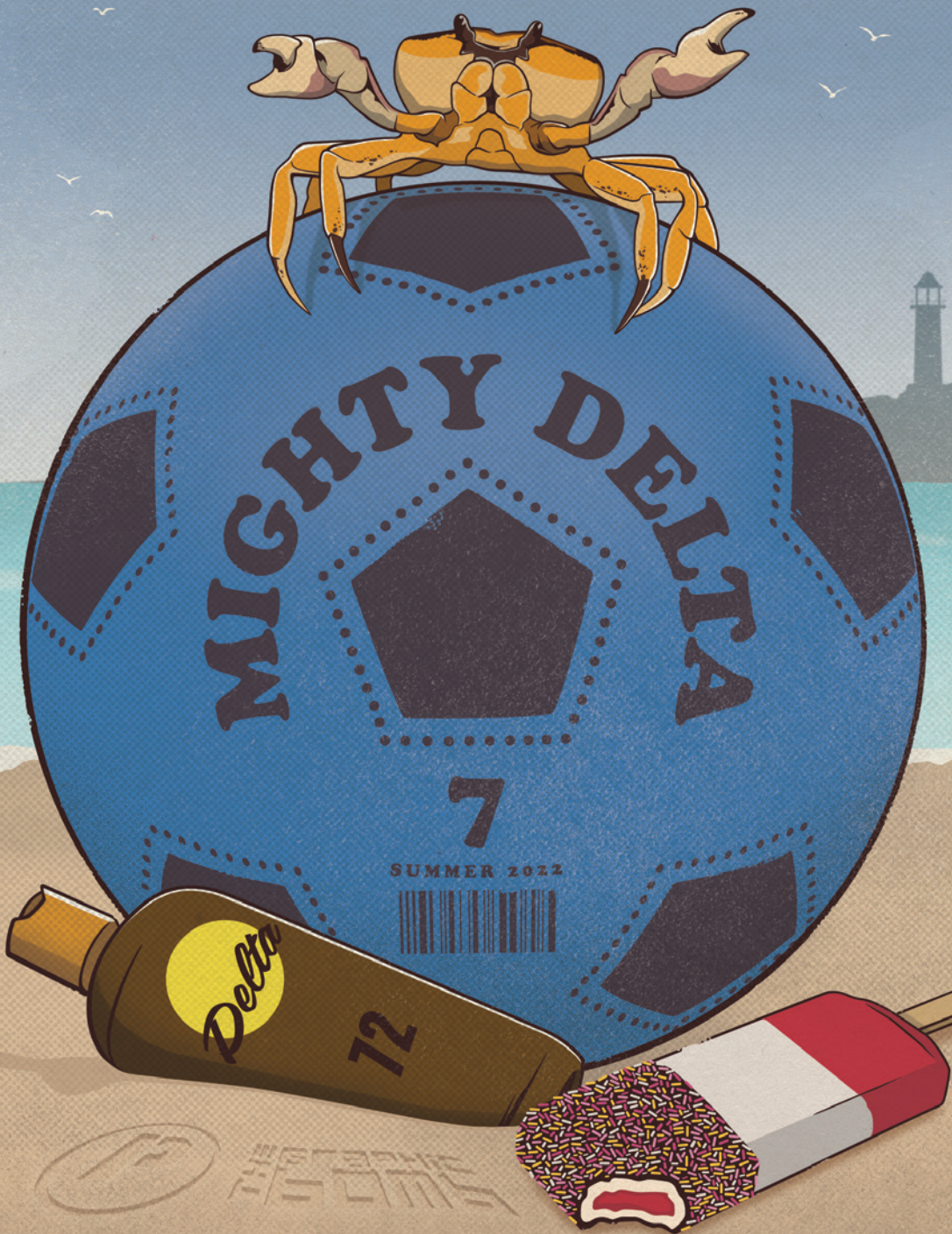


A FANZINE FOCUSED ON THE TOP FOUR TIERS OF ENGLISH FOOTBALL, AND BEYOND.



"AS FOOTBALLING NICKNAMES GO, 'THE LOCH NESS DROGGA' IS ONE OF THE BETTER ONES..."

WELCOME

A lot's been made of just how good the 2021/22 Premier League season was, and we've no truck with that... BUT the EFL and the National League have also hit heady heights and Issue Seven of the Delta widens its focus to celebrate the top five tiers of English football.

As Messrs Neville and Carragher point out most weeks, the top flight is blessed to have the likes of Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp in its ranks - and the standards set by eventual champions Man City and runners-up Liverpool were simply staggering.

There were plenty of storylines elsewhere too: from Everton leaving it late under Lampard to Eddie Howe reinvigorating the Toon Army; from the Bees buzzing on their Premier League debut to Manchester United suffering their 19th nervous breakdown.

City's inexorable rise and United's spiral over the past decade comes under the microscope in Alex Lawes' long read on pages 32-35.

The centrepiece of this edition, however, is our 'Playmaker 72' countdown of the top performers from across the Championship, League One and League Two in 2021/22. Our Number One may not be a surprise, but it's a stunning list and we've justified our selections with stacks of stats. We hope your personal favourites are in amongst it!

This season's National League has similarly been incredibly entertaining and we chatted to Wrexham centre-forward Ollie Palmer regarding his club record move to the Dragons, and a division that he believes doesn't get the credit it deserves.

Throw in a review of the best and worst grub in the EFL, a fascinating chat with an English commentator in Japan and an amusing peek at '80s footballers who looked about eighty, and we've one heck of an issue!

A big thank you to all our readers and everyone who lends their support to the zine.

Roll on 2022/23!

Stephen Gillett | Editor-in-Chief



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Editor in Chief
(captain)

Design and Illustration
(Towels at the ready)



WGRAPHIC
THE BOMB

Words and interview by Richard Cole

80s FOOTBALLERS AGEING BADLY

Nivaldo. Rodrigues. McGarr. Sproat. Borges. These might not be conventional household names but to followers of the Twitter account 80s Footballers Ageing Badly, they're true legends of the game.

The account now has over 60,000 followers with tournaments to decide who wins the dubious title of most badly aged. The matches get heated too, with an army of loyal followers cheering on their surprisingly senior-looking pros to glory.

The Mighty Delta spoke with the creator of 80s Footballers Ageing Badly, Winston Gallagher, to see where it all began.

TMD: Where did the inspiration come from to set up the account?

WG: During a bit of a nostalgic moment, I bought some of the Panini sticker albums I had as a kid from eBay. When they arrived, I was flicking through them and couldn't believe how old some of the players looked. I kept going back to them and they always made me laugh so I wondered if anyone on Twitter would find them funny. I set up an account and shared a handful of players. I had 1,000 followers by the next day.

TMD: You've got over 60k followers now, did you expect it to become so popular?

WG: Definitely not. I was amazed to get 1,000 followers. To hit 64k followers and experience the other

things that have happened around the account, such as being on the cover of the Wall Street Journal and featured in football magazines and podcasts around the world, has been beyond my wildest dreams for this account.

TMD: You do tournament finals that get pretty lively on Twitter, how do you cope – do you need to take time off work on match days?

WG: Haha. It takes up a LOT of my time around the tournaments. But it's totally worthwhile when I see how much enjoyment people get from it.

There's a real sense of community around the account, with people taking on roles. There is someone who gives match odds, someone who mocks up programmes, someone





who gives all the players backstories, someone who goes into great statistical analysis. It's amazing. And it's all so good-natured, which is a rarity on Twitter.

TMD: What's more likely to gain the most votes: wrinkles, bushy moustache, or receding hairline?

WG: Now you are opening a can of worms. There is a section of followers who would call themselves 'purists' they think that moustaches and receding hairlines are cheating and they prefer a weatherbeaten face with a clean shave and for them to have a full head of hair. I think a dodgy tache and haircut can put on ten years.

TMD: With Nivaldo and Peter Rodrigues you have two worthy past winners but do you feel like someone

else deserved it – is there a 'Netherlands 1974' of badly ageing footballers?

WG: Ernie McGarr looks about 77. But he was beaten fair and square in the final of the inaugural FA Cup of Badly Ageing Footballers, so I can't complain.

TMD: Have you ever heard from any of the tournament participants directly?

WG: I've heard from lots of family members and the Wall Street Journal got in touch with Hugh Sproat for their article. Otto Versfeld was interviewed on Dutch radio about his chances.

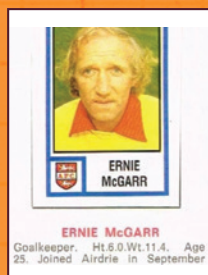
But only the ex-Everton player Kevin Ratcliffe has been directly in touch. He said that the sun was in his eyes when the photo was taken, hence the wrinkles around them.

WINSTONE'S FAVOURITES

I have lots of favourites for different reasons.

Jim Gallagher has a soft spot in my heart because it was staring aghast at his photo for ages that made me finally decide to share these thoughts with the Twitterati.

I love **Ernie McGarr**. He looks SO old that I had to check over and over again that he was the age he was. The comedian Henning Wehn got so behind Ernie McGarr in the first tournament that he changed his Twitter handle to 'the Ernie McGarr Tribute Act' and that remains his handle today!



Commentating football in English is hard enough for the likes of Martin Tyler and Peter Drury, but imagine commentating in Japanese. That's exactly what Ben Mabley has to do on a weekly basis, waxing lyrical on the Premier League and beyond for Japanese TV.

Ben has been living in Japan for 16 years now and had always wanted to become a commentator – inspired by Murray Walker saying on the BBC ‘those who can do, those who can’t talk about it.’ But Ben didn’t imagine he would be doing it on the other side of the world. However, at university he studied Japanese, which included a visit to the country.

“I loved my time here then so I thought I’d come back for a couple of years then move back to the UK and start my real career. But then a couple of years wasn’t enough and I stayed for another couple of years... and then a bit longer. Then I started my real career here.”

So Ben put the football thing to one side to go back to a more normal 9 to 5, Monday to Friday career as a translator. But one translation task changed the trajectory of his career.

“Then I got a job with a guy called Hiroshi Kagawa, who is 96, he is the final winner of the ‘prestigious’ FIFA Presidential Award presented by Sepp Blatter in 2015. He was still covering World Cups until 2014 when he was 89. He was making a historical archive of Japanese football and wanted someone to translate a bit of that into English so I met him through that.”

That led Ben on to writing gigs too, whether in English or Japanese, about football. Like anyone who has written about football knows, the pay wasn’t always great but it got his name out there. Eventually, a producer from

Japanese satellite broadcaster J Sports found it and was intrigued by a British person writing about football in Japanese.

“At the time he wanted somebody like that to talk about the Premier League on his show. He was a kind of old school, TV producer who doesn’t wear a suit, has kind of an unconventional hairstyle and fashion – creative, very talented guy... He would have an idea and just go with it. He invited me to their end of season party in 2011/12. So, I was like ‘oh, here’s a chance to meet some TV people, I better be on my best behaviour.’

“And he was waiting for me outside the venue of the party, he stopped me and said ‘right, you’re Ben? When I get in there I’m going to get really drunk, really quickly so I better say this now, I want you to be on my show next season talking about the Premier League. Is that alright? Good. Let’s go inside, get drunk, and talk about football!’ – that was the easiest job interview in the world!”

Not only does commentating in Japanese have a verbal language barrier, but every player’s name has to first be translated into ‘*katakana*’ – one of the Japanese alphabets. As a general rule, Japanese words have to go in consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel order, this means that every name sounds different compared to the usual English way.

“I have to mentally convert to the Japanese pronunciation of the name when I’m talking. I think I’m doing it, but then sometimes viewers comment ‘I like your pronunciation, Ben, it’s so authentic and English’. It’s really not!”

Ben also has to convey some of the many cultural nuances and add historical significance to the broadcast in a

THE

way many English viewers would take for granted.

“For a viewer the more you know, the more you understand, the

greater your enjoyment.
On the face of things,
Manchester
United playing
Leeds on
the first
day of
this

quite good last season but are expected to be mid-table. So the fact that Manchester United won that one quite comfortably seems quite straightforward.

"Whereas it's the first time that regularly has taken place in a league game with fans since 2004 and it's huge because of that. You can't explain about the Wars of the Roses in a 90-minute commentary, there's actual football you have to talk about. But around that time we did do in our related shows: there's a rivalry between United and Leeds, there's a rivalry between Lancashire and Yorkshire. People don't actually think back to the Wars of the Roses in their daily lives that often but if you want to know it does date back to that, or by legend it does.

"It definitely furnishes the commentary and the broadcast a lot because it provides that context. It's not just about title contender beating a mid-table team, 5-1, it's two proper historical rivals playing in front of the fans for the first time in 17 years, so that sort of thing is something I can provide and I find it's something people tend to appreciate."

The language barrier does present some unique challenges when it comes to vocabulary too.

"One thing I want to avoid and try to avoid, and it's difficult, is repetition of the same terms... a co-commentator will often say '*subarashii desu ne*', which is 'that was great' – a great piece of play,

But that adjective comes up an awful lot and it doesn't add much depth.

"In English, if someone has hit a shot with a lot of power you can say they've smashed it, hammered it – there's so much variety. In Japanese, people tend to use the same word, whereas in English even if it's exactly the same shot that's happened twice you'd like to use a different word to describe it.

"It's actually good to be different. Sometimes I'll say 'in English we would say' just to give a little bit of context."

Everyone has their favourite commentators, and besides FI legend Walker, Ben names Barry Davies, John Motson, and Martin Tyler in his top three. However, there's a special place reserved for Clive Tyldesley, who helped him out when he was still a student.

"When I was at sixth form we had to do a 4,000-word piece of coursework, which analysed language. So I did Clive Tyldesley and Ron Atkinson's commentary of the 1999 Champions League final. My teacher said you have to transcribe five minutes of it and analyse that but I thought 'that seems like a waste' so I transcribed the whole 90 minutes.

"And Clive Tyldesley's notes for the game were being auctioned off for charity and there was an advert about that in the official Manchester United magazine that I saw. I contacted them and said 'look I couldn't possibly win but I'm doing this piece of coursework, is there any chance I can get a photocopy?'

"And later he phoned me up – the man himself phoned me up! He said 'here's my number, if I can help you out with your coursework at all give me a call'. I did, and we spoke a couple of times on the phone for about an hour. It was absolutely amazing what he did for me. He's one of my favourite commentators and I will always be in his debt for what he did then."

WALKER

PART TWO
WORDS/INTERVIEW
BY RICHARD COLE

season, if you don't have the historical context, you've got a team who are title contenders playing a team who got promoted a year ago and were

Words: Stephen Gillett, Dan Oliveira,
Richard Cole and Alex Lawes

Editing: Stephen Gillett and Richard Cole

PLAYMAKER



What better way to bring down the curtain on a fabulous EFL season than by running down the best performers from across 'The 72'?

It's been a remarkable campaign across the Championship, League One and League Two - and Playmaker has taken on the joyously controversial task of ranking the 'Best 72 in the 72' in 2021/22.

We've gauged performance, measured achievement, factored in statistics - and, as the dust settles on a fantastic season, we are pretty confident that our final countdown is on the money!

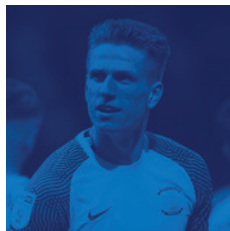
VAMOSSSS!





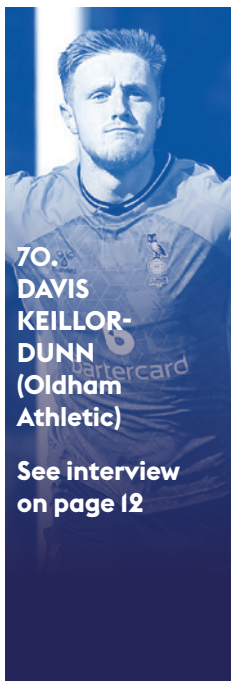
72. ROB DICKIE
(Oxford United)

The wheels came off QPR's promotion bid, but defensive lynchpin Dickie still emerged with credit this season. One of only five Championship centre-backs to score from outside the box in 2021/22, the 26-year-old struck five goals for Rangers across all competitions and looks to have the physicality, technique and poise to play at a higher level.



71. EMIL RIIS
(Preston North End)

After scoring just three times in 39 appearances in his debut season at Preston, 23-year-old Riis has improved massively in 2021/22: his 16 goals in the second tier making him the most prolific Lilywhites forward since their promotion back into the Championship in 2015/16. With an enviable ability to finish with both feet, the Dane spells danger for defences.



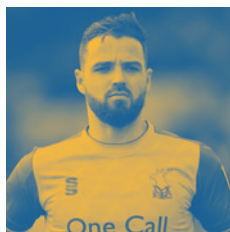
70. DAVIS KEILLOR-DUNN
(Oldham Athletic)

See interview on page 12



69. TOM LAWRENCE
(Derby County)

"He's been absolutely magnificent for us" – that's the verdict on 'Super' Tom Lawrence from Derby County assistant manager Liam Rosenior. The 28-year old was handed the armband at the start of the season by manager Wayne Rooney and was the Rams' stand-out performer in a difficult campaign. Lawrence led from the front as County, ultimately, went down swinging.



68. STEPHEN MCLAUGHLIN
(Mansfield Town)

A revelation at Mansfield since arriving from Southend United, the former winger has been converted to left-back by Nigel Clough with spectacular results - no defender in 'The 92' involved in as many league goals as the Irishman (8 goals, 10 assists) this season. Can McLaughlin now inspire the Stags to victory in their L2 play-off final against Port Vale?



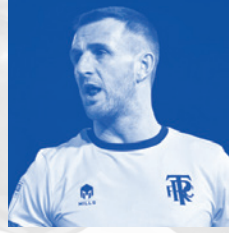
67. VIKTOR GYÖKERES
(Coventry City)

The Sky Blues enjoyed a solid season in the Championship and Gyökeres was one of the stars of the show. The versatile Swede hit 16 goals and supplied five assists, with Coventry losing only one game in which he scored. The former Brighton forward also ranked third in the Championship for successful dribbles (79) and 10th for key passes (66).



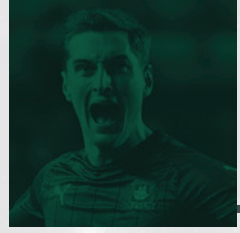
66. CALLUM LANG
(Wigan Athletic)

After a string of successful loans, Lang is making his mark at the DW Stadium and his ability to jink past players and find a yard of space has stood out this season. Fifteen goals and seven assists in League One was an impressive return from the 23-year-old, who formed a deadly partnership with the division's top scorer Will Keane.



65. PETER CLARKE
(Tranmere Rovers)

The Super Whites have kept 42 league clean sheets since Clarke's debut in January 2020, and their mean defence has excelled this season despite them just missing out on the League Two play-offs. Ranking top in the fourth tier for shots blocked, the 40-year-old defied Father Time to be the ONLY outfield player to play every L2 minute in 2021/22.



64. CONOR GRANT
(Plymouth Argyle)

A fine crosser of the ball, a skilled dribbler, and with a left foot commentators are legally obliged to refer to as 'cultured', Grant has been a potent attacking outlet for Argyle this season: only Sean McConville (145), Barry Bannan (84), and Joe Jacobson (78) swinging in more accurate crosses in League One than the 27-year-old (70).



59. CHRISTIAN WALTON
(Ipswich Town)

Walton's decision to leave Premier League Brighton for Ipswich in January so far appears an excellent one. With 14 clean sheets in 34 League One games in 2021/22, the former England youth international has been a key man for the Tractor Boys and has all the physical attributes required of a modern-day goalkeeper. Top flight potential.



58. JACK DIAMOND
(Harrogate Town)

After failing to establish himself at Sunderland last season, Diamond returned for a second loan spell with Harrogate in 2021/22 - and has positively sparkled. One of only four players across 'The 92' to record 100+ successful dribbles, the 23-year-old scored 13 goals and six assists in League Two and looks destined to play at a higher level next season.



57. KEANE LEWIS-POTTER
(Hull City)

Still only 21, Lewis-Potter proved his versatility and durability in the Championship this season with Hull City. Often compared to his former team-mate Jarrod Bowen, the local lad played every single game for the Tigers in all competitions and was their top scorer in the league with 12 goals. The forward will certainly attract attention this summer.



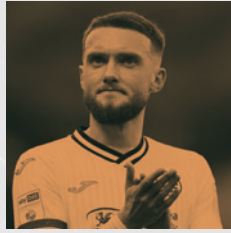
56. FRASER HORSFALL
(Northampton Town)

A key cog in League Two's meanest defensive machine, Horsfall also weighed in with nine goals this season. A huge threat from set-pieces, the 25-year-old excelled at both ends of the pitch, despite the Cobblers agonisingly missing out on automatic promotion and crashing out of the play-offs. Won more aerials (359) than any other defender in L2 in 2021/22.



63. ILIAS CHAIR
(QPR)

Donned by Marsh, Bowles, Taarab and Eze, QPR's IO shirt has a rich tradition and Chair has shown flashes of similar genius. The Hoops' play-off hopes tanked, but the Moroccan scored nine goals and supplied four assists in the Championship - and was one of only four players to score direct from a corner in 'The 92' this season.



62. MATT GRIMES
(Swansea City)

After averaging almost exactly 50% possession in the Championship last term under Steve Cooper, the Swans have switched tactics under Russell Martin and only Man City (68%) averaged more possession than the Welsh side (64%) in 2021/22. Captain Grimes was key in this regard: completing over 4000 passes this season, more than any player in the top four tiers.



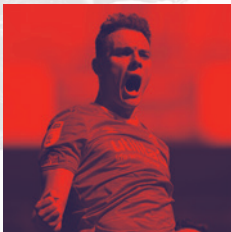
61. JACK RUDONI
(AFC Wimbledon)

AFC Wimbledon endured a difficult season, but watching their exciting crop of homegrown talent offered some consolation to Dons fans. Studying the likes of Frank Lampard and James Maddison is paying off for Rudoni, who weighed in with 12 goals and five assists for a team that finished 23rd in League One. Still only 20, he is one to watch.



60. RICARDO SANTOS
(Bolton Wanderers)

From mazy incursions into the opposition's half to pinpoint 60-yard diagonals, Santos certainly plays with an element of risk - but rarely makes mistakes. A rock at the back for the Trotters this season, the centre-half ranked 8th in League One, among outfield players, for successful long balls. Has all the tools to excel further up the EFL ladder.



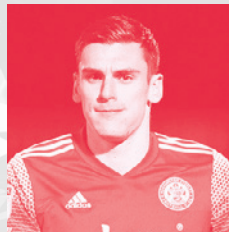
55. KAL NAISMITH
(Luton Town)

From the archetypal 'utility man' (who even played in goal) to one of the best central defenders in the Championship, Naismith has enjoyed a spectacular season. No one played more games for the Hatters than 'Kaldini' (44) in 2021/22 and the Scotsman provided two goals and eight assists from defence - no other Luton player laying on more goals.



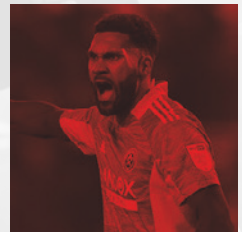
54. DAN NEIL
(Sunderland)

It was a season of milestones for Dan Neil. In September, the Sunderland youth product scored his first goal for his club, in October he penned a new contract, in November he debuted for England U20s and, in May, he and the Mackems celebrated promotion to the Championship. Seven assists and three goals in League One highlighted his obvious potential.



53. ROSS SYKES
(Accrington Stanley)

There's a fantastic video of Sykes charging back from an attacking set-piece to make a recovery tackle that sums up his never-say-die attitude (versus Wycombe; check it out!). The Stanley academy graduate played more games (44) this season than any in his career to date, and won more aerials than any defender in League One, ranking second for interceptions made.



52. WES FODERINGHAM
(Sheff Utd)

Foderingham has grabbed the opportunity to replace Aaron Ramsdale with both hands in 2021/22. With 18 clean sheets in 32 games, the 31-year-old shut out the opposition in 56% of the Championship games he played in 2021/22, the best clean sheet percentage in the division. 'Big Wes' also saved two of the three penalties he faced.



Congratulations on charting at #70 in our Playmaker 72, Davis! What do you make of your ranking?

I thought I could have been a little bit further down the order, haha, but I'll take it!

On a personal note, you've had a fabulous season, but it must have been tough given Oldham's relegation...?

I'm not gonna lie, it's been tough. There have been quite a few distractions along the way, but it's our job as players and professionals to focus on the job in hand and we've unfortunately not done enough individually, or as a team.

I would have much preferred for the team to be doing better, but obviously I'm delighted to do quite well personally this year. You've just got to take the positives.

Well, there have been plenty of positives for you! Only four players scored more than your 15 League Two goals in 2021/22 - is this the best you've performed in your career?

Interview by Stephen Gillett

In terms of my goal tally, it is, definitely. I scored 17 in all comps, and my target is always double figures so I'm quite pleased.

I would say I'm starting to come into my prime. I'm 24 now and hopefully in the next few seasons I can smash the tallies that I'm hitting already.

You're classed by many as a midfielder, but you're very versatile. What's your best position?

That's quite a tough question, as I've played so many! One good thing about my game is I can play quite a few positions.

I was more of an attacking midfielder and winger last season, but especially at the back end of this season, I've played more like a centre forward who can drop into midfield.

Basically any position that gives me the opportunity to get into the box and take a few chances.

Are there a couple of highlights that stand out for you?

During my time with Oldham as a whole, the one that stands out for me is scoring the matchwinner in the derby win against Rochdale last September.

I also enjoyed Sutton away this season. It's quite a tough place to go and we were getting beaten one nil. I came on and got two assists and we ended up winning so that was a nice moment.



Last season, Oldham were the second highest scorers in League Two with 72 goals, but the Latics only notched 46 in 2021/22. What changed?

I would say we probably lacked a big strong number nine.

We had Hallam Hope and myself in forward areas, but no out-and-out 9 to give us an option to go a bit longer, throw his strength around in the box and score goals.

Has creating chances or taking them been the biggest problem?

I think a bit of both. I've probably missed more chances than anyone this year and we have missed a fair few. But maybe we also lacked a bit of creativity.

You drew 5-5 with League Two winners Forest Green and picked up points against a good number of top-half teams...was it a season of fine margins?

Yeah, you took the words right out of my mouth. It has been a season of fine margins, and if they go against you the difference can be 5-6 places in the table.

You need to be clinical at this level, and if you lose games, it is very easy to lose momentum.

Little things, like switching off and making individual mistakes can really hurt you, and we have had a lot of setbacks particularly towards the end of games.

How do you feel your game has evolved this season?

The biggest thing has been looking after my body and competing better physically, as well as adding a little bit more pace.

I'm not fast, but I've got a lot sharper on the ball to help me not get caught. I'm decent in the air for my size and I think I'm just adding experience really.

I've played a decent amount of games now and have a little bit of savviness and know how.

Your goals have been really varied: eight from open play, seven from dead-balls and you've also scored a fair few with your left foot and your head. Do you consider yourself a bit of an all-rounder?

I think playing that false 9 role I spoke about has helped with that. Playing with (winger) Nicky Adams has also helped me, as he has been putting loads of balls in the box and is always telling me to stay alive.

It's so important to be proactive, not reactive and to be on your toes. I've got a few goals



from outside of the box and I don't want to just be a tap-in guy.

It is a cliché, but it all starts on the training pitch with all of the finishing practice that you do. If you practise that repetitiveness, keep gambling and getting into the right areas you're gonna score goals.

What was your favourite strike of the season?

It has to be my goal against Forest Green when I picked the ball up quite far out and hit one from outside the box into the top corner.

Relatively speaking, you've had few shots blocked this season. Do you consciously try and get your shots off early?

That's key, I think. I've heard Harry Kane say it: when you take a good touch and shoot early, the keeper can't get set.

I pride my game on my first touch and often hit the ball early to try and catch the keeper off guard.

Obviously, you choose your moments, as if you're trying to shoot early all the time, defenders will stick really tight to you.

How much of a distraction has the off-the-pitch stuff been?

I won't lie, the stuff with the fans has had some effect. But the fans have been great this year and stood by the team. I've got nothing but good things to say about them.

It's just one of those things you've got to deal with in football.

You're out of contract at the end of the season. What's next?

To be honest, I've not really thought things over properly yet. I've just focused on my football. I need to chat with the club, and go from there.

Well, good luck with everything, great to talk to you...

Thanks. Maybe next year I can finish a little higher up your list!



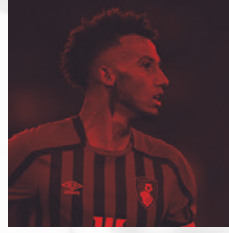
51. WES BURNS
(Ipswich Town)

Since arriving at Portman Road last summer, Burns has offered versatility and consistency – ending this season as the Tractor Boys’ Player of the Season. In total, he contributed 18 goal involvements: 12 goals and six assists. Remarkably, no other Ipswich Town player scored more or assisted more than Burns, who was named in League One’s Team of the Season.



50. SEPP VAN DEN BERG
(Preston North End)

Liverpool defender Sepp van den Berg’s loan to Preston has been a roaring success. A fan favourite at Deepdale, he debuted for Netherlands U21s this season and even played against his parent club in October. Only 20, he is a fine reader of the game and ranked seventh for interceptions in the Championship (76) this season. Destined for bigger things.



49. LLOYD KELLY
(Bournemouth)

The youngest captain in the second tier was crucial to Bournemouth’s successful 2021/22 promotion bid. Described by manager Scott Parker as a ‘Rolls Royce’ of a defender, Kelly is superb at covering space and defusing attacks (he was only dribbled past on seven occasions all season) and successfully marshalled the best defence in the second tier in 2021/22.



48. GAVIN BAZUNU
(Portsmouth)

Arguably no Man City loanee has made a better case for a long-term Etihad future than Republic of Ireland international Bazunu. Still only 20, the talented stopper kept 16 League One clean sheets at Portsmouth, whose boss Danny Cowley hailed Bazunu as “a top goalkeeper...the best I’ve worked with.” Saved a Cristiano Ronaldo penalty on international duty in September.



43. DAVID AJIBOYE
(Sutton Utd)

Ajiboye’s style has drawn comparisons to Raheem Sterling for the way he drives at defenders, and only four players in L2 completed more successful dribbles than the winger (59) this season. He also contributed eight goals and five assists as the Us’ maiden football league campaign saw them just miss out on the play-offs and reach the EFL Trophy final.



42. HARRY DARLING
(MK Dons)

MK Dons’ Young Player of the Year last season, Darling kicked on impressively in 2021/22. The Dons may have crashed out in the play-offs, after narrowly missing out on automatic promotion, but Darling was rightly named in League One’s Team of the Season. The cultured defender completed the second-most successful passes in L1 and netted 10 goals across all competitions.



41. ANTOONEE ROBINSON
(Fulham)

Unlike the Star Wars series, Antonee ‘Jedi’ Robinson has improved year on year. The athletic American has contributed to Fulham’s successful Championship promotion campaign with two goals and four assists. The wing-back also made the second-most interceptions (62), second-most tackles (47), and third-most passes (2023) for the Cottagers and will now be looking forward to tackling the Premier League.



40. MORGAN GIBBS-WHITE
(Sheff Utd)

A key member of the England side that won the Under-17 World Cup in 2017, Gibbs-White’s transition from academy starlet to Premier League regular has taken longer than expected. However, the 22-year-old sparked in the Championship with Sheffield United this season recording 12 goals and 10 assists for the Blades. The England U21 player undoubtedly has elite potential.



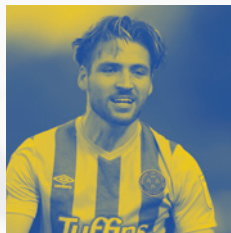
47. LEWIS O'BRIEN
(Huddersfield)

From Under-11s to first-team, O'Brien has been on quite a journey with Huddersfield. Promoted to vice-captain in 2021/22, the midfielder's leadership, consistency and versatility were outstanding as the Terriers finished fourth in the Championship and reached the play-off final. Ranked sixth for tackles (96) and second for dribbles (88) in the second tier and contributed three goals and three assists.



46. LIAM ROBERTS
(Northampton Town)

There's more to football than stats, but Roberts has some very persuasive ones in his corner. The Cobblers keeper kept a whopping 21 league clean sheets in 2021/22, the most by any goalkeeper across 'The 92', and also racked up a hugely impressive save percentage of 76%. Played all but one game in Northampton's ultimately unsuccessful promotion push.



45. LUKE LEAHY
(Shrewsbury Town)

The full-back turned midfielder has often been compared to Wycombe's Joe Jacobson for his ability on the ball, whether that be creating from out-wide or finding the net himself from a set-piece or open play. This season, Leahy provided seven assists (the most of any Shrewsbury player) and eight goals – only Daniel Udoh had more goal involvements for the Shrews.



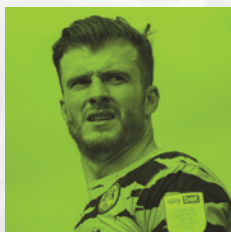
44. JEVANI BROWN
(Exeter City)

It has arguably taken until this season - with League Two runners-up Exeter - for this mercurial talent to really piece his game together. With seven goals and 12 assists in 12 in 2021/22, 27-year-old Brown was the Grecians' most productive player and he also contributed 125 key passes as City side-stepped their play-off hoodoo and secured automatic promotion.



39. JAMES MCCLEAN
(Wigan Athletic)

This season was McClean's first playing outside the top two tiers of English football. However, his talents were evidently not on the wane, as Wigan lifted the League One title in the Irishman's second spell at the club. McClean contributed nine goals and six assists to the Latics' cause and was named in League One's Team of the Season.



38. NICKY CADDEN
(Forest Green)

Cadden's season started well with a hat-trick in August against Crawley before he was named League Two's Player of the Month for September. The left-sided Scot provided plenty of ammunition during Forest Green's title-winning League Two campaign: completing 127 key passes in total – the most in the division – as well as a dozen assists, seven of which came from crosses.



37. BART BIALKOWSKI
(Millwall)

Arguably the safest pair of hands outside the top flight, Millwall's Bialkowski is "the best shot-stopper in the Championship" according to his Lions team-mate Jake Cooper. The Polish stopper enjoyed a particularly fine period of form in February/March, when he went 559 minutes without conceding a Championship goal – an unbeaten streak only Fulham's Marek Rodak (563 minutes) bettered in 2021/22.



36. MATT JAY
(Exeter City)

Exeter skipper Jay is a fantastic example of a hometown player coming good. After pouring cold water over transfer rumours last summer, Jay took the armband and led his beloved club to automatic promotion. The diminutive forward boasted the best shots-on-target percentage (50%) in the division in 2021/22 and again top-scored for the Grecians with 14 goals. A triumphant campaign!



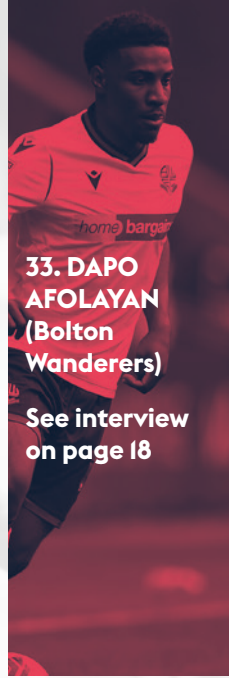
35. SORBA THOMAS
(Huddersfield Town)

Thomas has made the step up from the National League to the Championship look effortless. A trademark of his play has been his delivery from out wide, no winger in the second tier pinging in as many successful crosses as the Wales international (87), who has 12 assists going into the Terriers' play-off final versus Nottingham Forest at Wembley.



34. BILLY SHARP
(Sheffield Utd)

The Sheffield United legend is approaching 250 career goals across all four divisions of 'The 92', and his predatory instincts remain as, ahem, sharp as ever. Hampered by injury from March onwards, the striker still hit 14 goals to become the Championship's all-time top scorer (since the 04/05 rebrand) with 128 goals. The 36-year-old also supplied an impressive seven assists.



33. DAPO AFOLAYAN
(Bolton Wanderers)

See interview on page 18



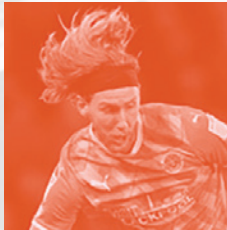
32. BARRY BANNAN
(Sheffield Wednesday)

The Scottish playmaker excelled in League One in 2021/22, winning the EFL Goal of the Season for a ludicrous strike against MK Dons and also named in the third tier's Team of the Season. The Owls' campaign ended in play-off heartbreak, but Bannan was simply outstanding, scoring nine goals and supplying 12 assists, in addition to playing 125 key passes.



27. JAMILLE MATT
(Forest Green)

The focal point of the League Two champions' attacking play, Forest Green captain Matt formed part of the most prolific duo in the division with Matty Stevens, the pair netting an astonishing 42 goals between them. The Jamaican has shared the limelight around though: "A striker is sometimes only as good as the creativity around him," he said in February.



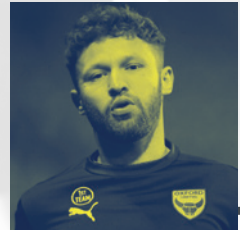
26. JOSH BOWLER
(Blackpool)

To their credit, Blackpool snapped up Josh Bowler on a one-year deal after his release by Everton last summer - but they must now wish he was on a longer contract! Still just 23, Bowler has been unplayable at times in the Championship where he scored seven goals, contributed three assists and was the only player to complete 100+ successful dribbles.



25. CAMERON BRANNAGAN
(Oxford Utd)

Any mention of Brannagan's 2021/22 vintage must start with his incredible four-goal haul against Gillingham in January. Scoring a 'poker' is special anyway, but the Oxford midfielder's was a rarity as it consisted solely of penalties! The U's missed out on League One's play-offs, but Brannagan scored 14 goals and featured in the 'Top 10' for a raft of statistics.



24. MATT TAYLOR
(Oxford Utd)

After two earlier rejections from his boyhood club, Matty Taylor is now stealing the show at Oxford. Karl Robinson's men fell short of the play-offs, but the 32-year old striker scored 20 League One goals, sixteen of them from open play. Since rejoining the U's in 2019/20, no player has scored more League One goals (52) than the prolific marksman.



31. ELIJAH ADEBAYO
(Luton Town)

The 24-year-old notched 16 goals this season to help the Hatters bag an unlikely play-off place. Six of the powerful forward's strikes came from inside the six-yard box, underlining his predatory instincts, with only Aleksandar Mitrovic and Dominik Solanke netting more Championship goals from close range. As team-mate Henri Lansbury put it: "(Adebayo) bullies almost everyone he comes up against."



30. LEE NICHOLLS
(Huddersfield Town)

Considering the limited career opportunities Nicholls received prior to his move to Huddersfield, his stellar performances for the Terriers this season have come as quite a surprise. With a play-off final against Nottingham Forest still to come, Nicholls has kept more Championship clean sheets (19) than any player in 2021/22, also making more saves than any goalkeeper in the division.



29. WILL KEANE
(Wigan Athletic)

After countless bouts of bad luck, the 29-year-old has enjoyed the best season of his career - finishing as League One's top scorer with 26 goals. With a further seven assists, not even League One Player of the Season Scott Twine was more productive than Keane in 2021/22 - the former Man Utd academy player shooting Wigan into the Championship.



28. CHRIS WILLOCK
(QPR)

You don't have praise heaped on you by Arsene Wenger at 16 without bucket loads of talent, but it has taken until this season for Willock to live up to the hype. Technically fantastic, QPR's Player of the Season has added end product in 2021/22: scoring seven goals and racking up 11 assists before injury halted his season in March.



23. BEN BRERETON DIAZ
(Blackburn Rovers)

A cult hero in his mother's native country of Chile, Brereton Diaz enjoyed a sensational season in the Championship. Despite missing a large chunk of the campaign due to an injury in February, the forward still finished third in the division's goal charts with 22 league goals (42% of Rovers' total!). Where would Blackburn have finished if he'd avoided injury?



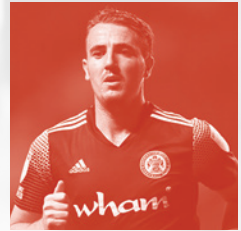
22. DAN BARLASER
(Rotherham Utd)

With two promotions, a relegation and an EFL Trophy win during his time with Rotherham, Barlasler has had an eventful time in South Yorkshire. Named in League One's Team of the Season, the 25-year-old is a fantastic pivot between defence and attack and ranked fifth for key passes in 2021/22, in addition to scoring nine goals and supplying seven assists.



21. ISAIAH JONES
(Middlesbrough)

A year is a long time in football and twelve months ago Jones was on loan with Scottish Championship outfit Queen of the South. After featuring as sub in Middlesbrough's opening game, however, the marauding wing-back has gone from strength to strength and excelled in a fabulous FA Cup run that saw Boro dump out both Man Utd and Spurs.



20. SEAN MCCONVILLE
(Accrington Stanley)

McConville claimed a hat-trick of assists against Wimbledon on the final day to top off an incredible season. In total, he chalked up 17 assists in 2021/22, the most in League One, and completed the most key passes (161) in the top four tiers. McConville's incredible numbers underlined that he is back to his best after a serious Achilles injury.

Interview
by
Stephen
Gillett

AFOOLAY

Are you happy with your ranking of 33, Dapo?

Well, there's a lot of good players in the EFL... I'm happy to make the 'Top 40', especially with this being my first full season.

I made Number 37 in the FourFourTwo list, so I'm a bit higher than that!

You've obviously enjoyed a fabulous season. What have your personal highlights been?

I think for me it has to be Ipswich away on my birthday. I scored two goals and we won 5-2, which was a massive result for us.

The other one would be Sunderland at home when we won 6-0 and I got an assist. That was an incredible result.

Those two games really stick out.

You joined Bolton when they were in the bottom half of League Two and you've just finished ninth in League One. What's that journey and adventure been like?

It's one of those things where maybe I won't really realise how good it's been until the end of my career as, since I've joined, it's been constant football.

It's been a whirlwind, but yeah, it's been amazing so far and we know there are still areas for us to improve in.

We've seen the standards in League One this season and now we want to take that next step.

You joined Bolton from West Ham. You scored in your one senior appearance for the Hammers; how was that and how big a wrench was it to leave them?

West Ham was my first introduction to professional football and it was really good for me.





The set-up, the staff, the coaches were great and looked after me really well.

I've always wanted to play at the highest level and playing in the FA Cup and scoring was obviously great for me.

I'm realistic, though, and I knew that to reach that level I needed to go out and do more. I need to play in League One, the Championship etc and show I can perform consistently, not just on one occasion. I feel I have done that so far at Bolton.

Who were your role models at West Ham?

'Nobes' (Mark Noble) is always the one you look up to as a young player. You watch him and see how he trains, how professional he is.

There are no secrets behind why he's been at the top for so long.

I know Dec (Declan Rice) really well and he's the same. He's taken everything onboard, applied it and you can see the results.

Despite making an incredible impact at Bolton, you were only involved in three goals last season. This season you've been involved in 17 (12G, 5A) - how pleasing has that been?

The funny thing is that last season I didn't feel far off it. If a bit of luck had gone my way and a few balls dropped differently, I could have ended up with eight or nine goals. I must have hit the post four or five times!

I had some big chances saved, things like that. So, I knew it was always small margins.

That's the difference between the leagues, though: making sure the finer details are perfect. I worked hard last summer and obviously the goals and assists have followed this season.

You've ranked in the top three for successful dribbles all season, so you've given League One defenders a torrid time. Who's been your toughest opponent though?

Good question. One single defender doesn't really stand out, as the main issue for me has been when teams have doubled or tripled up on me.

I'd probably say Rotherham and Wes Harding, though. He came on specifically to mark me and made my life difficult!

Even if defenders play me well, though, I always know that I just need to go past them once to set up a goal.

You've become a crowd favourite at the UniBol. Do you see yourself as an entertainer?

100% - that's a big part of football. People pay their money to come and see good goals, big tackles, things like that.

As an attacker, I try to express myself and beat people 1v1, as not only does it help the team, but it also gets people's bums off seats.

Bolton started really well, but drifted a bit in the middle of the season before finishing strongly. Why do you think you fell short of the play-offs?

The main thing was that we went through a bad patch with injuries and basically didn't have the depth at the time.

In January we recruited, and we finished the season with a bigger, better squad.

We know we've dropped points we shouldn't have, at more difficult grounds or in difficult conditions, but this team is a new team. The manager has only been here two years.

Now we need to keep moving forward. We know what to expect from the league so there's no real excuses anymore.

Here's a stat for you: Bolton have won 21 of the 23 games they have led in in League One this season. Why are you such good frontrunners?

The way we play helps us manage games when we're in front. We need to do better when we fall behind. We've rarely taken the lead against teams in the top six, which is a clear area we can work on.

We used to concede first and go on to lose games in the past, but that's changing.

We've got a lot of character in the squad now, which you can see from the fact we score so many late goals.

What aspects of your game do you feel you've really improved this season?

Obviously in terms of my goals and assists, but also defensively and tactically I've been better for the team.

I've been able to adapt to different systems and formations, especially in the second half of the season.

My dribbling is coming on and my physicality is improving: my strength and my speed.

Any targets for next season?

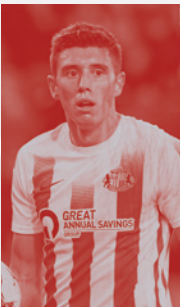
I want to hit 20 goals and be consistent in my performances. This season has gone well, but it doesn't mean anything if I don't back it up.

19. ROSS STEWART
(Sunderland)

Nicknamed the 'Loch Ness Drogba', Ross Stewart finished the campaign scoring the goal that ensured Sunderland returned to the Championship at Wembley.

The Scottish forward bagged 26 in total, scoring the vast majority of his goals from inside the penalty area including seven headers – only two players scored more with their heads in the league this season.

Sunderland have been so reliant on Stewart that when the goals briefly dried up, boss Alex Neil came out in his defence: "To expect a lad to come to this level and churn that out repeatedly for that amount of time, having done what he has done for us already, you are asking a lot of anybody."



18. ANTONY EVANS
(Bristol Rovers)

The last day of the season in League Two was epic, as Bristol Rovers smashed SEVEN goals past Scunthorpe to claim an automatic promotion place.

It was no surprise that blossoming talent Antony Evans was at the heart of the drama.

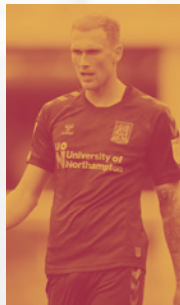
An unforgettable day like that was just reward for Evans who has sparkled in League Two, scoring 10 goals and supplying 12 assists. Six of those 10 league goals have come from outside the box - the most in League Two

However, the stats don't tell the full tale regarding this mercurial talent, whose ability to regularly conjure magical moments has won the hearts of the Rovers faithful.

17. MITCH PINNOCK
(Northampton Town)

Dubbed 'The Postman' by Northampton fans for his pinpoint accuracy, Mitchell Pinnock has been a key player in Jon Brady's team – playing in every single league game this season and chipping in with 22 goal involvements.

The stats suggest that he is the source of imagination for Northampton's squad: joint-top for most assists (13), sixth for most key passes (82) and fifth for most accurate crosses (73) in League Two this season. His deliveries are also one of the main reasons Northampton were so deadly from set-pieces in 2021/22..



Now in his prime, Pinnock is playing the best football of his career and it looks like he is enjoying every minute of it.



16. MICHAEL SMITH
(Rotherham Utd)

Michael Smith is a true number nine in the era of false nines. His manager Paul Warne describes him as a 'dying breed'.

Warne's system plays to Smith's strengths, with creative players supplying the ammunition he needs. He's duly delivered too. Smith scored 19 goals in League One this season, eight of which were with his head – only Will Keane topped that.

His prolific season earned him plenty of accolades. Smith was twice named LI Player of the Month and he scooped up everything at his club's end of season awards: Player of the Year, Players' Player of the Year, and the Community Player of the Season. Not bad going.

15. JOHN SWIFT
(Reading)

Most players at the top of the goals and assists charts are from the best teams in the division but the most notable exception is Reading's John Swift.

With 11 goals and 13 assists in 2021/22, the Royals playmaker was the most productive central midfielder in the division and one of only six players to achieve double figures for goals AND assists.

However, none of the other five players (Billing, Gibbs-White, Johnson, Weimann and Wilson) were embroiled in a relegation battle for much of the season like the 26-year-old Swift.

Despite surviving the drop, the indications are that Swift will leave Reading this summer. Expect a stiff race for his signature given his eye-catching stats during the 2021/22 campaign.





14. ANDREAS WEIMANN
(Bristol City)

Despite missing the majority of last season due to an ACL injury, this year is the best of Weimann's career.

The 30-year old scored 22 times in the Championship and provided 10 assists – just one of three players to score 20 or more goals and provide 10 or more assists alongside Mohamed Salah and Scott Twine.

The Austrian has kept his magic touch even when deployed at wing-back. After a goal and an assist against West Brom from that position in March, Nigel Pearson described Weimann as “a manager's delight because whatever job you give him to do, he'll do it.”

His form was also noticed by his country again, with Weimann appearing for *Das Team* for the first time in seven years.

13. DJED SPENCE
(Nottingham Forest)

Sent on loan to “sort himself out” by now-departed Middlesbrough boss Neil Warnock, Djed Spence has done exactly that.

Given free rein on Forest's right flank, the defender has made huge strides under the guidance of Steve Cooper and is currently being linked with Bayern Munich among others.

Spence ranked highly in the dribbling stakes in the Championship this term, racking up more than any other defender in the division (74). He fulfilled his defensive duties too: blocking more crosses than anyone else (20).



A dazzling display in Forest's I-O FA Cup win over Arsenal in January, had Gunners legend Ian Wright reaching for superlatives.

“I have not seen a combative, technical, swashbuckling performance like that for a very long time,” he said on *Wrighty's House podcast*.

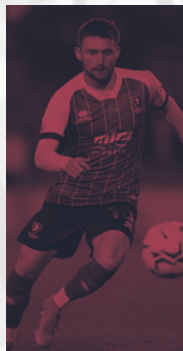


11. ALFIE MAY
(Cheltenham Town)

Until this season there was no suggestion that Alfie May could become a 20-goals-a-season man.

However, May is now established as one of League One's most lethal finishers after scoring 23 league goals for Cheltenham this season.

An undoubted highlight from May's amazing campaign was his ‘poker’ in an incredible 5-5 draw against Wycombe in February, which saw him join Gabriel Jesus, Cameron Brannagan, Harry McKirdy and Scott Twine as the only players to score four goals in a league game this season.



Polished, robust and full of character, 2021/22 has been a spectacular vintage for the free-scoring Red - who is now just one goal shy of Julian Alspop's all-time EFL goal record (39) for Cheltenham.

10. HARRY WILSON
(Fulham)

“His shooting is world-class. Find me five players who shoot better than him.”

Jürgen Klopp showered praise on academy graduate Wilson during his time at Liverpool, but the Welshman failed to make the grade at Anfield.

He has unlocked new parts to his game this season, however, helping Fulham eviscerate England's second-tier.

The winger racked up more league assists (19) than any player in ‘The 92’, and banged in 10 strikes to take his direct goal contributions to a whopping 29.

Wilson has described 2021/22 as his ‘most enjoyable season’ and he was deservedly shortlisted for the Championship Player of the Season.

A key member of the Wales side striving to reach the 2022 World Cup - Wilson looks primed to make an impact in the Premier League next season.





Words by Richard Cole

FOOTY

If The Mighty Delta is going to spend the time ranking the best EFL players, then it might as well get on to the important things: scrán.

There have been some superb efforts by clubs this season to keep the fans happy but other clubs need to take a long, hard look at themselves.

Here, we've gone through the EFL to see which clubs deserve promotion, which warrant relegation and which may need their food licence revoked (we're joking!).

SCRAN

CHAMPIONSHIP Promotion

Birmingham City: The Blues have put in some solid efforts this season and deserve recognition for it. But the pick of the bunch is the chicken gyros topped with honey mustard mayo.

Hull City: Cheese lovers will have enjoyed their trip to the MKM stadium regardless of the result. Just look at the beauty of these pulled pork loaded chips.

Barnsley: Unfortunately, the Tykes will be taking their scrán to League One but if it was up to us they'd be going up. These nachos deserve the very best.

Relegation

Stoke City: The Potters claim that this is a chicken burger, we've seen chicken burgers before and they don't look like this is worthy of relegation and maybe a points deduction next season.

Sheffield United: No this is not the surface of a volcanic alien planet, it's a balti pie on offer at Sheffield United. Why would they do this?

West Bromwich Albion: Imagine paying four of your hard-earned pounds for this small slice of an overcooked pizza. The disappointment is palpable.





**FOOTY SCRAN
PROMOTIONS**

CHAMPIONSHIP

BIRMINGHAM CITY
CHICKEN GYROS
WITH HONEY MUSTARD

HULL CITY
PULLED PORK
LOADED CHIPS

BARNSELY
NACHOS

**FIND THE BILL
AT @FootyScran**



LEAGUE ONE

Promotion

Cambridge United: Now there's a fine-looking kebab on offer at the Abbey Stadium, although maybe the £7.99 price is a little off-putting.

Sunderland: A chilli dog simply too good for League One level – a thing of beauty that deserves its own documentary series.

Cheltenham Town: Korean style wings are always a treat and these look particularly delicious, about as good as you can get for a fiver.

Relegation

Cheltenham Town: Oh no, Cheltenham, from heroes to zeroes. After those amazing wings come these 'cheesy chips' with the cardinal sin of just putting a slice of cheese on some chips.

Rotherham United: It's a plain burger alright, but this looks like one that you put in the microwave for a few minutes and spend the rest of the day regretting your life choices.

Burton Albion: When your food doesn't look like it has been cooked then it's relegation. This sausage roll looks like it just returned from an Antarctic expedition.



FOOTY SCRAN'S PROMOTIONS

LEAGUE ONE

CAMBRIDGE UNITED
KEBAB

SUNDERLAND
CHILLI DOG

CHELTHENHAM TOWN
KOREAN STYLE
CHICKEN WINGS

LEAGUE TWO

ROCHDALE
SAMOSAS

SALFORD CITY
HOT DOG AND CHIPS

BRISTOL ROVERS
VEGAN TACOS



LEAGUE TWO

Promotion

Rochdale: There's plenty to enjoy about these samosas on offer and at just £3 they're a bargain too. Good work from everyone all-around at Spotlands.

Salford City: Other clubs take note, this is a shining example of what a hot dog and chips should look like and includes the magic words 'drink included'.

Bristol Rovers: Despite being in the same league as Forest Green Rovers, the Gas are defying the odds with these delicious-looking vegan tacos.

Relegation

Leyton Orient: Maybe there is a gravy shortage because Leyton Orient have decided on this liquor gravy that simply isn't a suitable substance for the real thing. At least we can see it, though.

Bradford City: If you'd never seen a hot dog before in your life then you may be forgiven for thinking that this is one. We're not sure what it is but there's no way they lured Mark Hughes to the club with this.

Tranmere Rovers: Apparently this is 'with gravy' but we're still struggling to see exactly where the gravy is. Just terrible.



9. HARRY MCKIRDY (Swindon Town)

After failing to break through at Aston Villa, McKirdy impressed at Carlisle in 2019/20, scoring 11 League Two goals, but was subsequently released because he wasn't 'settled', according to the Cumbrians' boss Chris Beech:

"I respect the skill sets he has got - 100 percent - (but) Harry wasn't happy. He lives in Harry's world and needs to find a place where he is happy for those skill sets to be more consistent."

A free agent last summer, 'Harry's world' was in danger of imploding until he found his spiritual home at Swindon this season.

Now 25, McKirdy has played the best football of his career and was deservedly voted into the League Two 2021/22 Team of the Season.

In total, the spritely forward was involved in 29 league goals for the Robins (21 goals and eight assists), NO player involved in more goals in the fourth tier.

What McKirdy's numbers don't reflect is his exuberance and spontaneity; his joie de vivre and quirky character key to what make him such an exciting player to watch.

After scoring a brace in Swindon's play-off semi-final first leg win over Port Vale, McKirdy's season unfortunately ended on a low - the forward skying his spot-kick as the Robins lost a decisive penalty shoot-out after a dramatic second leg.

One thing is for sure: Harry's world is never boring!



8. COLE STOCKTON (Morecambe)

Scoring 23 goals and supplying four assists in League One would be seriously impressive under any circumstances...but in Cole Stockton's case, it was exceptional.

Overlooked for League One's Team of the Season in 2021/22, Stockton's performances and the quality of his goals make a strong case that he should have been included.

While other prolific forwards in the division played for promotion contenders regularly enjoying over 50% possession, Stockton led the line for a club fighting for their lives who had only 43% of the ball on average.

The forward's back catalogue of goals in 2021/22 is stunning. A 50-yard lob against Wimbledon, a 30-yard turn and strike against Lincoln, a rasping volley at Oxford, a Beckham-like ping versus Fleetwood and a Yeboah-esque rocket against Cambridge... the list goes on.

No player had more shots on target (62) in League One this season than Stockton, who amazingly hit all but two of his 23 goals with his right foot.

It's also notable that Stockton scored more LI goals from open play (18) than any player.

That the Shrimps managed to preserve their third tier status is remarkable and it is inconceivable that they could have done so without their talisman.

Stockton may have won a relegation tussle rather than a promotion battle, but his season was Roy of the Rovers stuff and had a suitably happy ending!

7. FABIO CARVALHO (Fulham)

Born in Lisbon before moving to England at age 11, Fabio Carvalho has quickly become the kind of player you pay to watch.

He's a hybrid footballer, in many ways. Carvalho has vibes of a classical 'number 10' and hints of yesteryear Portuguese technicians, such as Deco and Rui Costa, combined with the feel of a 'number 8', who can drop deeper to influence the game and excel in tight spaces à la Bernardo Silva.

However, he's also a tricky winger, blessed with the quick feet and agility to breeze past opponents as if they're not there. Basically, he's got a bit of everything!

The 19-year-old has scored 10 goals and made eight assists in 34 Championship appearances this season to help the Cottagers comfortably win the league.

His numbers are particularly impressive for a teenager. In his age group (Under 21s), only Nottingham Forest's Brennan Johnson (18 goals & 10 assists) has had more goal involvements than the young Portuguese this season in the Championship.

It's no surprise then that Carvalho has already made the move to a big club. A January winter move to Liverpool fell through, but Jürgen Klopp was quick to guarantee his services with a deal confirmed in May.

He'll be facing his fellow Championship winning teammates in the top flight next season.



6. DOMINIC TELFORD (Newport County)

By his own admission, the 2021/22 campaign was 'sink or swim' for Dominic Telford.

The goals hadn't flowed after his January 2021 move to Newport and he found himself on the Exiles' transfer list last summer.

Telford buckled down, however, and was rewarded with a spectacular season that saw him top the League Two goal charts with 25 goals.

Although he scored every 122 minutes on average, it's fair to say Telford enjoyed the most productive of purple patches between October and December, when he hit an amazing 12 goals in eight games, a spree that included his first-ever senior hat-trick.

The arrival of new manager James Rowberry in October coincided with Telford's season sparking into life.

"The big thing was having the new manager (Rowberry) come in...he believed in me," Telford stated recently.

Telford possessed the most lethal left foot outside of the Premier League this season: 17 of his 25 L2 strikes coming courtesy of his deadly left peg, only Mo Salah able to boast more left-footed league strikes across 'The 92'.

Nominated for League Two's Player of the Season award and named in the Team of the Season, Telford is convinced there's plenty more to come.

"I back my ability. If I play games of football, I'm going to score goals," he told the Delta back in January.

5. BRENNAN JOHNSON (Nottingham Forest)

Of all the exciting, young players who have flourished in the EFL this season, Brennan Johnson might just be the most promising prospect of all. After all, we're talking about the Championship Young Player of the Season here.

The son of former player David Johnson, Brennan has always been an exciting prospect. He's unpredictable, possesses blistering pace, and knows exactly how to use it to his advantage – a nightmare for defenders.

A Nottingham Forest academy graduate, Johnson made his debut at the age of 18 before a successful loan stint at Lincoln City last season where he flourished.

This year he continued his development even further, finishing as Forest's top scorer with 16 goals in the Championship. He also provided 10 assists to help his side finish fourth.

With a Wembley play-off final still to play, Johnson tops the Championship table for goal contributions for his age group (Under 21) ahead of Fulham's Carvalho and places sixth overall behind older, more experienced pros.

At the tender age of 20, Johnson is already a regular fixture for the Wales national team and is tipped to become the Dragons' next star.

'Star' is definitely the word to use with Brennan Johnson. He's almost certainly going to be playing top-level football very soon. Top-flight clubs in England and abroad are already queuing up for the player's signature.



4. KANE WILSON (Forest Green)

Snapped up from West Brom in the summer of 2020, Kane Wilson impressed in his first full campaign with Forest Green Rovers...but there was little indication of what was to come.

This season, however, Wilson enjoyed an outstanding campaign that saw him quite literally run teams ragged.

Although he has since left in acrimonious circumstances, Rob Edwards' appointment as Rovers manager last summer was an inspired one, as the former Wolves U23 coach guided the Gloucestershire club to the League Two title.

Under Edwards, Wilson was given licence to roam free on the right flank and it quickly became apparent that the flying wing-back was a phenomenal dribbler and exceptional in 1vs1s.

Ranking top for most successful dribbles in the EFL, only one player across the top four tiers returned higher dribbling stats than Wilson in 2021/22 - Newcastle's flying winger Allan Saint-Maximin.

Wilson allied fantastic end product with his penetration and completed 95 key passes in League Two, in addition to swinging in more accurate crosses (60) than any fourth tier defender.

After all that, we've saved Wilson's headline stat for last, as he finished joint-top for League Two assists this season, level with Northampton's Mitch Pinnock on 13.

Wilson deservedly picked up the League Two Player of the Season award and will now be a key man for Rovers in League One next term.



3. DOMINIC SOLANKE (Bournemouth)

It's easy to forget that Dominic Solanke is still only 24 years old. The one-time England striker's name has been known to football fans for so long that you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Bournemouth man was pushing 30 already.

Solanke's big-money move from Liverpool to Bournemouth took a while to work out. At first, it looked like the former Chelsea product was an expensive flop.

However, under Scott Parker, the player is now at his best. He leads the charge for his team with an excellent work rate, pressing from the front, pace, and an eye for goal.

Following a typically scintillating performance against Blackburn Rovers in late April, Parker paid tribute to the player: "Dom, as always... there are not many more words I can say about him or try to compliment him, in terms of what he gives to us as a team and what he is as a bloke."

This season, Solanke bagged 30 goals for Bournemouth in all competitions – 29 of those in the league – doubling his tally from last season.

If it wasn't for Aleksandar Mitrovic, we'd be talking about how Solanke is topping all the charts. His overall goal tally, goal contributions, goal to games ratio – they're all fantastic, but they are all second-best thanks to a certain Serbian.

Of course, scoring goals for fun in the Championship isn't going to convince everyone. There's still the question of whether Solanke can recapture this kind of form in the Premier League.



2. SCOTT TWINE (MK Dons)

MK Dons' summer signing Scott Twine has admitted he was "a bit worried" when Russell Martin, the manager who sold him 'Project MK', left six days before the start of the season.

The world works in mysterious ways, though, and Martin's successor Liam Manning has brought the best out of Twine, who has hailed 2021/22 as his "most enjoyable season in professional football".

League One's Player of the Season, Twine scored a seriously impressive 20 goals and supplied 13 assists in the third tier.

One of an exclusive trio to score 20+ goals and record 10+ assists this term, alongside Liverpool's Mo Salah and Bristol City's Andreas Weimann, Twine has been unplayable at times - notably scoring four against Plymouth.

For anyone who's followed Twine's rapid rise, the 22-year-old has a staggering ability to strike a ball from distance.

This term, nine of his goals have come from outside the box and, if you factor in last season, 18 of his 33 league goals have been struck from beyond the 18-yard line. Incredible.

Only Accrington's Sean McConville (16) and Sheffield Wednesday's Barry Bannan (128) played more key passes than Twine (112) in League One in 2021/22, and only McConville (17) registered more assists.

With the goal return of a '9', the creativity of a '10' and the technique of an '8', Twine is tipped for the top.

Let us start this profile on Fulham goal machine Aleksandar Mitrovic by saying that, despite earning our respect with 43 (yes, forty three) league goals this season, it has been grudging - because he has made Playmaker's life difficult!

The term 'Stat Killer' is one of our own invention to describe the teams and players who rob us of delightful statistics to share with our public. Manchester City have been the most obvious stat wreckers since Pep Guardiola sidled into town, with City invariably topping leaderboards across the top four tiers when it comes to goals scored, clean sheets, possession, pass completion, longest unbeaten runs etc etc.

However excited we may get about Shrewsbury's watertight defensive displays, Wigan's away form, or Chris Willock's pass accuracy, City and their personnel are invariably ready to pilfer top spot in our stats.

The only silver lining with City was that (pre-Haaland!) they had pretty much dispensed with a centre-forward, so there hasn't been a single Citizen dominating every goal stat in sight.

However, Fulham's relegation from the top flight last season effectively unleashed a 'Stat Killer' to fill that void... as Mitrovic has blown the Championship to smithereens in 2021/22.

The powerful Serb has terrorised the life out of defences in the second tier this season and he tops just about every goal statistic going.

Words by Stephen Gillett



ALEKSANDAR MITROVIC



Goals (43), goals involved in (50), goals-per-game (0.98), minutes-per-goal (89), shots on target (92), matchwinners (8), 8 of team's Championship goals (41), penalties scored (6), goals in the first 15 minutes (7), most hat-tricks (3) - you name it, Mitrovic is top of it!

It's universally accepted that sticking the ball in the back of the net is the hardest job in football, yet it's been a cakewalk for Mitrovic - his goals flying in from all angles, as champions Fulham racked up over 100 goals in the second tier to bounce straight back up into the Premier League.

The likes of 20-assist Harry Wilson and Liverpool-bound Fabio Carvalho also enjoyed dazzling campaigns, but 'Mitro' - voted the Championship Player of the Season to nobody's surprise at the end of April - has been the Cottager's main man. He's scored 43 goals, for goodness sake!



MITROVIC

For the record, ALL of the fearsome forward's 43 Championship strikes have been scored from inside the box, 12 of them (the most across the 92 obviously!) from inside the six-yard box. Three of those goals have been scored on the counter-attack with 28 stemming from open-play; 22 have come courtesy of his unerring right foot, a dozen from headers and nine via his left-boot (including an absolute netbuster against Bristol City!).

It's actually interesting to conduct a short thought experiment and inhabit the mind of a Championship defender for a second.

You're due to face the top scorer in English football, what would you do? Try and bully him? Well, if anyone's tried, it hasn't worked - Mitrovic well outside the 'Top 50' most fouled players in the Championship this season and ranking fifth for aerials won among the division's forwards.

Maybe hold a high line, put as much distance as possible between Mitrovic and your goal, and enforce a rigid offside trap? Well, there's no evidence that that's been an effective tactic either, with the Serb flagged on a modest 24 occasions this season - nearly half as often as other forwards in the

division (Ben Brereton Diaz tops this stat in the Championship with 46 offsides).

Show him left? Block him off at set-pieces? Try and rile him into a stupid sending off? Nope, nothing has worked.

It's almost as if Mitrovic has been untouchable this season, like a prize heavyweight fighter no one could lay a glove on.

It's worth watching all of his goals this season if you've got a spare six minutes (they do take a while), as the footage reveals a masterclass in centre-forward play.

His first goal of the season may have come via a fortuitous ricochet against Huddersfield, but Mitrovic's overall efficiency in front of goal has been scary. Perhaps the most eye-catching things are how relaxed many of his finishes are and how adept he has been at attacking space and running across defenders to latch onto chances.

The apparent ease with which Mitrovic has broken Guy Whittingham's long-standing EFL goal record of 42 goals gives rise to the only possible criticism of his stellar achievements this season...has he been a flat-track bully playing below his level?

It's a pertinent question, in many ways, given that Mitrovic has over 100 Premier League appearances under his belt (24 goals) and a mightily impressive 44 international goals in 71 caps for Serbia.

However, it is worth remembering that last season Mitrovic scored just three goals in 27 Premier League appearances for the Cottagers under Scott Parker, and no one was convinced he was too good for the Championship then.

What this season has illustrated beyond any doubt is that Aleksandar Mitrovic is now a striker in his prime who will score goals given the right service. Lots and lots of goals.

It's now up to Fulham to ride the wave of their impressive title-winning season, and for the 'Stat Killer' in their midst to dispel any lingering doubts about whether he can cut it at the highest level.

(We'd be grateful if you could score just a few less next season, though, Aleksandar...just to mix the stats up a bit!)



MD
GAMES



Five years & up

RISE & FALL



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Words by Alex Lawes and
Stephen Gillett

After a fourth Premier League title in five seasons, the 2021/22 campaign could arguably mark the apex of Manchester City's Abu Dhabi funded project, while their fallen rivals across town have lurched from debacle to disaster to catastrophe.

In this article, we look back at the rise and fall of two English football dynasties...

The 2021/22 Premier League campaign will be best remembered for two heavyweights at the top of their game slugging it out for the title. One swathed in red, the other in blue.

It seems ridiculous to say now, but after their second-placed finish the previous season, Manchester United fans entertained hopes that they would be the Reds challenging Pep Guardiola's Sky Blue champions.

However, the team fighting out of the red corner in 2021/22 was Jürgen Klopp's relentless Liverpool, as United stumbled through a horrendous campaign that saw them lucky to finish sixth.

While their rivals on Merseyside traded blows with City, only to lose out by a single point on the final day of the season, United plumbed new depths, their decision to replace Ole Gunnar Solskjær with interim manager Ralf Rangnick last November looking increasingly absurd as the campaign wore on.

In many ways, Liverpool's Premier League games against City and United in April are a fantastic barometer by which to measure the respective seasons of both Manchester clubs.

PART OF FERGUSON'S GENIUS WAS KNOWING WHEN THE TIME WAS RIGHT TO LEAVE.

City's 2-2 draw with Liverpool on 10 April has been roundly declared as the best game anywhere in Europe this season, and a candidate for the best Premier League match of all-time.

There were obviously fantastic goals (from Kevin De Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus for the hosts; Diogo Jota and Sadio Mane for the visitors), but it was the standard of play across the 90 minutes that kept everyone gripped for the duration.

It was a masterclass of modern football that ebbed and flowed: one team wrestling control, only for the other to deftly nab the ascendancy. There was power, pace, technique, intelligence... and mastery. A sense that these teams and their managers were at the peak of their powers.

Nine days later, after Liverpool had negotiated a Champions League quarter-final and beaten City in a classic FA Cup semi-final, Manchester United

had their chance to avenge the embarrassing 5-0 defeat in October that left Solskjær living on borrowed time.

No one seriously expected United to dent their rivals' title hopes at Anfield but the manner in which Liverpool brushed the Red Devils aside was brutal. 4-0. Probably the most one-sided North West derby in Premier League history.

Thiago showboated in midfield, as Liverpool ran circles around a United team who couldn't get near them for love nor money. Kenny Dalglish beamed from ear to ear in the stands as Red Devils fans bolted for an early exit.

One was a battle for the ages; the other a sorry chapter in an increasingly tragic story.

If you rewind almost 10 years to the day, it's almost as if you can see the tide turning, so we cast an eye back to April 2012 and a game that marked a power shift in Manchester.

April 30, 2012 |
Manchester City I
Manchester United O
(Kompany '45)

THE RISE OF A SUPERPOWER

The story of Manchester City is a well-told one. From genuine success in the distant past to real struggles in the 90s, even plummeting to as low as the third-tier in English football.

They became a stalwart in the Premier League for much of the 2000s, flirting with UEFA Cup qualification, but happy enough in mid-table. That was until the rapid takeover of the club by Abu Dhabi United Group in late-August of 2008.

Within days of the unexpected takeover, City had bid for high-profile players such as Mario Gomez and David Villa as well as signed Robinho from Real Madrid for a fee of £32.5 million – the first time the club had paid more than £20 million for a player.

There were serious teething issues at the start of the new regime. Mark Hughes remained in charge as the club splurged with little planning. It was a scatter-gun approach with almost no long-term foresight.

During the summer of 2009, with Hughes remaining in post, the club made ten high-profile signings. They finished fifth with Hughes sacked before Christmas.

In the summer of 2010, with Roberto Mancini in charge for his first full season, they signed another seven players. They finished third, winning the FA Cup.

Progress was being made but there was still little long-term planning.

It was the 2011/12 season that arguably changed everything. Winning that title justified the spending and clarified what was needed.

It was a problematic campaign with off-field issues between Mancini and former captain Carlos Tevez. One win in five matches across March and April left them eight points behind their neighbours Manchester United.

However, City won their last six matches of that season, including the vital I-O derby win over United at the end of April. It was a watermark victory if ever there was one.

Without that Premier League title, doubts over whether or not any 'new money' club could come and disrupt the established elite would have grown. The project, whilst never at risk or on the brink, would, and could, have been viewed a failure due to the time it was taking.

THE 2011/12 TITLE WIN HAD A CRYSTALLISING EFFECT. EMOTIONALLY AND MENTALLY, THE IDEA OF A NEW AND DOMINANT FORCE IN ENGLISH FOOTBALL WAS GIVEN CREDENCE.

As it was, the 2011/12 title win had a crystallising effect. Emotionally and mentally, the idea of a new and dominant force in English football was given credence. The previous short-termism evident under Hughes and Mancini paved the way for long-term plans to be laid and acted upon.

The 'Barcelona-fication' of the club and institution gathered momentum, and as the trophies began to arrive, the aforementioned 'splurges' were no longer necessary. A 'superpower' was born and a new hierarchy ushered in.

The Manchester City that we now know is streamlined and smart; their success on and off the pitch has a methodical inevitability, rather than the 'comic book' feel that their crucial 2011/12 campaign had.

Since that first Premier League title just ten years ago, City have won five more, four under Guardiola after their success this season.

The Citizens have certainly come a long way in 10 years, but their dizzying progress has been more than matched by Manchester United's fall from grace.

THE FALL OF A SUPERPOWER

If Manchester United had won the 2011/12 league title, it is believed that Sir Alex Ferguson would have chosen to retire, having delivered the Red Devils' 20th title.

Instead, that achievement and Fergie's retirement was delayed by a year - and a lot can change in a year.

The Scotsman was a football genius. Maybe not quite in the same innovative and trend-setting way as Pep Guardiola but he defined an era of English football in a way that nobody ever has or, arguably, ever will again.

Part of Ferguson's genius was knowing when the time was right to leave.

Departing in 2013, after winning a Premier League title, preserved his own legacy intact and meant his predecessor would inherit the reigning champions - not much needed for a rebuild, then, eh?

Well, another part of the Scotsman's gift was recognising the decay of his squad. Ferguson knew that Wayne Rooney had had grounds to complain about a lack of transfer activity. He knew that the financial muscle of United's "noisy neighbours", as well as the likes of PSG abroad was likely to irrevocably alter the

football landscape. A past master at moving with the times, Ferguson also knew when to get out.

Footballing structures were being put in place by clubs across Europe. Data-led recruitment, the identification of young talent and progressive coaches, and a focus on creating holistic club cultures were all at the vanguard of a paradigm shift at 'elite' level. There were changes and developments across the continent - but not at United.

Had Balotelli never played in Agüero, had Agüero not had the composure to finish so precisely and had Ferguson departed in the summer of 2012 as a Premier League champion then maybe things would have been different.

Albeit intent on a sabbatical, it is well known that Guardiola was a keen admirer of United as a club and Ferguson as a manager. The Spaniard's sabbatical may have been shelved and the Red Devils may have been built in the image that City are today: a machine-like operation, from youth ranks to first-team. A force of nature that looks destined to win every single major trophy numerous times - even if Real Madrid threw a massive spanner in the works recently at the Bernabéu.

Ferguson stayed on for that extra year and squeezed everything he could out of what was, on paper, a below par title-winning squad. The team Fergie handed over was ageing and in need of rejuvenation.

Other clubs, if not built well, had been in the process of building well in the summer of 2013. They were ready to attack the foreseeable future with the intellectual and financial might that they had.

Their story was either beginning or half-written whilst, at the exact same time, United's fairytale under Ferguson had ended and they had to start again from scratch. It's not even that they didn't know how - they didn't even know they had to.

Since Sir Alex Ferguson handed over the reins to David Moyes after United's last Premier League title win in 2012/13, it's fair to say times have been tough at Old Trafford, the Red Devils' plight thrown into sharp contrast by the progress made by their crosstown rivals.

In a strange way, however, the biggest positive United can take from this season is how bad they have been! It's hard to imagine a more rocky bottom than the 4-0 defeat to Brighton in their penultimate game of the campaign. They got hammered by a mid-table side and no one was surprised.

More recently, a BBC news broadcast carried the message 'Manchester United are rubbish' on the ticker at the bottom of the screen after a trainee error - with fans of all persuasions immediately jumping on the bandwagon to declare that the caption was, far from being a mistake, actually a fine example of fair and accurate reporting!

It's "obvious" to everyone, including interim boss Rangnick, that a rebuild is needed - and the newly-appointed Erik ten Hag will now have a clean slate. There is no other option.

Although Pep Guardiola is rumoured to be considering a contract extension at City, there is a sense that while ten Hag is starting from scratch with a blank canvas, the Spaniard has (Champions League success aside) raised the bar just about as high as it can go at City

For one, the only way is up; for the other, the ceiling of success may already have been hit.

Could the 2021/22 season therefore mark the almost imperceptible start of another shift in the Manchester power struggle?



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MIGHTY MINI INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW: Stephen Gillett



ollie palmer wrexhamafc

Note: interview conducted before the end of the regular National League season. Wrexham are currently in the play-offs

How have you settled at Wrexham, are you happy you made the move?

Yeah, very. It was a tough decision and it can go one of two ways – luckily it's gone really well. I'm very settled here. They're a fantastic bunch, the players, coach, the staff. And the fanbase is deserving of at least League One. On top of that we've got two owners who are very humble and down to Earth, so I'm really happy.

Was it tough to leave Wimbledon and League One?

I chatted with my family and we weighed up the pros and the cons. I have some affection for Wimbledon, and the grass isn't always greener. But I was performing really well for the club and wanted another year or two on my contract really.

They weren't prepared to offer me that, which made the decision easier.

You are the club record signing for a team owned by Hollywood movie stars. Is there added pressure with the media glare being on you at Wrexham?

There is definitely that expectation, and a real atmosphere at the club at the moment.

It's been stuck at this level for a long time now, but it is a Football League club, a huge club, so there is that pressure to get them back where they belong.

It's very different to Wimbledon where we would go to places like Sunderland and Sheffield Wednesday just looking to nick something.

Here, the goal is to win every single game. Being the big fish

all of a sudden has needed almost a flip in mindset.

What's that like knowing every team in the division is dying to beat you?

Yeah, you've got to enjoy that pressure. It's hard though, as teams set up just to get a draw against us.

You can't afford to take your foot off the gas, you've got to keep pushing yourself to produce.

What's the standard like in the National League?

It deserves more respect than it gets. It could almost be the fifth tier of the Football League.

I've dropped down two divisions, but I don't think there's a huge gulf between them. If you pulled 10 teams up from the National League tomorrow, I think all of them

would stay up in League Two next season, and three or four of them would stand a chance of winning it.

I'm not the only league player to drop down – there are a lot of talented players who have come from the league, and a load who haven't played in the EFL yet, who I'm sure will do in the future.

I actually think there are some league players who are very fortunate to be in the position they're in, as I've played with worse players in the Football League than what I have in the Conference.

There's just the one automatic promotion place in the National League, which Wrexham are obviously gunning for. Does the format make it even harder?

Yeah, it's such a hard league to get out of with just the one automatic. We're obviously looking to win every single game, but it's easier said than done.

Have any aspects of lower league football been a bit of a culture shock?

Some of the facilities. You'll play a lot of football and then have a tough game away where all of a sudden you're playing on a 4G pitch, running on concrete. I think it's ridiculous to have 4G pitches at this level with full-time football clubs.

It's just another obstacle to overcome, I guess.

You and Paul Mullin appear to have struck up a good strike partnership. Are you happy with how it's been going?

Yeah, it's been really good, I get on really well with Paul, so I'm very fortunate in that respect, as we have a relationship both on and off the pitch. He's a top lad. He's obviously scored a lot of goals (26) and I feel like I've

helped him kick on since I've been here.

I've given defenders more to think about, which gives him a bit more freedom, and that works the same for me as well.

We don't have assist data for the fifth tier, but how is the National League handling Ben Tozer's long throw?

It's deadly, he must have about 10 assists.

It's actually better than a corner because he can torpedo it right at the goal whereas a corner is often going away from it. I've been on the receiving end of them in the past and they are so hard to defend.

In addition to the high profile names who have dropped down from the EFL, which players have stood out for you since you joined the Dragons?

Jordan Davies, for one. He's got that little special spark that means he can produce something special in games.

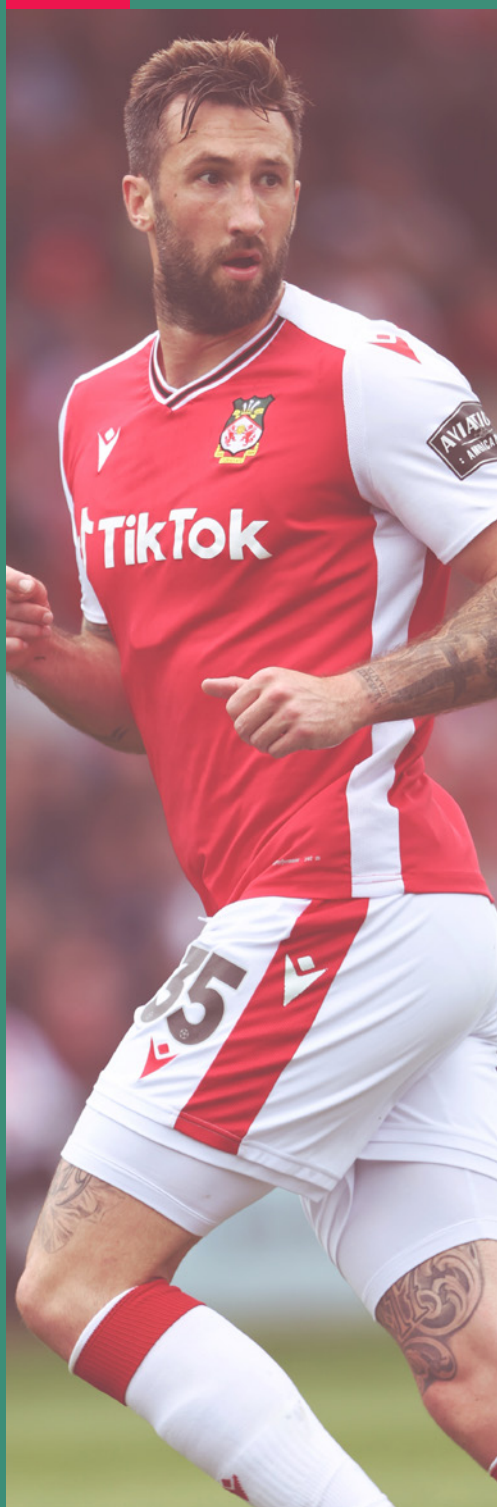
And also Max Cleworth our left-sided centre-back. He's only 18/19, but he's very reliable at such a young age and very comfortable on the ball even on his weaker side.

Having players like that, in addition to the players we have with league experience bodes really well for us.

You're level on points with Stockport with a game to play...it's going to the wire!

Even when we were 11 points off Stockport with a dozen games to play, we always felt there was still a chance, as we had games in hand and still had to play them.

They've still got a tough run-in, so all we can do is keep doing what we're doing.



Mister Dill's
FOOTBALL ART-A-SIDE

Flipping the age-old formula, we asked
 illustrator and designer James Dillon aka
 Mister Dills who would turn out for his
 ultimate football artist five-a-side team...



YONI WEISBERG

A supremely gifted and ultra versatile creator. Each new piece is better than the last and that's saying something.



CHARLES DRAWIN

Charles Drawin's work is always really fun and joyous and he's so versatile. I always smile when he posts something new.



OSVALDO CASANOVA

Oswaldo is a brilliant storyteller, masterful at using the bare minimum in shapes and palettes to bring those stories to life.



Harry is an exceptional painter and another brilliant storyteller. His recent Samuel Eto'o painting was one of the nicest things I've seen in a long while.

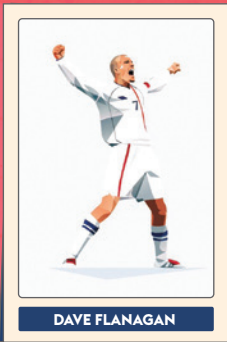


HARRY G WARD

<<<
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About Issue Seven

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THE DIRECTORY

Issue Seven marks something of a milestone for 'The Mighty Delta' - and, if mags were movies, now would be a great time for a Rocky-style montage!

From features with Football League legends to interviews with Euro 2020 semi-finalists; in-depth chats with fanatical full-backs (good luck at Wembley, Harry Toffolo!) to EFL countdowns, it has been one long highlight reel.

That's not to say it's been a breeze. There have been plenty of times where balancing the day job with producing a fanzine has had Playmaker and The Graphic Bomb firmly on the ropes - but the fantastic passion, culture and personality in the English game always inspires us to embark on another edition.

One lovely aspect of producing regular zines is the freedom to change direction and focus, and a look at our eclectic back catalogue shows that the Delta has morphed and shape-shifted since its inception two years ago. We see that as a massive positive and hope you're enjoying the ride!

As always, we have plenty of thank yous to dish out. The players, commentators, fans, photographers, social accounts etc who feature in these pages have all been supremely generous with their time and we're mahoosively appreciative.

In time-honoured tradition: please give the following a follow...

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