.

But all the above clubs have enjoyed fabulous success at some point in their recent history thereby establishing themselves as serious players in both the cosy world of English football, and more significantly, within their local communities, thus creating their much vaunted, 'fan base.'

**Thirdly** Wigan Athletic have made the move into the big time at a time of cultural instant gratification. Granpa's stories of *"going down to that there Wembley when I wur a lad"* mean nothing to the average sports fan of today. Seen a local team in a Wembley final/ win the league? *"Easy, Wigan rugby, Man Utd, Liverpool, I even saw Bolton in Europe. I can take my pick."*

(And don't get me started on Sky Sports saturation coverage of football as a factor.)

*I recently met a Wigan 'fan' at a home game who, without any visible sense of irony, admitted that he had watched Latics every home game and some away games too, for the past ten years or so. He went on to say that now they were 'rubbish' and he only goes to a few games per season. 'Rubbish'... we are surviving in arguably the best league in the world, but in his eyes we were still 'rubbish.' I submit that he is the archetypal Wiganer. Nor is such blinkered vision new, many Latics fans of a certain vintage will recall the ever present shouts from Springfield Park of ...'bloody rubbish Latics, am gewin't rugby next wik.'*

Latics simply have not made the transition from plucky upstarts to serious competition winners. Indeed to most Premier League fans and media merchants we have outlived our usefulness. For them it is time to move on to Burnley and now Blackpool for the patronising accolades surrounding everyone's favourite underdogs.

Wigan Athletic have actually become a serious pain in the arse for the EPL and their simpering media acolytes. With TV and newspaper pictures of empty seats, a team that only rarely causes upsets and few scandals worth investigating, Wigan Athletic are not the kind of club the media want. The cheeky little beggars are not even facing bankruptcy, how

dare they be relatively solvent whilst Portsmouth, Leeds, Man Utd, Liverpool and many others face financial ruin.

The truth is however that until we progress from annual relegation fodder to mid table security with the odd cup run or two, a Wembley final would be nice, (the Millenium Stadium seems a dim and distant memory now,) I suspect our attendances will remain low.

So Mr Whelan, if you really crave success to feed your clearly massive ego, give the Wigan public a team that is successful. They don't need to be entertaining, though that would be nice, just successful and Wiganers will turn out in their thousands as they have proved in the past, (what was our average league attendance in the first EPL season again?)

Such fans are not and never will be 'true' blue Latics fans but they are fans of success and who knows, some of them may just graduate to become true Latics fans of the future.

• Ken Barlow



*"Our Mudhutters Chinese agent improving UK - China relations whilst undertaking a review of defensive walls."*

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**Andrew Vaughan's new book 'Faded Lois Dreams' set in 1980's London hits the streets shortly. We are delighted to reproduce an extract from it below**

**Keep checking [www.mudhutsmedia.co.uk](http://www.mudhutsmedia.co.uk) for details of the launch and where to buy**

## **To Cut a Long Story Short...**

Spandau Ballet are our house band. House band in the fact that they are often being played in our house. Fair enough they are alright. But they get played a lot as the lads know them

from school. In fact Dell and Anwar roadied for them from the beginning. When they were The Cut, The Makers and Gentry. I think they did the odd Spandau gig and that was it. All that Blitz, Billies and Le Beat Route was not for these lads. Dell's a strictly donkey

jacket, Fred Perry and Doc Martens type of guy whilst Anwar's in touch with his rock side. Leather jacket and trousers. Hey, and there's nothing wrong with that.

They both walked - just wasn't for them. Frills and frolics. Poseurs and poetry. Not sure it's really for the lads in Spandau Ballet but they're earning a crust or two.

Dame Alice Owens boys in the main. From the rough streets of Islington. Another mate of ours played bass with them but wasn't deemed pretty enough and brother Martin was brought

in. Ade goes the match with their manager and all that and now they're bleeding pop stars.

Remember the day the first single - *To Cut a Long Story Short* - came out. Anwar got it and played it constantly and it weren't too bad. Nice bit of electro-pop. Decent tune and hey good luck to 'em. Latest in a long line of London boys made good. From the estates and back streets of N1. Bit happening in this post-punk popstastic time. ABC and their glitter suits and Trevor Horn production and the beauty that is *The Lexicon of Love*.

*Tears Are Not Enough, Poison Arrow, The Look of Love* and the beautiful *All of My Heart*. Love the way Martin Fry sings:

*"But I hope and I pray  
That maybe someday  
You'll walk in the room with my heart  
Add and subtract  
But as a matter of fact  
Now that you're gone I still want you back  
Remembering  
Surrendering  
The kindest cut's the cruelest part  
All of my heart."*

Love the way his voice drops. Stylised as fuck but with that lush orchestration it is perfect pop. Whatever the fuck that might be and the cover of the album is to kill for. With the suit and the girl and the gun and only a year or so back we used to wear suits like that. From Flip on Curtain Road . Or Long Acre . Long Acre was the shop for the tourists but the lads and girls in the know would step east of Old Street to there warehouse for a slice of Americana . A suit with a zoot or a flying jacket with vintage jeans. And sweats and madras. Shoes and spats. Pendleton work shirts and lumberjack coats. Was at Goodison in 1980 for the FA Cup. Lumber



coat, Paul Smith baggy jeans and loafers. Some kids come up to me: "Like your clothes.

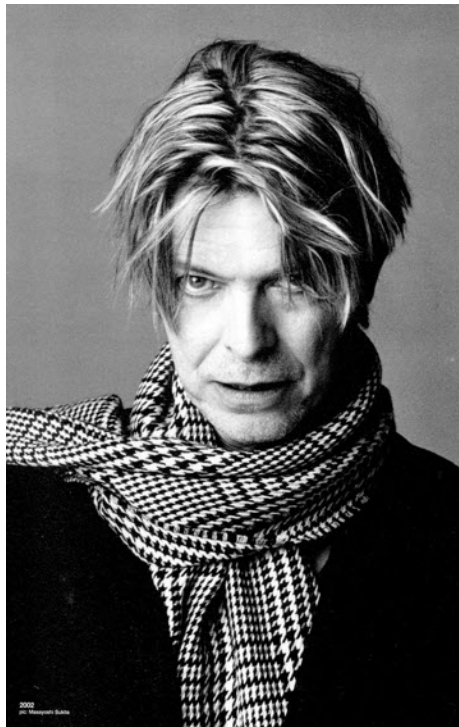
"Don't like your face."

And did that hand in pocket go for/pretend to go for the blade. As ever I'm out of sync and I freeze, then smile, the swing out and a couple of older Wigan chaps intervene and the kids are off. Different worlds. Different strokes for different folks and I liked those clothes from Flip and then that one in Sicillian Avenue in Holborn. Blax or something. Searching back then for clothes. Searching for style - whatever that might be. And Fry's got the suit and he's got some sort of style and we might get the suits out again for when Kid Creole and his Coconuts come to town. Down the Strand and the Lyceum and "Annie, I'm not your Daddy" and dancing to the Latin beats.

For this is London town where kids from the estates become pop stars and spotty Yorkshire boys like Martin Fry can make girls swoon and the orchestra of life gets your feet dancing and the sounds of Spandau Ballet seep from under bedsit doors...

### **It's all a load of Baalocks**

Bowie's on the box tonight. A play by Brecht called Baal. It's bollocks. I give it twenty minutes and put *Station to Station* on the turntable. Remembering, surrendering the kindest cut and all that... Because despite shit films



and worse television plays Bowie matters. Always has done. Always will.

Geoff Brad's front room when we were kids. *Hunky Dory*, *Ziggy*, *Aladdin Sane* and onwards. Not always upwards but it was never anything other than stylish. Never uncool. Always looked up to him. Sat in Chris Ball's barber's shop getting a Bowie crop. Stars on our faces and glitter on our cheeks. With platform soles and platinum souls. To the school disco. Love in our hearts. Getting to understand girls, trying to understand girls. The girls liked Bowie. The boys liked Bowie. Even the heavy metal lot admired Mick Ronson's guitar work and of course the soulies admired *Young Americans*.

Then when we were punks *Low* blew us away. But before that *Station to Station* made us fall in love. And tonight *Station to Station* reminds me of those early days falling in love. Kids. That's all we were. Not grown men like now. Early nineteen seventy-six. Seventeen and in love with Anne and Christine, Cathy and Jo. Serious lads with seriously grown-out haircuts waiting for something to happen. Punk on the horizon but we are not to know that. Northern enclave and waiting for Bowie to make his next move. But he's fucked up on cocaine. High in the Hollywood Hills.

Yet somehow, somehow he gives us *Station to Station*. A slab of pop with Golden Years and five other sensational tracks. One - *Wild is the Wind* - was a hit for Johnny Mathis! Sounds like a James Bond theme to me One for Connery. Connery playing golf in his Slazzy jumper and fucking glorious blonde girls that end up dead and covered in gold paint. Bowie crooning *Wild is the Wind*. Or announcing: "The return of the Thin White Duke throwing darts in lovers' eyes." Getting funkier and funkier and the funk begats the electronic-German sound via *TVC15* and the

beautiful *Word on a Wing*. This is Bowie off his fucking head, trying to make peace with God. Or sense of God. However when I was seventeen this was a song for the girls. A song for my latest girlfriend because the line: "In this age of grand illusion you walked into my life out of my dreams" is beautiful. Truly beautiful...

Of course it wasn't written to woo a young grammar school girl. It's Bowie off his fucking tits looking for some answer. But back then it was about serenading Jo. Bowie being omnipresent in my life. In our lives. Now six years later I see things differently. Know that he was fucked up and fucking about with fascism but boy could he sing and on *Station to Station* he sang like an angel. Sang like the wind.

Still he matters. Saw The Associates down the ICA the other year and those kids are Bowie freaks like us and now they are in the charts with Party Fears Two. Spandau , Joy Division, Magazine and the rest. And those kids down the Electric Ballroom, flicking their hair and the boys in the West Stand at Highbury all

influenced by the Thin White Duke. Or Ziggy or that lad that was insane. Whether they know it or not.

Then when *Station to Station* ends I play Pin-Ups and I'm back in 1973. Rushing from school to town on the day it was released. Staring at the cover. Him and Twig the Wonderkid. Thinking of Wendy "with her long blonde hair and her eyes of blue" while sat in Muswell Hill. The home of Ray Davies and The Kinks as Bowie sings Davies' song *Where Have All the Good Times Gone*. Life goes on. Keeps moving. Wigan to London N10. Still listening to Bowie . Still trying to do the hair the same Quoting Bowie lyrics to impressionable girls Waiting for his next move but most of all remembering, surrendering... and of course Martin Fry and ABC owe everything to Bowie .

Mind you that Baal tonight was fucking shit...

## • Faded Lois Blues By Andrew Vaughan

### **Follically challenged**

I'm follically challenged,  
but I couldn't give a shit.  
When I look into the mirror,  
what looks back at me is fit.

Crows feet they enhance my charm,  
and fit this face of beauty  
Define these dark, deep stunning eyes,  
to be striking is my duty.

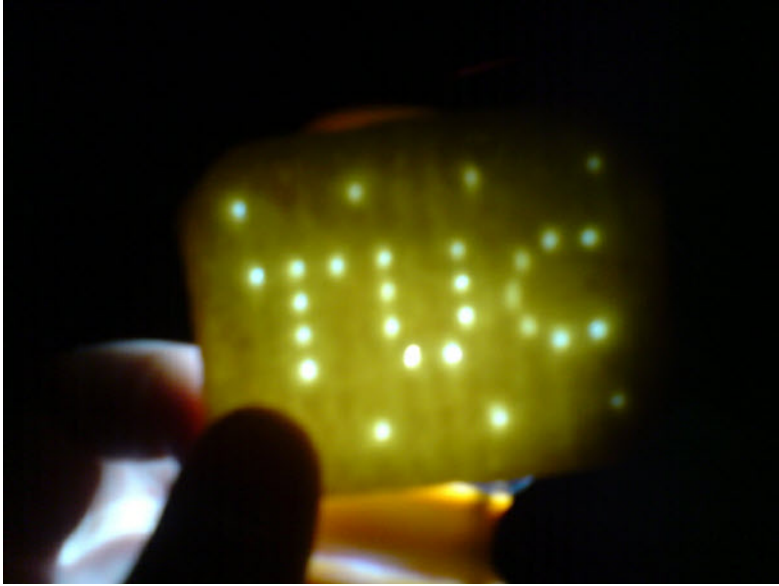
So tell me what the problem is,  
that I have several chins?  
When just above my first one,  
lies the cheekiest of grins.

My age is not my challenge,  
can't you see I'm wrote for luck.  
So take me as you find me,  
because I don't give a fuck.

### • Dirrrrtyoldman



## Nipped and Tucked



A few weeks back, I was strolling round Tesco, deciding what to get for my dinners at work. After months of different tins of soup and shit salads, I needed a change, so I was in the “Biscuits and Crackers” aisle, to see if anything tickled me fancy.

About halfway down, I stumbled across the packets of Tuc, next to the horrific sounding Jacobs Rosemary and Sea Salt Thins. Now, I like rosemary, as it happens, but in a biscuit? And with Salt? What happened to plain old cream crackers, where you either needed a gallon of water or have a serious issue with drool, to get even one dry one down. It’s rumoured that the bloke who invented Bounty (the kitchen roll, not the coconut chocolate bar) did so after accidentally dropping a cream cracker in a full bath and seeing it absorb 85% of the water.

Anyway, I pick up a packet of Tucs, because I haven’t had one in donkeys years. Tucs are kind of thing you have while you wait for your tea, usually smothered in Lurpak or, if you live in WN5, Stork. Once I was home, I thought “fuckit, I’ll have a couple”. 20 minutes later, I’ve gone through a full packet of Tucs, a load of Lurpak,

some Philadelphia, some Ardennes pate, a slab of McLelland’s extra strong, some seedless Raspberry jam and a bit of sweet chili sauce. The last one, admittedly, was an experiment that didn’t work. It didn’t quite live up to the infusion of salty and sweet that I’d imagined it would. It was, in a word, rank.

What all this did though, is light a fire in me regarding crackers and what you can put on them. This is what I’ve discovered...

### JACOBS

Jacobs don’t make a single decent cracker. The original cream crackers are, apparently, the fastest selling cracker in the UK. I can only imagine that they sit for months in cupboards the length and breadth of the country, next to the tin of Golden Syrup which is stuck to the shelf despite never actually having been opened.

They do a range flavoured crackers of various consistencies, all of them firmly somewhere in the culinary category of “Underlay”. Is this simply a case of people buying what they’re expected to buy? It’s like VHS all over again.

The one saving grace of Jacobs are Cheddars, which are still as ace as I remember they were when I was a kid. Sadly, it’s not enough to convince me that Jacobs, as a cracker maker, cut it any more.

### Ryvita

Despite bad memories about Ryvita, I bought some anyway. In the years since I last had them, they haven’t improved any. They are still the dry, bland, dog shit-coloured disasters they always were. The same goes for the Ryvita Minis. Well, actually the minis are slightly better, in that they have flavour for the length of time it takes to actually bite through them. After that, we’re back to a bland, fibrous mess.

In short, stay away from Ryvita, unless you have teeth like the fella in the Bond films, or are Fern Britton.

### Ritz

Ritz are a fairly inoffensive cracker, but they are also unusable. They are about the size of a 5p piece, and hold less topping than a dead ice cream man. They're okay, I suppose, for eating straight from the box but, if I wanted to eat stuff like that, I'd buy crisps. Tasty but useless, is the verdict.

### Tuc

I come now, to the cracker I assumed was going to walk my tests. I'd already enjoyed my initial packet, and expected equal satisfaction from the one bought for the taste experiment. I wasn't disappointed. The only downside to Tucs is that a full packet leaves your tongue raw, sitting as they do in the salty section of the cracker aisle. Nevertheless, a cracker worthy of the title "Best cracker-as-a-substitute-for-soup-and-shit-salads (Lunch Category)"

Or they would have been, were it not for these little gems...

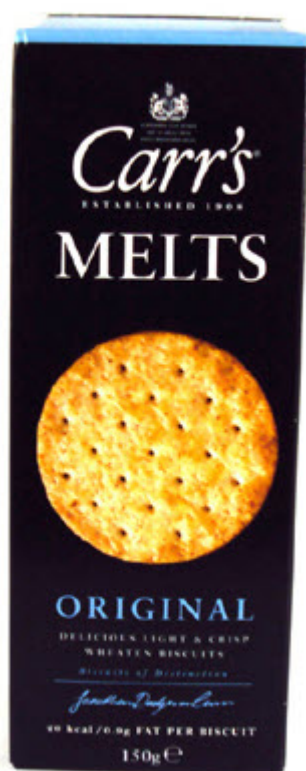
### Carrs

The very fact that Carrs make a cracker called "Melts", makes them worthy of inclusion in our test. That they live up to the name, and then some, comes as both a shock and a pleasure.

Don't get me wrong, Carrs also drop the ball with some of their range. They do a Ritz-sized thing which is as pointless as the original, and their Cheese Melts are just, well, too cheesy. You can't actually taste anything you put on them. You might taste Tramp's Piss, but that's about it.

However, range shortcomings aside, the Carrs Original Melts truly earn the prize as the king of the crackers. They are tasty and crispy, without being dry, and perform equally as well with jam, pate or soft cheese. A worthy winner in a category desperately in need of inspiration.

#### • **Bob the Biscuit**



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# Talking shite

with Will  
Philkinson

England's failed World Cup 2018 puffball bid didn't surprise me in the least. I got told privately that a) Sepp Blatter was worried about being outshone by the 2013 Rugby League World Cup and b) behind the scenes politics weren't adhered to. These events don't just happen you know. My lifelong companion Maurice was heavily involved in bringing the 2013 tournament to these shores, spending hours schmoozing officials the length of Platt Bridge before the final announcement was made and the good people of Batley rejoiced as one. Rumours that a year's supply of Uncle Joe's mintballs, a 4 pack of Thwaites' Mild and a luxury hamper from Twiss' bakery were distributed to both delegates can be neither confirmed nor denied at this point. That's politics.

Other FIFA news. In their laughably transparent campaign to knock Rugby League off its perch as the world game, they posted photoshopped pictures all over the internet of Joel Monaghan having peanut butter licked off his genitals by a dog. In the interests of journalism, I obtained these pictures and studied them for hours over several days before concluding they are fake. I know Joel personally and can state categorically that he's a good 2 inches longer, has a slimmer girth, is uncut & more thickly veined towards the head of the shaft. Moreover, he's allergic to peanuts. As is his pet Labrador.

How proud I was recently to watch Coronation Street's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. I am a huge fan and count several cast members as personal friends. I visit the same health club as Norris Cole and remember Sean the barman when he was fluffing in Mantos and cleaning for John Mundy and Fred the weatherman on the side. One of my fondest memories though is the time I visited my lifelong chum Fred Elliot who gave me a guided tour of the set. After visits to the Kabin & the Rovers, he asked me what my dearest wish was. I confided I'd long dreamt of being taken up the ginnel down Inkerman Street so he finished his hotpot and he duly obliged. I say, he duly obliged!!!!

It was the Warriors Christmas party last week and was a real family affair. Kids were invited and as is customary, one of the players donned the Santa suit while the rest helped make seasonal goodies. Feka was the obvious choice for Santa but the suit was 8 sizes too small so Stuart Fielden took over due to his expertise with beards and Sam Tomkins was his elf. The party was soon in full swing. Tomkins was dishing out the presents with Fielden in a rather haphazard fashion whilst Pat Richards and Tommy Leaulia were busy baking a traditional cake, albeit on their haunches as all the chairs were taken. Leaulai soon got tired though & decided to lay down to take a nap. To teach him a lesson, and stop his snoring, Richards decided to play a trick on him but was having trouble with a rusted up piping bag. However, I still say the sight of an Australian test winger squatting over the New Zealand scrum half, straining to squeeze out a big thick brown Yule log into his mouth whilst in the background the Great Britain half back showers eight excited young boys with the contents of Stuart Fielden's bulging sack is one that will stay with me forever.

**Did you know?** Former Wigan coach Maurice Bamford wrote the lyrics for Boney M's Christmas hit "Mary's Boy Child" and continues to donate all royalties to charity.

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