

## THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUBS

Featuring a review of the 1978-79 League season, and full details of each of the 92 clubs in the Football League.

Officials, statistics, ground information, full 1978-79 League record, career details of the players.

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## Review of the Season

Just before the League season ended, a season in which foreign footballers flocked in, transfer fees shot up and snow heaped down, someone worked out that if Liverpool never won another League match and Arsenal never failed to win another League match – it would still be three full seasons before Liverpool's place in history could be usurped.

It may have been a bizarre statistic, but it served well to underline the awe felt about Bob Paisley's team as they took the title to Anfield for a record eleventh year (Arsenal, on eight, are their nearest challengers). The scale of Liverpool's achievement was indeed so massive as to encourage odd perspectives like that.

Not only did they win, they won superbly. They smashed the all-time record of 67 points, they set an all-time record for conceding fewest goals (16 in 42 matches) and just in case there were any out-dated fools still muttering 'Liverpool, boring' they picked up a £50,000 newspaper prize for hitting a target of 84 goals. Good sides, even *very* good sides, were hit for three, four and occasionally six, as Liverpool cut loose in a manner they have never quite equalled before. Kenny Dalglish, the Scot bought the previous season to replace the irreplaceable Kevin Keegan, was a towering influence in this.

After an early falter (at the time they lost in Europe to Nottingham Forest) Liverpool seemed always bound to do it. So the interest was principally in who would chase them hardest. Curiously it wasn't the expected Forest (whose results if not their play had looked a shade cramped). Nor their dour neighbours Everton, but West Bromwich Albion. And most were prepared to applaud them all along the way.

Albion had got a lot of it right: they had a bright young manager, Ron Atkinson, who in turn had given chances and encouragement to a trio of black players, and Albion's 'multi-coloured skill shop' was admired far beyond the Midlands (as far as Peking in fact, for in 1978 Albion had toured to China) and had the weather not unbalanced their rhythm from New Year – when they stood alongside Liverpool on equal points – Albion might have got closer. Liverpool are surely the team of the decade – they can afford to let Albion be known as the team of the season.

At the bottom, Birmingham were in trouble from the start. Their star Trevor Francis came back late from America and was then soon hurt. Birmingham were doomed before he recovered and was sold to Forest as the country's first million pound player. The experimental deal with North America had not served Birmingham well – nor had their initiative with South America. Involved with the import of Argentinians that gave the season so splendid a new flavour, Birmingham's choice – Alberto Tarantini – settled less well than the others; perhaps because he never played in his World Cup role at left back. Down with Birmingham went London strugglers QPR and Chelsea: both took new managers with them. Danny Blanchflower's lyrical optimism gave Chelsea heart but not defensive back; Tommy Docherty's grit was purchased to start rubbing the edges off a new side being built for the Second Division.

The way back has been trail-blazed by London neighbours Crystal Palace who climbed back on the last day of perhaps the most enthralling promotion battle within memory. Up with them went Brighton and Stoke – and few pretend it is coincidence that what these clubs have so much in common is a young manager (respectively Terry Venables, Alan Mullery and Alan Durban) full of drive, deft with words, and marked by a clear missionary zeal. Their impact on a game increasingly gripped by a real managerial revolution may become enormous.

But more than these three were involved in an epic struggle. West Ham lost their England man Trevor Brooking for the 10 final matches and thus their chance – even though they lashed out late with £500,000 to make Phil Parkes the most expensive goalkeeper in history. Sunderland can trace their downfall to that daft day they lost at home to bottom team Blackburn.

And losing at home to Blackburn committed Sheffield United to a first season in Division Three, where they will join their neighbours Wednesday to render a great city with two major grounds without a side among the country's top 42 teams. Irony here is that United's manager Harry Haslam, the moving force behind the importation of foreign stars (he bought the Argentinian Alex Sabella for himself) should gain so little from his initiative.

Up from the Third came Watford, who led by a street and then barely made it in a highly dramatic sort of season perhaps best appreciated by their chairman Elton John;

with them marched the best footballing side Shrewsbury (moulded by a succession of these same young managerial lions, Durban, Richie Barker, Graham Turner) and Swansea. The Swansea success was appreciated widely . . . for the continuation it gave to the splendid careers of the five ex-Liverpool men gathered around player-manager John Toshack; and the effect it had on a revival of 'Welshness' in the city's soccer. Four Swansea men were included in current Wales teams.

Up from the Fourth came the big, strong Reading side and a Grimsby team whose bright football was given edge by Joe Waters' shooting. With them strode Barnsley, carried on a wave of support that included a 21,000 crowd for their promotion night. Next season Barnsley will meet both Sheffield teams and Rotherham in what is already being nick-named 'Third Division - Yorks' and when they rope in Chesterfield and Mansfield, bristling local derbies will be epidemic.

No one, finally was thrown out. Possibly the voting reflected the feeling that only the very rich and powerful had ridden through the worst footballing weather in history untouched: Halifax, for example, could point out that they had not a single home match between mid-December and March. If for them 1978-79 was all about enduring, we luckier lookers-on will surely best remember Anfield and Osvaldo Ardiles, West Bromwich and Viv Anderson, a League year of players and places in which great clubs like Arsenal and the two at Manchester failed to shine . . . and yet were scarcely missed.

BRIAN JAMES

## Introduction to Club Section

Because of the disruption of the original fixture list for 1978-79 and subsequent postponement of many matches which elongated the season, we have taken advantage of the lateness thus produced to provide information on the club section which embraces another month.

In the past our final 'copy date' had been roughly 1 June but in this edition there has been an extension to allow for major transfers. Even so, not all the changes which would normally have affected new colours and finalisation of transfers during this period will be found on the following pages, since 'page 4' refers specifically to the retained lists at the end of the 1978-79 season. But details of players subsequently transferred will appear under their former clubs.

But basically the formula is as before with four pages devoted to each of the 92 League clubs. On 'page 1' there is a potted history of the club since it entered the League, as well as a list of the achievements attained during its existence.

As to 'pages 2 and 3' of this section, these appear as they have done so in recent years. On 'page 4' despite the continuing problem of reproducing a vast amount of material in a small space, all contract players who were attached to the club at the end of the 1978-79 season plus those who were signed up to the end of May 1979 are featured with their individual details.

In addition any player who was either on non-contract or associated schoolboy forms and actually played in the League side is also noted separately.

Where clubs have retained the League registration of a player who has not been on the playing strength for various reasons, these have been listed at the foot of the page. Details of their playing records can be found in earlier editions, of course.

Similarly with a few clubs, specific players who did not appear in the League side in 1978-79 might have been included without details of their previous history but again last year's edition will have covered their careers.

As far as height and weight are concerned, as we have stated previously, the players report for training after our press deadline and this information may be missing for certain comparative newcomers to the ranks of the Football League.

We would like to thank the club secretaries who were kind enough to inform us of changes affecting their club and also those who again allowed us to reproduce their badges. These badges add a touch of individuality to the pages and provide a welcome presentation.

JACK ROLLIN

## DIVISION ONE LEAGUE POSITION PROGRESS CHART

1978

1979

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May
	2	7	11	16	20	24	28	1	5
la	9	13	11	10	9	8	7	7	7
an C	6	5	7	12	10	10	8	10	10
	17	21	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
	20	14	18	16	17	15	18	19	19
	7	12	8	6	5	9	11	10	12
	16	18	20	20	21	21	20	20	20
C	2	3	3	4	3	7	10	8	8
	18	19	16	13	17	16	19	16	13
	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	14	17	15	18	13	14	15	16	16
	5	9	14	12	11	13	14	12	14
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
er C	15	10	7	4	10	7	5	5	6
er U	8	8	10	9	7	5	6	6	6
rough	13	16	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
un F	10	6	9	8	6	4	3	3	4
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nton	12	7	12	14	15	18	16	17	18
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	3	4	4	5	3	6	4	4	4
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