

## INTRODUCTION

The twelfth edition of *Rothmans Football Yearbook* includes the results of all World Cup qualifying matches played up to the time of publication. The full list of teams and goalscorers for the entire qualifying competition and the finals themselves will appear in the next edition.

In addition, there is full coverage of domestic football with line-ups, goalscorers and attendances of matches played in the Football League and Scottish League, as well as the League Cup, FA Cup, Scottish League Cup and Scottish Cup. Transfers affecting players being signed by Football League clubs are given, together with any transfer fee noted at the time. As there is no official figure for such moves, the fees quoted are estimated, and with the addition of levies, including VAT, they are merely a guide to the value of the players in question.

This year's edition also marks the return of the Milestones of soccer which appeared in early issues of *Rothmans Football Yearbook*. Accompanying this is a more concise Diary of main events covering the 1980-81 season.

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## EDITORIAL

The slump in League attendances of almost 2¼ millions during the 1980-81 season to a new post-war low of 21,907,569 is not due solely to the economic recession, which has certainly hit the game as badly as many another industry. Watching the game has become an expensive pastime, and in the scramble for that ever-elusive quality, success, the product, so often designed to achieve it, loses vital eye appeal. Thus, in seeking one and missing out on the other, clubs have added to the desertion of spectators.

Dwindling personal finances have led to many would-be spectators deciding to give football a miss, though not completely as there are attractive alternatives encompassing the sport. The retreat to the armchair and the extensive coverage available on television enables former devotees of the live audience to keep in touch. Indeed, the medium increasingly appears to have become a source of relatively cheap entertainment at the flick of a switch in inflationary times.

The fireside fan may still retain his interest in the game rather than take his viewing in the same detached and uncommitted way that he would watch any soap opera. But many of the genuine followers of the sport, especially those of an older generation, have tended to disappear from active participation at grounds for a variety of reasons. They have been driven away by modern annoyances, including hooliganism, obscene language, the spiralling cost of attending matches and the realisation that the game probably no longer represents the one they once knew.

Certainly it is true that people invariably remember the last result rather than the quality of the game it might have represented. But this failing allows the modern trend towards association with success to flourish whatever the quality. For there is evidence that the fan is being forced away by this pandering to the prize of success as a stimulus for a greater following.

And it is at a considerable cost to the game. In the 1955-56 season, for example, the top average attendance for a club in the First Division was 42,000; the lowest 20,000. In 1980-81, the best supported team had just over 45,000 while the lowest was just under 16,000. Moreover, there were eight First Division teams who failed to reach an average of 20,000. It could be argued that the gap between the winners and losers is widening to an alarming degree. Indeed, the structure of the game will not allow the luxury of simply following the winners, for no club can guarantee success. Only the fortunate few will enjoy that. But what they all can do, and should be ensuring, is that entertainment is provided.

It is a sickness of modern society that nobody wants to be seen to be associated with a losing team, but unless there are sufficient spectators prepared to show their loyalty to the unsuccessful clubs, the professional game will not exist in its present form. Naturally it is all too easy to blame the Football League, in its present size, for all the ills of the game. However, if the leagues were sliced to half their present number, the problems of winning and losing teams would remain the same.

It is frequently said that the Football League is the best in the world. It may be. What it certainly represents is the most competitive and longest-running, and it has continued to produce teams capable of winning honours outside this country. The 1980-81 season was no exception to this impressive record. Liverpool won the European Cup for the third time - in another tediously boring final - and Ipswich Town claimed the UEFA Cup. Though Liverpool also achieved the League Cup, a trophy which had previously eluded the Anfield sideboard, it was probably not looked upon as a vintage season on Merseyside, such has been the dominance they have provided in the First Division. The club also suffered at the turnstiles, with their lower-than-usual average of 37,547 reflecting the crippling effects of the recession in their area as much as anything else. Yet it was still the second-best figure in the Football League.

Ipswich were victims of the overcrowded fixture list, and in chasing a treble of League, FA Cup and UEFA Cup they might have failed in all three. In the First Division they sawed nervously in the closing stages as their apparently almost unassailable lead was shredded in a sequence which produced just one win in five games - this solitary success, incredibly enough, coming at Villa Park against the eventual champions. Indeed, Ipswich beat Villa three times, twice in the League and also in the FA Cup. They were also the only club in the Football League with as many as four players reaching double figures of goals scored.

Villa, not burdened by other commitments, kept within measurable striking distance and made few changes that were not affected by injury or the odd suspension. They had seven ever-present players, one who missed only two League games, and another absent

three times among only 14 players used. Even so the League Championship remained in doubt until their last fixture, at Highbury against Arsenal. However, there was something of an anti-climax about the proceedings when, on the same day, Ipswich – with a match in hand – were beaten at Middlesbrough. This made Villa's own defeat of academic interest.

Underlining the fierce competitiveness of the divisions, the other issues throughout the League remained unresolved until the last few vital games. Leicester City, despite the achievement of a rare double over Liverpool, were relegated along with Norwich City and Crystal Palace, who had languished for much of the term. Brighton and Hove Albion escaped the drop by winning their last four matches, one of them at Sunderland who themselves retrieved what appeared a desperate situation. They had to win at Liverpool and did so by the only goal of the game.

West Ham United were aristocratic in achieving their 13 points' lead at the top of the Second Division and finishing with a club record 66 points. The other two promotion places were less obvious, and Notts County and Swansea City finally achieved elevation at the expense of a handful of others, including Blackburn Rovers, Luton Town, Derby County and Grimsby Town. Chelsea, regarded as early contenders, scored in only three of their last 22 matches.

At the bottom of the Second Division the two Bristol clubs, who had been among the chief strugglers during the season, went down with Preston North End, while Cardiff City extricated themselves at the eleventh hour.

Yorkshire clubs dominated the challenge for the promotion places in Division Three, with Rotherham United and Barnsley succeeding, along with Charlton Athletic who arrested the late slide that threatened to end their hopes as it finally did those of Huddersfield Town. Rotherham set a new divisional record, conceding only 32 goals. One of the other hopefuls, Chesterfield, had had the earlier consolation of winning the last Anglo-Scottish Cup, the competition being replaced for 1981–82 by a pre-season cup for 32 clubs outside the First Division.

Probably the most dramatic end came at the foot of the Third Division, with Walsall winning at Sheffield United on the last day and United missing a penalty that would have saved them from accompanying Colchester United, Blackpool and Hull City into Division Four.

Southend United and record breakers Lincoln City, who let in a mere 25 goals, were consistent in the Fourth Division and not surprisingly finished well ahead of the rest of the field. In the eventual shake-out, Doncaster Rovers and Wimbledon progressed with them.

The oddest event of the season came near the depths of the division on 25 April in a bout of freak weather. Stockport County visited Bury but found that several snowbound players had been unable to reach the ground. Playing the entire first half with nine men they held Bury, and with a full side after the interval they actually won 1-0 – a result which helped them climb out of the re-election zone.

The other major domestic honour went to Tottenham Hotspur, who maintained their impressive record of six victories in six FA Cup finals. Their replayed success against Manchester City was a fitting climax to the 100th competition.

While the crowded domestic programme is of no real assistance to clubs aiming to achieve more than one honour, it does little to help the international teams either. The unique situation of two bodies often operating in a manner which, to an outsider, must seem to be at variance with the aims of the other, is one of the root causes. However many the problems of demarcation for the Football Association and the Football League, there will have to be a move to centralise interests wherever the affairs of the two overlap.

It may be argued that the performances of the England team in 1980–81 were largely unimpressive because of the stranglehold on players' time caused by the demands of the League system. But the Football League clubs cannot be made responsible for the material at their disposal. This continues to mirror the far from satisfactory situation which often has promising young players regimented into tactics designed to win competitions when they should be devoting their formative years to developing individual skills.

JACK ROLLIN

## ROTHMANS FOOTBALL AWARDS 1981

The following six special awards have been made by Rothmans to mark a worthwhile contribution to the game in season 1980–81.

**JOHN BOND.** When John Bond was persuaded to leave Norwich City for Maine Road, Manchester City were languishing so badly in the lower reaches of the First Division that salvation seemed an unlikely outcome, even under a new administration. Yet with the instilment of confidence and some judicious deals in the transfer market, he fashioned a side which proved itself not only capable of escaping danger but possessing the ability to reach the FA Cup final and provide a fitting finale to the 100th competition, even though City had to be content with the runners-up medals after the replay.

**ENFIELD.** Giant-killing has been one of the essential ingredients in the success of the FA Cup and the 100th competition proved to be no exception to this rule. Enfield emerged with traditionally excellent credentials, taking on Football League opposition and beating it in the process. Both Port Vale and Hereford United succumbed to the Berger Isthmian League side before Barnsley were faced in the fourth round. After battling to a draw at Oakwell, Enfield won a replay which was switched to White Hart Lane to accommodate a crowd of 35,244 – and defeat there brought no disgrace to the part-timers.

**TONY KELLOW.** Although he made his name as a prolific goalscorer outside the League with Falmouth Town, Tony Kellow has also established himself in the national competition in a few seasons. In 1980–81 he enjoyed his best campaign, finishing as the League's top marksman with 25 League goals plus another eight in cup games. After a couple of seasons with Blackpool he returned to his first League club, Exeter City, towards the end of 1979–80 and by the conclusion of last season had taken his overall total to 93 for his two clubs – an average of nearly one goal for every two matches.

**JIM McLEAN.** Dundee United's long-serving manager Jim McLean has established a reputation for both success and attractiveness – an almost elusive combination in the modern game. In 1980–81 United were able to retain the League Cup won the previous season, and they also reached the Scottish Cup final where they were beaten by Rangers in a replay. In the Premier Division Dundee United were freely acknowledged to be the team to catch the eye, often providing a challenge to Celtic, Rangers and Aberdeen – the dominating teams in recent years.

**MICK MILLS.** Ipswich Town owed much to captain Mick Mills during the 1980–81 season as they chased a treble of honours involving the League title, FA Cup and UEFA Cup. In the final reckoning they managed only the European prize, but it in no way diminished their gallant attempt. Throughout they owed much to the leadership of their captain, who acted as the interpreter on the field to the guidance of manager Bobby Robson. A full England international capable of playing either at full-back or in midfield, Mills has been a one-club man.

**BRYAN ROBSON.** The most consistent player to have emerged during the past year for the full England team is arguably Bryan Robson, of West Bromwich Albion, who has proved able to acquit himself either in midfield or defence and at any level of the game. A product of the fertile North-East, he has been with the Albion since his youth, and despite a nightmare season early in his development when he experienced the trauma of breaking his leg three times, he has graduated to become one of the most talented professionals in the Football League.