

SUPERSTAR

DAVID FAIRCLOUGH

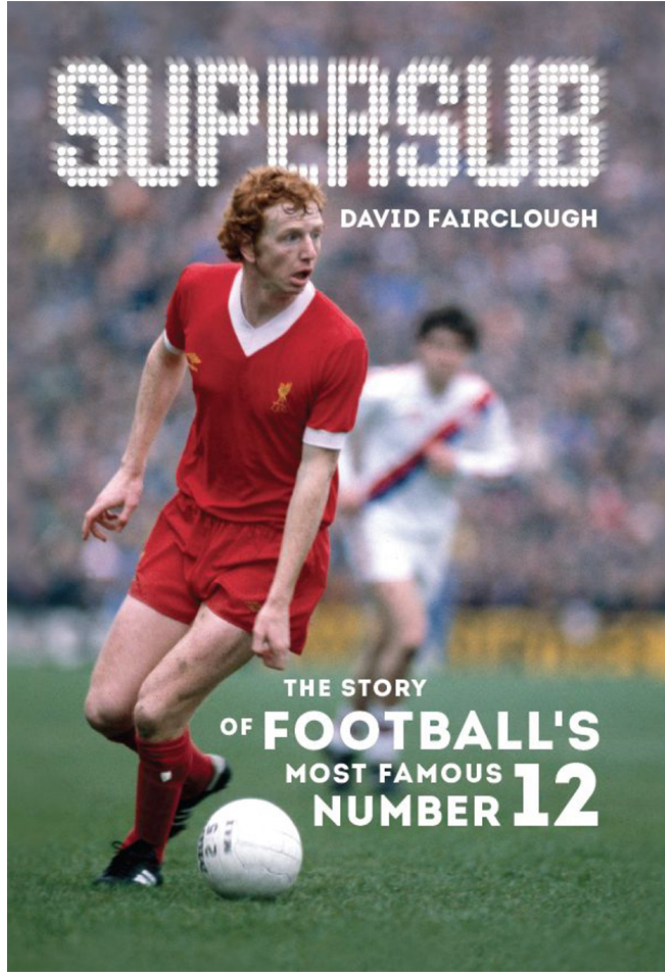


THE STORY
OF **FOOTBALL'S**
MOST FAMOUS
NUMBER 12

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DAVID FAIRCLOUGH
WITH MARK PLATT



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To my Mum and Dad, who have given me so much love and support.

And for Janet the love of my life and soulmate, who once asked, when I first discussed writing my autobiography, 'Who's interested anyway?'

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My childhood was one blessed with happiness and for that I have my parents to thank. Here we all are, including my baby sister Lesley, during one of our regular family holidays at Butlins. *(Personal collection)*

Showing off my skills at young age. I've been football-daft from as far back as I can remember and as long as I had a ball at my feet I was always happy. *(Personal collection)*

It was for my school team Major Lester that I first began to show promise. As captain of both the 'A' and 'B' teams I'm pictured here holding the ball at the centre of the front row. *(Personal collection)*

I first got to play at Anfield as a 14-year old in 1971. It was for Liverpool Boys against London and although a young Ray Wilkins inspired the visitors to victory it was a thrilling experience. *(Personal collection)*

Venturing into enemy territory. Myself and future Liverpool reserve team-mate Alex Cribble at Goodison Park for national penalty prize competition with Everton goalkeeper Gordon West. *(Mirrorpix)*

In training with the Liverpool Boys team at Penny Lane, the year we reached the semi-final of the ESFA Trophy. I'm second to the end, one of the smallest in the squad. *(Personal collection)*

The Liverpool youth team of 1974/75 – Back row (left to right): Brian Kettle, Max Thompson, John Higham, Joe James, Derek McClatchey, Jon Laisby, me, Mick Branch. Front row (left to right) Chris Tansey, Colin Williamson, Tommy Tynan, Kevin Kewley, Jimmy Case, Jeff Ainsworth. *(Getty)*

The Liverpoolian 'Likely Lads': taking a walk in the shadow of the Kop with fellow Anfield hopefuls Max Thompson and Brian Kettle during the autumn of 1975. *(Personal collection)*

The press attention that greeted my first team breakthrough was a real eye-opener but the people around me made sure I never forgot my roots, including the kids in Cantril Farm. *(Personal collection)*

Casually stroking home the first of my 55 goals for Liverpool. It came against Real Sociedad in a UEFA Cup tie at Anfield in November 1975. I'd made my senior debut just four days before. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

Derby debut delight: Grand National morning 1976 and I come off the bench to score a dramatic last-minute winner versus Everton. *(Personal collection)*

'We Are The Champions', the celebrations that followed our title-clinching victory at Molineux in 1976 are up there with the best I ever experienced. *(Getty)*

At just 19 years of age I got my hands on the UEFA Cup, a competition that was perhaps even tougher to win than the European Cup back in the day. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

Bringing home the silver in the spring of 1976. What a way to end my first season as a senior player. *(Adrian Killen)*

The moment that defined my career. Scoring the decisive goal in the 1977 European Cup quarter-final against St Etienne. I've never been allowed to forget this one and nor would I want to. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

Missing out on the 1977 FA Cup final remains the biggest disappointment of my career. I received this letter a few days later. If only Bob Paisley would have thought the same. *(Personal collection)*

Three months later I did get to play against Manchester United at Wembley. It was my first game beneath the twin towers and it ended in a goalless draw, meaning we shared the Charity Shield. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

A proud moment as I celebrate scoring a goal for the England 'B' team against West Germany in a snowy Augsburg, February 1978. *(Personal collection)*

The Anfield dug-out seemed like a second home for me at times. This picture was taken during the European Cup tie against Benfica. To my right is Liverpool's record appearance holder Ian Callaghan, to my left the Boot Room brains trust. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

A banner at the 1978 League Cup Final against Nottingham Forest asks the prevailing question of the day. *(Colorsport)*

'We hate Nottingham Forest...' so sang the Liverpool supporters and this game, a frustrating goalless draw in the 1978 League Cup final, was one of the reasons why. For a three-year spell Cloughie's men were our bogey side. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

10 May 1978. In action at the European Cup final at Wembley. After missing out on the glory of Rome the previous season I savoured every moment of this occasion. *(Colorsport)*

King of Europe: celebrating with Sammy Lee on the train back to Liverpool the day after beating Bruges. Feelings in football don't get much better than becoming a European champion with your hometown club. *(Offside)*

The second goal of the hat-trick I scored away to Norwich in February 1980. The game ended 5-3 to Liverpool but is best remembered for Justin Fashanu's 'goal of the season' strike. *(Personal collection)*

In action against Finland's Oulun at Anfield in the 1980 European Cup. Liverpool won 10-1. *(Steve Hale/Liverpool FC)*

Seven years after overlooking my claims for a place in the team that played Manchester United in the 1977 FA Cup final, Bob Paisley sends me into action against the same opposition in the Milk Cup final, which we won 2-1 in extra time. *(Colorsport)*

A move to Toronto Blizzard in the North American Soccer League was just what I needed in the summer of 1982 and it helped me regain full fitness after my recent knee injury. *(Personal collection)*

The schedule in the NASL could be hectic at times but the Blizzard still managed to squeeze in a high-profile friendly against Juventus, a game I was sent off after just 90 seconds. *(Personal collection)*

I thoroughly enjoyed my solitary season with Tranmere Rovers. The team spirit was fantastic and I would have loved to have extended my stay at Prenton Park. *(Personal collection)*

My time in Switzerland may have ended on a sour note but there were some good moments, including this goal for Luzern against FC Aarau. *(Personal collection)*

The style of football at Beveren was much more to my liking and, in the first season especially, we gave the bigger clubs in Belgium a run for their money. *(Personal collection)*

Happier times. My lovely wife and soul-mate Jan. Tragically and prematurely taken from us but forever in our thoughts.

A portrait in my life after playing. *(Offside)*

With my son and daughter, Tom and Sophie. I couldn't have wished for two better children and I'm so proud of how both have turned out.

FOREWORD BY GÉRARD HOULLIER

ON THE NIGHT OF WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 1977, I HEARD DAVID FAIRclough's name for the first time. Liverpool defeated St Etienne in the quarter-final of the European Cup and he famously scored the winning goal.

As a proud Frenchman, I should loathe him for burying the hopes of my nation. Yet he is someone who I have nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for. To be invited to write this foreword to his autobiography is a huge honour.

When this local discovery was suddenly propelled into the European spotlight I was starting out on the road to becoming a coach. Yet I was there at Anfield as a spectator on that legendary night, travelling up from France in a car with three friends. I remember there was lot of excitement surrounding the tie. St Etienne was the outstanding team in France at that time and almost the entire country was willing them to become the first French team to lift the coveted trophy.

My friends were all passionately rooting for 'Les Verts' and I guess my loyalty should also have been with the team from my homeland. However, I had a strong affinity with Liverpool too, having previously spent time working as a teacher in the city. So it was with mixed feelings that I went through the turnstiles at Anfield. In a way, I couldn't really lose. Secretly though, if I'm being honest, deep down I favoured Liverpool slightly more.

As anyone who was lucky enough to also be present at the game will testify, the atmosphere was incredible and the match is one I'll never forget. We drove straight back to France afterwards and the sense of disappointment among the St Etienne fans was overwhelming. They couldn't believe that their team had been knocked out of the competition by this previously unheard of player called David Fairclough.

For me, it was a privilege to be there; to experience one of Anfield's most special nights and to witness the rise of the legend that is Supersub. There have been many memorable moments in the history of European football and that was one of them.

It's a goal that has haunted St Etienne ever since and it remains one of the most infamous moments in French sport. The name David Fairclough is perhaps as well-known in France as it is in England. He may not have been the biggest star in the Liverpool side but, for his antics when coming off the bench that night, it is he who is remembered most.

It is because of his exploits back then, the term Supersub quickly became part of footballing parlance and he set the standards for the rest to follow. Not that many have managed to replicate it on the scale he did. I remember during my time as Liverpool manager that Manchester United's Ole Gunnar Solskjaer emerged as a prolific goalscoring substitute but there'll only ever be one Supersub in my eyes and that is David Fairclough.

It wasn't until I took charge at Anfield that I was lucky enough to meet him for the first time. I then got to know him more and found him to be very amicable and generous, someone who was always supportive of me and my staff. It was clear to see that this club is in his blood. He wanted what was best for the team and, having played abroad, he understood the motives behind some of the ideas we were trying to implement.

It's good to know that David is still involved at Liverpool as regular face on LFCTV. He's a legend at the club, one of the many who have played a key role in establishing it as the world famous institution it is today.

His story is a fascinating one and I'm sure that football fans everywhere will enjoy reading it, even those in France who can still remember the pain he inflicted on them all those years ago.

Gérard Houllier

August 2015

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TWELFTH MAN

A typical match day at Anfield - circa late 70s/early 80s . . .

THE FINAL SHRILL OF THE REFEREE'S WHISTLE BRINGS ANOTHER ROUTINE Liverpool victory to a close. As the Kop roar their appreciation, Tannoy announcer George Sephton tries his best to be heard when reading out that afternoon's final scores. A few local youths break free from the terraces to congratulate their heroes as they leave the pitch, while those in the stands politely applaud. In the dugout members of the coaching staff rise to exchange pleasantries with the opposition, content in the knowledge of yet another 'job well done'. In the home camp it's smiles all round. Or so it seems.

There is one glum face. It's mine. Having been sat helplessly on the bench for the past ninety minutes I struggle to share the collective joy that is resonating around the ground. Ronnie Moran wrings out the 'magic sponge' that he would use to treat injured players and chucks the cold water out of his white bucket. He hands the bucket to me and I place the spare ball inside before trudging disconsolately down the tunnel. It is my only worthwhile contribution on the afternoon.

*

TO ME, THAT WHITE BUCKET SYMBOLISES MY FRUSTRATION AT being Liverpool's twelfth man. For some reason it became an unwritten rule that if I hadn't been sent on as substitute it was my job to carry the bucket. How it started I don't know. I assume Ronnie must have barked at me to do it one day

and it then just became an accepted ritual. Now, whenever I see a white bucket it takes me back to the disappointment I felt at that time; a sense of uselessness as my team-mates cantered to victory without me. It would be the same if a win had been secured narrowly, or if the game had ended in a draw. Or even on the rare occasions they lost. If I had played no part, it meant nothing to me.

During the course of my eight years as a first-team player at Liverpool I made a total of 154 competitive appearances. Sixty-two of those came as substitute – a club record for the pre-Premier League era and bettered, at the time of writing, by only Danny Murphy, Vladimir Smicer and Ryan Babel. It's not a record I'm proud of. With the exception of my first few months as a first-team member I honestly hated being substitute. Worse than that was being an unused substitute, and there were a further 76 occasions when I was forced to keep the bench warm for the entire 90 minutes.

That would leave me feeling totally hollow and in a state of limbo. If we'd won everyone would be congratulating each other but amid the handshakes and back-slapping I was left feeling like a phoney. I'd contributed nothing meaningful to the day. I was like an outsider at a party. Someone who'd been invited but for what reason nobody knew. To be on the outside looking in as the lads basked in the glory of what they'd just achieved, or even as they dwelt on the disappointment of defeat, left me in a desperately awkward and uneasy situation. Even getting a shower brought with it a sense of guilt. I wasn't dirty. I hadn't sweated. In my eyes I hadn't earned the right to a shower. It was ridiculous when I think back, but that's how I felt. What do you do? Obviously, I had to get a shower because we'd have had oil rubbed into our legs pre-match. But it didn't feel right.

'What are you moaning for? You got your win bonus and didn't even have to work for it!' That's what some people would say but to me it was never about the money. I was living comfortably enough so financial gain was never a motivating factor. For a young lad like I was at the time I welcomed the money. Of course I did, who wouldn't? And given Liverpool's record at the time there were plenty of win bonuses coming my way. But, hand on heart, I just wanted to play football. Pure and simple. I was a footballer. That was my job. What I got paid for. So to not play and still get paid didn't seem right. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't about to give up my weekly wage every time I was an unused substitute – and just as well, because I'd have been skint if I had – but to me, spending money always felt better when I knew I'd earned it.

Down the years it's often been said that to accept the situation showed a lack of ambition on my part. But that was never the case. In fact, I'd say it was very much the opposite.



LIKE ALL THE LADS, I WOULD PUT IN A LOT OF HARD WORK ON THE training ground during the week but for me there had to be an end product. The match of a Saturday, the grand climax to the week, was what we all worked towards and to not be involved when that day came was always a huge disappointment.

Come Friday, I'd be raring to go. I would be as pumped up and mentally prepared as anyone. But whereas most of the lads could rest assured that their place in the starting eleven was safe, for me this would be the most anxious of times. In those early days, no matter how well I'd done in the game before or in training during the week, I'd always be on edge come Friday. Would I or wouldn't I be involved the following day?

Had we worked on team shape in training during the week then we'd have possibly had a better idea of what side the manager had in mind. But our training back then would mostly consist of six, seven or eight-a-side games and therefore there was never any hint of what Bob Paisley was thinking with regard to team selection for the next game.

Team news was all that mattered to me as the week drew to a close. I'd be on high alert listening out for any possible clues that could maybe help me second-guess what the boss was thinking selection-wise. Whenever I was in earshot of the coaching staff I'd strain myself to try and overhear any whispers that would possibly give something away.

Invariably though we'd be kept waiting until the last minute. Even after training on a Friday it was very rare for Paisley to put us out of our misery and tell us the team face to face. The likes of Jimmy Case, David Johnson and Terry McDermott are three other players that spring to mind whose place in the team, at one stage or another, could never be taken for granted. We'd all be in the frame for one of the cherished places in the starting eleven, but I'm sure it was myself more than others who this affected most because, like I say, my involvement always seemed to be in the balance.

The only possible hint you would get of what the team would be was on the back page of Friday's *Liverpool Echo*. Michael Charters, who covered the club for many years, was very close to Bob and whatever he wrote you could be sure had come straight from the horse's mouth. Reading his articles was just like listening to the boss. He even used the same terminology so it was obvious where he'd got his information from. Bob must have had his reasons for operating this way but to me it was a cowardly method of delivering bad news to the players who wouldn't be involved.

If I was substitute then I have to confess that mentally I wouldn't switch on until given the nod to warm up. I wasn't the type of player who kicked every ball while sat watching from sidelines. I never enjoyed a game from the bench. It might have been a ten-goal thriller but I could take no enjoyment from it if not involved.

I remember the first time I was sub for the reserves. Afterwards, Ronnie Moran asked if I'd enjoyed the experience. As a young kid, hoping to forge a career at the club I love, I suppose I should have been grateful just to be given this chance and I know there would have been a queue of thousands just to be in my shoes. But I genuinely didn't enjoy it. And I wasn't being an arrogant teenager when I told him, in no uncertain terms, that it was rubbish.

There were times in later years when, as a substitute, I probably appeared a little distant. My mind would be elsewhere and I'm not ashamed to admit that I'd be thinking about myself and nothing else. This may sound selfish, the ramblings of a spoiled brat who sulked because he hadn't got his way and wasn't in the team. But was it wrong for me to feel this way? I don't think so. Let me explain. This was my club, the one I'd supported all my life. As long as we were winning, nothing else should have mattered. But you become a different type of supporter once you become a professional footballer. When the game is your livelihood you view it through a different perspective. It's a ruthless profession and to succeed you have to look after number one. To me, every game Liverpool won, or even played, without me was a slight on my ability and a setback for my career.

Football, of course, is a team game. The romantic notion is that everyone in the squad is in it together. Yet that couldn't be further from the truth back in my day. The team spirit at Liverpool was second to none. Like most clubs there'd be certain cliques within the dressing room, but by and large the lads got on. But as I've explained, not everyone could say they had played their part and there was even a real stigma about being substituted back then. Even if the team was winning by three or four a player would still be angry about being brought off for the last ten minutes or so; they saw it as a slur on their reputation rather than about them being rested in order to give the sub a run-out.

I once coined a phrase that used to have my mates roaring with laughter. When someone went down injured I'd say, 'I hope it's nothing trivial.' It was a tongue-in-cheek comment but one barbed with a semi-serious undertone. Harsh, I know. But that's just how it was. Of course, I wouldn't have wished a serious injury on any of the lads, but there was certainly no sentiment. It was very rare for one of your team-mates to sympathise with you if you were

suffering with an injury. At Liverpool everyone was out for themselves. They really were. One player's misery could be your joy. And vice versa.

We all wanted what was best for the club but every player genuinely believed Liverpool Football Club would be better off with them in the team, me included. It was a dog-eat-dog environment and you had to be tough to survive.

It was on the occasions when I was an unused substitute that I really questioned what I was doing there. In those days, not to use your substitute was common practice but I think it showed a lack of foresight. It was a waste, really. I'm certain that games involving Liverpool during this time could have been changed if the manager had been more willing to embrace the role of the number twelve.

It doesn't happen now. The rules have changed and there's a totally different attitude. Managers can choose any three from seven subs and it's very rare they don't use them. The players in the starting eleven accept that they are going to be taken off more often. It's an accepted way of playing in the modern game, meaning the situation I too often found myself in would be a lot easier to cope with nowadays.

But back then no one gave the substitute a second thought. Until something untoward happened, you were just incidental to it all; slumped in the old brick dugout that Bob Paisley had helped build back in the mid-50s, shortly after he'd hung up his boots as a player.

*

FOR A SATURDAY GAME AT ANFIELD THERE'D BE RONNIE MORAN, Joe Fagan and, more often than not, myself. For a midweek match it'd be the same, plus maybe Reuben Bennett and in later years, if the reserves didn't have a game, Roy Evans. Obviously, this small space would become even more cramped on a European night when we'd have five substitutes to choose from.

I became an expert at reading the situation regarding any possible changes and I'd get to know when a substitution was going to be made. Bob would come down from his seat in the directors' box. My ears would instantly prick up and once I heard those magic words, 'I'm throwing Davey on', I'd be up for it. 'Go and have a little run up and down,' he'd say, and off I'd go. A lot of the time it would be John Toshack or Jimmy Case who I'd come on for. But if he then went back upstairs my heart would sink. That meant he wasn't too sure and was leaving the final decision to Joe Fagan and Ronnie Moran. When this happened, I'd say more often than not I'd not go on.

I'd normally just do a few sprints up and down the touchline then some light exercises to stretch the muscles. That's all my warm-up would consist of. I wouldn't overdo it.

Footballers have certain habits on a match day and one of the things I always have a memory of is the young lad who used to walk around the cinder track at Anfield selling sweets. This one day he threw me a packet of Wrigley's chewing gum before I went on and scored. After that, every time I was a sub at Anfield this same lad, without fail, would shout, 'Davey, here you go,' as he walked past and would throw me another packet. It became a routine.

The old grey warm-up jumper I used to occasionally wear was seen as another lucky omen. For the life of me I couldn't tell you how many times I came on and scored after I'd been wearing it, but people would later say, 'I knew you were going to score because you had the jumper on.' It was a load of rubbish really because the weather would dictate if I wore the jumper or not, but it's amazing what people believe.

The Liverpool fans certainly believed in me and I'll be eternally grateful to them for that because apart from my own eagerness to make an impact when sent on I also fed off their belief. It was like plugging in to mains electricity. There'd always be this huge buzz of anticipation whenever I came on. Invariably I was being sent on because things weren't going as expected, so I suppose the sight of me getting ready offered hope. Apart from my home debut against Real Sociedad in the UEFA Cup in November 1975, very rarely can I remember being sent on when we were three or four goals up. It always seemed to be in dramatic circumstances, chasing a lost cause, and there'd be this expectancy every time that I'd just get the ball, run at defenders and have a shot at goal, because this had become my trademark.

If I didn't do this then the talk in the newspapers would be that I'd failed to make an impact and therefore the substitution was branded a failure. And I'd feel the same. There was never any middle ground. I might have gone on, kept things neat and tidy and done a job. But given my early exploits as twelfth man, this was never enough. If I was going on I had to do something. I was never happy to just make up the numbers. What's the point in coming on as a sub if you're not going to try your best to change things?

Of course, I went on plenty of times and never scored, but I always had confidence in my ability to go on and change a game, especially in the early days when it seemed to happen all the time. I never once ran on thinking, it's not going to be my day today. I never suffered from nerves when going on but I'd always be keen to get that first shot in on goal. If I didn't manage to have at least one shot then in my mind it had been a waste of time. My philosophy

was that I'd always get at least one chance in a game. I wouldn't know how good an opportunity it was until afterwards so I used to try and take every chance as if it was my last.

To be fair, Bob Paisley was still finding his way in the job when I first broke into the side. The club was on the up and back then when a youngster was pitched into the first team he had to deliver. There was a lot of pressure on us both. If I didn't produce the goods I'd be criticised and so would he. Simple as that. It's just the way it was. No big deal. I knew what to expect and just got on with it.

More often than not a player will need a run of four, five or six games to find their level and produce the form they are capable of. I was expected to produce at the drop of a hat. Other players might have suffered a dip in form but their place in the team was already established and they were therefore given a lot more leeway. The spotlight was more on the young kid who'd been brought in. All eyes would be on me to see what I could do. And when it didn't come off it was tempting to make me a scapegoat. In the very early days, when I started coming on as sub and doing quite well, it wasn't a problem. But after less than a year, probably around the start of the 1976/77 season, I first went in to see Bob Paisley. I just wanted to be playing and it got to a point where I didn't mind whether that was for the first team or the reserves. Just like the first team, the reserves would most weeks play Saturday and midweek, 42 games a season.

Around September that season I was down to be sub one Tuesday night and I remember asking Bob to put me back in the reserves just so I could get a game. He'd made it clear that I'd always be his first-choice number twelve that season so my place in the first-team squad – and the win bonuses that would bring – were guaranteed. But I wasn't happy to just accept that. It was still early in the season but to remain fresh I had to be playing. He did eventually come around to my way of thinking and I was allowed to return to the reserves. Looking back, perhaps I did myself an injustice and talked myself out of more first-team appearances.

If I'd have carried on being sub then more opportunities might have come my way. It only takes an injury to a first-team player for the situation to change but, and it's sad for me to say, even then a distrust of Bob Paisley was festering away inside me. There was a lot of 'what if' in my thinking. What if I got another chance, would I keep my place? Competition for places at the time was fierce. The likes of Tosh, Davey Johnson and Alan Waddle were all in and around the fringes of the first team. There were many different permutations

the boss could use and I got the feeling that no matter how well I did I'd never get an extended run in the side.

Hindsight, of course, is a wonderful thing but I was desperate to maintain my match fitness and if I had to drop back into the reserves to achieve this then so be it. At least then, in my mind, when an opportunity to start in the first team came available I'd be better equipped to make a worthwhile contribution. Of course, it could be argued that Bob Paisley only had my best interests at heart. I was just nineteen at that time and by playing first-team football week in, week out I suppose there was a danger that I could become burned out. Not just in a physical sense but mentally as well, because there is a huge pressure attached to it. It's a topic that's still relevant in the game today but I maintain my belief that he was far too overcautious where I was concerned. I've since read that he later admitted he'd have done things differently had he had more experience of dealing with an up-and-coming youngster like I was back then but that is of little comfort to me now.

We can all look back through rose-tinted glasses at the Liverpool team of the late 70s and early 80s. But let's be honest, it wasn't always perfect. There were plenty of times when the team didn't perform to their true capabilities. Sometimes they'd just manage to scrape through games. Occasionally they'd lose, but no big fuss was ever made within the club.

Many a time I'd be sat on the bench watching the team labour to a narrow victory, thinking I could do better than certain players in my position, but continuity played such a big part of the thinking at Liverpool during this time. It stemmed from the days of Bill Shankly. In the title-winning season of 1965/66 he famously called upon just fourteen players and two of them – Bobby Graham and Alf Arrowsmith – played only six games between them. 'What's the team this week, Bill?' journalists would ask. 'Same as last year,' his reply. Tongue-in-cheek it might have been, but this was very much the club's philosophy when it came to team selection. Changes were rarely made. And when they were it was more due to injury than loss of form.

Not that anyone at Liverpool would ever own up to having an injury. We, the players, would know that a certain player was carrying an injury and struggling but they would do their best to disguise it.

On the morning of the St Etienne game, for example, I knew Tosh was badly injured. He'd been suffering with an Achilles problem. My movement was fine, no hint of stiffness. I was as fit as a flea. Tosh's Achilles was crumbling away. There was no way he should have played against St Etienne. As it turned out, it was him who I'd later replace but he shouldn't have started in the first place. That's the way it was at Liverpool back then. No player would ever

admit to not being 100 per cent because that would put their starting place in jeopardy. I'll admit I did it myself on many occasions. There was a genuine fear that if you dropped out of the first team at Liverpool you might never get back in.

It was so competitive that some players would resort to taking painkillers, while the sheer adrenalin rush of being involved would sometimes be enough to get players through games. Because the team was so strong, it was good enough to carry a few under-par performers. It's a subject that we've since discussed in-depth when the former players have got together, and the general consensus was that so long as there were eight fully fit players in the eleven we'd be OK.

An accusation that was often levelled at me is that I wasn't fit enough to last ninety minutes; that I was never as effective when starting and only ever effective when coming into a game late on. It's a claim I dispute and I'd like to think that 37 goals in 92 starts dispels that theory.

But at the same time I do harbour a sense of resentment at how my career panned out. Bitter is perhaps too harsh a word to use but – and it's horrible to have regrets in life – there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that I could have made a bigger impact at Liverpool and, in turn, enjoyed a much more fruitful career had I been given more opportunities. In my opinion Bob Paisley didn't fully utilise my potential. He failed to use me in the best possible way. And it's something that still haunts me to this day.

2

AN EVERTON RED

A BORN-AND-BRED, DYED-IN-THE-WOOL LIVERPUDLIAN I WAS, I AM and I always will be. Yet it was in the Everton district of Liverpool that I grew up and in a blue and white kit that I first showed my potential as a young footballer.

The kit belonged to Major Lester, the primary school many a Liverpool fan would have walked past on countless occasions as they made their way up to Anfield. It stood at the Everton Valley end of Walton Breck Road, a Ray Clemence goal kick away from the famous Spion Kop.

I attended that school for four years (1964–68) and started playing competitively when I was just seven years old; first for the under-10s (B-team) and then the under-11s (A-team). Why we played in the colours of the team from Goodison Park I don't know, but despite my allegiances to the red half of the city I wore the Major Lester blue with immense pride.

Our home games took place on Stanley Park, that great divide which separated the city's two major football clubs. If any inspiration was needed during a match you had only to look one way towards the shrine that was Anfield or, if you happened to be the other way inclined, turn your head in the opposite direction towards Goodison, where those of a blue persuasion worshipped.

Football is a religion on Merseyside and with both grounds being in such close proximity to our house I suppose it's no surprise that I was footy mad. We lived in a typical two-up two-down, back-to-back, terrace house: 43 Carmel Street, off St Domingo Road.

I suspect there are very few former Liverpool players who can lay claim to having grown up closer to Anfield than me, the nearest ones to me that I can think of are Steve Peplow who lived on Oakfield Road and Tommy Smith who came from Kirkdale. On a match day I could hear the roar of the crowd from our front step, while the choruses of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' would fill the air.

I can't vouch for other parts of the city at that time but to me football just seemed to dominate the lives of everyone. In our narrow street, which hardly ever had a car parked in it, we had a ready-made pitch and practice area. In the middle of the street was a gap between houses, left to us by the Luftwaffe in World War Two. We called it the 'hollow'. At one end, the wall had Liverpool painted on it; at the other end, it was Everton. It was a rough, uneven surface of rocks and stones but we never complained. In the summer it briefly became our cricket pitch as well. Learning to play football in such cramped spaces meant we devised our own rules for the games, such as keeping the ball below window height or playing one and two touch, which, unwittingly at the time, helped us develop our skills.

Given where we lived, there was just no getting away from the footy. It would have been difficult for anyone not be bitten by the bug and it took hold of me from a very early age.

Every week the streets were alive with people making their way to the match: one Saturday it would be the Reds at home, the next it was the Blues. I just loved the buzz that a match day brought and together with my mates I'd be out early touting to mind the cars of those on their way to the game. It was an extremely competitive business, with most little lads around our way out to do likewise. With both clubs regularly attracting crowds in excess of 50,000 back then, not to mention the lack of 'official' car parks, it was an obvious way to supplement my small amount of pocket money. In return I like to think we offered a valuable service to the motoring match-goers of Merseyside back in the mid to late 60s.

It's often through rose-tinted spectacles and a sense of dewy-eyed nostalgia that people think back to their childhood. It can be all too easy to let emotion fool you into believing it was actually better than it was. But I can honestly say that I couldn't have grown up in a better place. Our neighbourhood was a constant hive of activity. There were local shops or pubs on almost every street corner, lots of people buzzing about and something was always going on. There was also such a strong community spirit and I'm so proud to say I came from there.

Of course, I'm not naive enough to start suggesting everything was a bed of roses, far from it. Everyone in that area had to work hard for a living. Money was tight and I suppose life could be a struggle at times. Within most big cities there were areas like ours. It was also a tough environment in which to live so you certainly had to be street-wise to survive. I remember regularly getting chased around the block by older lads, usually from the local Catholic school, with my escape route usually being the tenement blocks of the nearby Sir Thomas White Gardens, known locally as Tommy Whites, which I knew like the back of my hand.

It's a good job I could run, that's all I'm saying. And I believe it was partly because of where we lived that I had so much pace. St Domingo Road, which ran across the bottom of our street, gradually rose from Walton Road, across Everton Valley and up to one of the highest points in Liverpool. On a clear day it offered terrific views across the Mersey and out to sea. Tackling that steep incline every day worked wonders for my football fitness. Without knowing it, I was in daily training even back then.

It's an age-old cliché, I know, but those long, mainly football-filled, carefree days I spent as a kid on the streets of Everton really were special. I even enjoyed going to school. Academically I was more than competent and Major Lester was a great place to learn. I might have once lost two teeth on the sloping school yard after accidentally butting the concrete floor during a break-time game of football, but I'd still be one of the first in each day, ready to hone my skills once again.

Sadly, the old neighbourhood has changed beyond all recognition now. Carmel Street and Major Lester School no longer exist. Both were bulldozed. Carmel Street, in 1971, shortly after we left, and Major Lester as recently as 2014. But the memories will never fade. I spent the formative years of my life there and wouldn't change a thing. For that I have my mum and dad to thank.

Both my parents, Tommy and Ivy, were from Liverpool, although my grandmother on my mum's side was actually Scottish, a fact I only discovered after my football career was over. Mum was one of nine children and had four older brothers, all of whom were keen Liverpool supporters. My dad was friends with them and that's how he and mum met. Dad was a precision engineer, having previously travelled the world during a short spell in the Merchant Navy. He too was a big Liverpool fan, a passion shared with his brother and two sisters. Strangely, three of my mum's sisters married Everton fans, so that really divided our family on that side, although the banter between us was always good-natured, even when they bought me an Everton strip one Christmas.

When I think back, I only have great memories of growing up in a home where both my parents forever tried their best to see that my sister Lesley and I had a happy home life. They made sure that we spent plenty of time together as a family. Days out would be arranged at every opportunity, mostly to Southport or Harrison Drive in Wallasey, and we enjoyed some great holidays in the likes of North Wales and Devon. In short, we wanted for nothing and they both worked hard to ensure that we were happy kids. We were actively encouraged to do well at school and they certainly supported my love of football, with my dad always happy to enjoy a kickabout with me.



COMPARED TO THE OLDER LADS IN THE SCHOOL TEAM I WAS small, but I was always very quick, even back then, and could pack a powerful shot for someone with such a slight build. I lost count of the number of times I smashed windows in Carmel Street through the sheer power of my shooting. It was never done in a malicious way, maybe due to me trying to be too adventurous. On such occasions the other kids would invariably scatter, leaving me to take the blame. Someone had to though because otherwise we'd have never have got our ball back.

There wasn't much else to do other than play football and so the ball would be out at every opportunity. Unless it was World Cup year, the cricket stumps replaced it for a few months, always the day after the FA Cup final, but football was my all-consuming passion and I'd always be there or thereabouts whenever a game was taking place, be it in the street, the park or at school. I steadily earned myself a reputation as a promising player and my friend's dad in particular insisted I would play for Liverpool. Because of my red hair I was often likened to Alan Ball, especially by the Evertonians in the street.

Like most Scousers, my dad had played as a young lad, but apart from the fact that my mum's cousin Alan Banks had been a professional with Liverpool in the late 50s, there was nothing in the family genes to suggest that football would become my livelihood. Alan was an inside-forward who scored six goals in eight games during a three-year stint as a professional at Anfield. His name cropped up in conversation from time to time – he went on to have a successful career, playing for the likes of Exeter City and Plymouth Argyle – but that's all I knew of him until years later when we met at a former players' function and we cleared up how we were related.

He would have been just six months into his apprenticeship with Liverpool when I entered the world on Saturday 5 January 1957. But while my parents

might have been celebrating the birth of their first child they'd have also been cursing the fortunes of their favourite football team, because on that same afternoon the Reds were infamously dumped out of the FA Cup by Southend United. Perhaps it was an omen – I too was destined never to have much luck in that competition.

The decade in which I was born was not the best of times to be a Liverpool supporter. The club lost out to Arsenal in the 1950 FA Cup final, their first-ever appearance at Wembley, after which a gradual demise set in that led to relegation in 1954 and an annual failure to regain their top-flight status. Support for the team, however, remained loyal and my dad was among the staunchest of Liverpoolians.

In his younger days he'd have regularly travelled away to watch the team and, although I would only have been about five at the time, I can distinctly remember him going to Leyton Orient during the promotion season of 1961/62. It was only natural that I followed in his footsteps, although in truth he wouldn't have given me a choice. Everton might have been the bigger club on Merseyside at this time but there was never any doubt as to where my allegiances would lie and I am eternally grateful to him for guiding me down the right path when it came to football.

Like most young kids of the time my match-going experience began with the reserves. My dad became a season-ticket holder in the Kemlyn Road Stand when it was rebuilt in 1963 and was therefore entitled to free entry into Anfield whenever the second string played at home. But even before then we were regular supporters of the reserve team and, though I can't remember specific matches from this period, I can still clearly recall how back then you could walk from one end of the ground to the other while the game was in progress. We'd normally go in the Kop and walk along the terracing that used to run alongside the front of the old Kemlyn to the Anfield Road, or vice versa depending on which way the Reds were shooting. Watching the reserves with my dad became a regular thing and I really looked forward to those Saturday afternoons in the early 60s. I was too young to know who was who at this stage but the likes of Tommy Lawrence, Chris Lawler and Tommy Smith, players who would soon establish themselves as Liverpool legends, were then coming through the reserve ranks. Little did I know that one day I would be running out in a red shirt alongside Tommy Smith!

While I might not yet have been too familiar with the names of those in the club's second string my apprenticeship as a Liverpoolian was progressing well and my thirst for knowledge about the club must have driven my dad mad. I was soon scouring the local papers for snippets of information and it wasn't

long before I became a regular subscriber to magazines like Charlie Buchan's Football Monthly – if they contained any photographs of the Liverpool team, I would cut them out to put in my LFC scrapbook or pin on my bedroom wall. Kop stars of the time, such as Roger Hunt and Ian St John, used to stare down at me as my dream of one day emulating them developed, but there were so many players in that early 60s team to admire. Bill Shankly's first great side was taking shape and it was difficult not to get swept away by the excitement of it all.

The stories about Shanks are the stuff of legend and he was a messiah in the eyes of all Liverpool fans. Our club hadn't won the league since the first season just after the war in 1946/47 and on the day this long wait was finally ended, in April 1964, I'm proud to say I was there at Anfield. Well, I was for the last quarter of an hour. Something special was occurring almost on my doorstep. My dad was at the game, sat in his usual seat in the Kemlyn Road, and I simply had to be there too, so together with a group of friends we made our way down to the ground just to be closer to the action.

Famous film footage of that day – a 5–0 victory over Arsenal – still exists. It was the afternoon BBC's Panorama visited Anfield and the swaying Kop was in fine voice. A carnival atmosphere engulfed Anfield and there was a party going on outside too, where lots of kids would often hang around waiting for the exit gates to open at what was generally known as three-quarter time. When they did, as the odd fan from the inside made for an early dart, hundreds on the outside would rush past them, eager to catch some of the action. On this occasion curiosity got the better of me and I followed suit.



THE FIRST 'PROPER' GAME I ACTUALLY REMEMBER ATTENDING WAS Anfield's inaugural European fixture against Reykjavik in September 1964. I stood at the front of the Boys Pen and became a regular there throughout that season, although I did watch the odd game from dad's seat in the Kemlyn: row 3, seat 145. It was such a fantastic spec, so close to the action, that I wished I could have sat there every week. Totally smitten with the Reds, it wasn't that long before my dad also started taking me to away games, my first being the following season's visit to Blackburn, which we won 4–1 on the road to being champions again.

Of course, you can't talk about memories of those times without mentioning one of the biggest games ever at Anfield. That occasion was the night world champions Inter Milan came to town for the European Cup semifinal first leg in May 1965. Just days earlier, amid seemingly never-ending celebrations,