



**2007 PLAY-OFF FINAL**



BLACKPOOL

v



YEOVIL TOWN



WEMBLEY STADIUM

SUNDAY 27TH MAY 2007  
WEMBLEY STADIUM  
KICK OFF 3.00PM



THE FOOTBALL  
**LEAGUE**



- 
- 4 WELCOME**  
**6 THE PLAY-OFF TEAMS**  
**8 MANAGER PROFILE**  
*Simon Grayson, Blackpool*  
**11 SIX OF THE BEST**  
**14 MANAGER PROFILE**  
*Russell Slade, Yeovil Town*  
**16 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Andrew Morrell*  
**19 PLAYER PROFILE** *Arron Davies*  
**21 COMMUNITY CUP**  
**23 BLACKPOOL PLAYER-BY-PLAYER PROFILES**  
**31 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Marcus Stewart*  
**33 TACTICS**  
*John Ward on Blackpool*  
**34 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Terry Skiverton*  
**37 FANS' VIEW**  
*Yeovil Town*  
**39 FOOTBALL'S COMING HOME**  
*The return to Wembley*  
**45 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Wesley Hoolahan*  
**47 TACTICS**  
*Martin Foyle on Yeovil*  
**49 YEOVIL TOWN**  
**PLAYER-BY-PLAYER PROFILES**  
**57 WHAT BECOMES OF THE**  
**BROKEN-HEARTED?**  
**61 FANS' VIEW** *Blackpool*  
**63 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Nathan Jones*  
**65 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Keith Southern*  
**66 SKY DIARY**  
**69 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Claus Jorgensen*  
**71 IT'S A DATE!**  
*Behind the fixture lists*  
**75 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Lee Morris*  
**77 PLAYER PROFILE**  
*Paul Bachubka*  
**79 FAITH IN THE FUTURE**  
*The League's Youth Development*  
**83 STAT ATTACK** *Blackpool*  
**85 STAT ATTACK**  
*Yeovil Town*  
**87 MAGIC NUMBERS**  
*League 1 vital statistics*  
**89 JUST THE TICKET**  
**FOR YOUNG FANS**  
**91 THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE**  
**CUSTOMER CHARTER**  
**93 NO SMOKING**  
*A smoke-free football future*  
**95 STADIUM SAFETY**  
**96 FINAL SQUADS**

# CONTENTS



## 4 WELCOME MESSAGES



elcome to the Coca-Cola  
League 1 Play-Off  
Final 2007.

On behalf of everyone at Coca-Cola I'd like to say how delighted we are to be hosting the Play-Offs here at Wembley for the first time.

As you can all see, it is a fitting setting for the showcase occasion in Coca-Cola's football calendar but we must also say a big thank you to Cardiff and the Millennium Stadium, who have hosted the Coca-Cola Play-Offs for the last two years, for having done a fantastic job.

The prize on offer for today's teams is sure to make this afternoon a tense occasion for fans and players of both clubs.

Blackpool and Yeovil Town have performed wonders to get here, not only in the Play-Offs but in their 46 League games, and either winner will grace the Championship next season.

We wish both teams the very best of luck for today's game and for next season.

This year's Play-Offs marks the third anniversary of Coca-Cola's title sponsorship of The Football League. Earlier this year we were delighted to re-sign our deal with The Football League for a further three years. The strength of the relationship is based on a unique fit between Coca-Cola and The Football League – both share a real heritage in the game and a deep appreciation of the passions of football fans everywhere.

Since becoming title sponsor we have sought to develop relationships with each and every one of the 72 clubs in The League and we would like to thank each club who has embraced our involvement in the League and helped us connect with 72 communities around the UK where the football club is part of the lifeblood. With the help of Powerade and Coca-Cola Zero we're looking forward to developing these partnerships further.

We're all looking forward to this being a memorable occasion and may the best team win.

Enjoy your day!

**SANJAY GUHA**

President, Coca-Cola  
Great Britain & Ireland



# WELCOME TO WEMBLEY

*The Coca-Cola Football League Play-Off Finals return home this weekend*



Lord Mawhinney and Sanjay Guha salute the 72 clubs of The Football League



a further three seasons. I cannot understate the importance of having one of the world's most recognised brands supporting our competition. On behalf of our 72 clubs, I offer my grateful thanks.

Also I would like to offer my appreciation to The League's main broadcast partner Sky Sports. Their comprehensive coverage of the Play-Offs, which includes showing all fifteen matches live, has delivered a marvellous end of season football festival.

This season The League has recorded its highest attendance figures in the modern era. Nearly sixteen and a half million supporters watched our matches; The League's highest crowds for 47 years. I would like to salute the efforts made by each and every one in support of their club.

In the last twenty years the number of people watching live football at League clubs has more than doubled. This remarkable statistic is a testament to the strength of professional football in The Football League.

Each week, in towns and cities throughout the country, The League delivers real football for real fans. Our clubs are the very heartbeat of their local communities and they play a central role in the lives of their supporters, without whom they could not exist.

With this in mind I would like to finish by welcoming both sets of fans to today's crucial encounter. Enjoy the match and enjoy next season, in whichever division you are watching your football.

**LORD MAWHINNEY**  
Chairman, The Football League

**O**n behalf of The Football League, welcome to the 2006/07 Coca-Cola Football League Play-Off Finals.

It is a great pleasure to bring these gripping football occasions to the wonderful new Wembley Stadium. Across a period of eleven years the 'old' stadium hosted a succession of memorable, high-scoring football matches that sealed the Play-Offs' reputation as an unmissable finale to the domestic season.

The new Wembley is a worthy successor and I look forward to savouring the very special atmosphere that will be generated this weekend.

Few football matches have as much resting on them as a Play-Off Final. An entire season's work hangs in the balance. Despite this pressure, these games have earned themselves a reputation for producing outstanding entertainment as well as more than their fair share of tension and drama.

The directors, management and players of the finalist clubs are particularly welcome. I hope you enjoy your day with us and that it is an occasion you cherish, regardless of the result.

Welcome, too, to our sponsors Coca-Cola who earlier in the season committed to backing our League for



# UP, UP & AWAY

Blackpool's Keigan Parker and Simon Gillett celebrate booking a dream trip to Wembley



*The Play-Offs were a controversial invention, but they have brought about such excitement and drama over the years that they are now considered an institution*

BY GUY HODGSON INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

**T**wo figures will dangle before the teams preparing for the Football League Play-Offs this weekend. One will be a statistic, the tantalising £60 million that is the estimated benefit for reaching the Premiership, the other will be the less attractive spectre of what can go wrong.

At this time last year Leeds United were looking forward to the prospect of top-flight football, a dream demolished when Watford comprehensively defeated them 3-0 at the Millennium Stadium. Now they are looking at life in Coca-Cola League 1.

But as you enjoy the splendours of the shiny new £800m Wembley with its 90,000 seats, 133-metre high arch and unobstructed views of a place described by Wayne Rooney as the greatest stadium in the world, let's accentuate the positive.

By Tuesday, one club will be relishing the prospect of meeting Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool while two others will be a step nearer to doing the same. The

Play-Offs may have their critics, but no one can deny they come dripping with drama.

Charlton Athletic defeating Sunderland 7-6 on penalties in 1998 after extra time had them all square at 4-4, Manchester City prevailing against Gillingham the following year after they had been 2-0 down with four minutes to play and Bolton Wanderers winning 4-3 after being two down in 12 minutes against Reading in 1995.

That's just the finals, the semi-finals, too, have been known to produce sagas that are retold like the myths of ancient times.

Can you imagine a May without the Championship Play-Off Final that is perennially billed as the "richest game of football in the world"? Neither can I.

If nothing else, the Play-Offs make the closing stages of the league season immeasurably more interesting. Take the Championship as an example. After the weekend of April 21 and 22 every team had just two matches to play and yet 11 clubs had the

prospect of playing in the end-of-season finale. Without them Sunderland, Birmingham City, and Derby would have been having a private battle for the title having comfortably decided promotion two weeks earlier.

Colin Calderwood, the manager of Nottingham Forest, has lost out in Play-Offs with both his current club and Northampton Town, but balances those defeats against the excitement.

"The Play-Offs are the best thing that's happened to the lower divisions," he said, "and credit to The Football League for starting the system.

"I don't know the figures about which of the teams – third, fourth, fifth or sixth in the table – predominantly end up with promotion through the Play-Offs, but the difference between them tends to be minimal and I don't think anyone who finishes outside the automatic places can argue that they should really have gone up.

**"THE PLAY-OFFS ARE THE BEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED TO THE LOWER DIVISIONS"**

Colin Calderwood



"The fact is that, in years gone by, it was only two up and two down so I don't know why people moan about the Play-Offs. They're a great invention." For the record, three-up, three down for the top two divisions was introduced in the 1973/74 season.

But if the participants in the League 1 and League 2 contests will forgive me, let us intrude on private greed. How does the Championship Play-Off come to reach the £60m figure? The answer is television money.

The new rights deal, worth £2.7 billion, means that clubs will be lining their pockets even if they make only a one-season appearance in the top division as Watford have done. Sunderland and Birmingham are already dreaming of what they can do with the money, while one of Derby and West Bromwich Albion will be getting a congratulatory message from their accountants on Tuesday.

According to experts at the Sports Business Group at Deloitte – the City accountants – it doesn't matter whether these clubs come straight back down after one season in the Premiership, such are the rewards.

Every Premiership club's payments will rise dramatically, but the three promoted clubs know that they will get at least £30m in television payouts immediately, with more lucrative sponsorship deals and bigger gate receipts worth up to £10 million.

Even failure is rewarded by "parachute payments", worth £11 million for each of the two seasons after relegation.

To put the Premiership payouts into context, the club that finished just outside the Championship Play-Off places, Preston North End, have an annual turn-over of £10m while even the division's financial Goliaths, Birmingham operate on £45m. Pouring £60m into one of these clubs is not so much a bonus as a lifetime of Christmas and birthdays lumped together.

"Such an amount of money gives the three clubs that come up to the Premiership a huge opportunity," Dan Jones, who leads the Sports Business Group, said. "If they use the cash sensibly, they could easily have a

good run at the top level."

Derby can embark on that run in the Premiership after five years away if they defeat West Brom, but history is not on their side. They have never successfully negotiated the Play-Offs and the team that finished third has reached the top division only four times since the

present format was introduced in 1989. And, given that the third-placed team entered the semi-finals as the best, that record is remarkably poor. Albion have a 100 per cent record with one success in one attempt, beating Port Vale in the 1993 Division Two Final.

Blackpool, who contest the League 1 final, are Play-Off regulars, but they demonstrate the perils of failure. In 1996 they sacked their manager when they lost in the semi-finals to Bradford City and no one really knows what happened to Sam Allardyce afterwards!

Blackpool face Yeovil, who only made it to The Football League in 2003, and will be just a promotion away from the Premiership if they prevail in the League 1 final. Who says that the pressures of modern football preclude fairy tales?

**"THERE'S NO SECRET TO WINNING THE PLAY-OFFS. IT'S IN THE LAP OF THE GODS"**

George Burley

Yeovil's Marcus Stewart and Arron Davies are one step from the Championship

The year Yeovil entered The League saw Shrewsbury Town head in the opposite direction, so their appearance at Wembley this weekend marks a considerable recovery. They face Bristol Rovers, another club who have never been successful in the Play-Offs. "It's great," the Rovers manager Paul Trollope said, "but we are wary because we are aware we have to do it on the biggest stage of all."

So how do you succeed? George Burley, who was the last successful manager to win a Play-Off at the old Wembley when his Ipswich Town team defeated Barnsley 4-2 in 2000, says you simply cross your fingers. "There's no secret to winning the Play-Offs," he said before Southampton were pipped on penalties by Derby this month, "but you hope the habits of the season can continue. There are a lot of factors, but it's in the lap of the gods."

So, for the six teams who will sample the imposters of triumph and defeat this weekend the message must be the one comedian Dave Allen used to leave his audience. May your god be with you.





# SIMON SAYS

*As Blackpool's season got off to a stuttering start, Simon Grayson was calm and confident. Now his cool outlook is looking justified*

BY STEVE CANAVAN BLACKPOOL GAZETTE

**I**f anyone knows how to succeed in the Play-Offs it should be Blackpool manager, Simon Grayson.

You'd never guess it from his quiet and unassuming nature, but until recently Grayson was a player who could rub shoulders with the best. He was signed for £1.3 million by Aston Villa and proved to be a solid and tenacious midfielder in the Premiership.

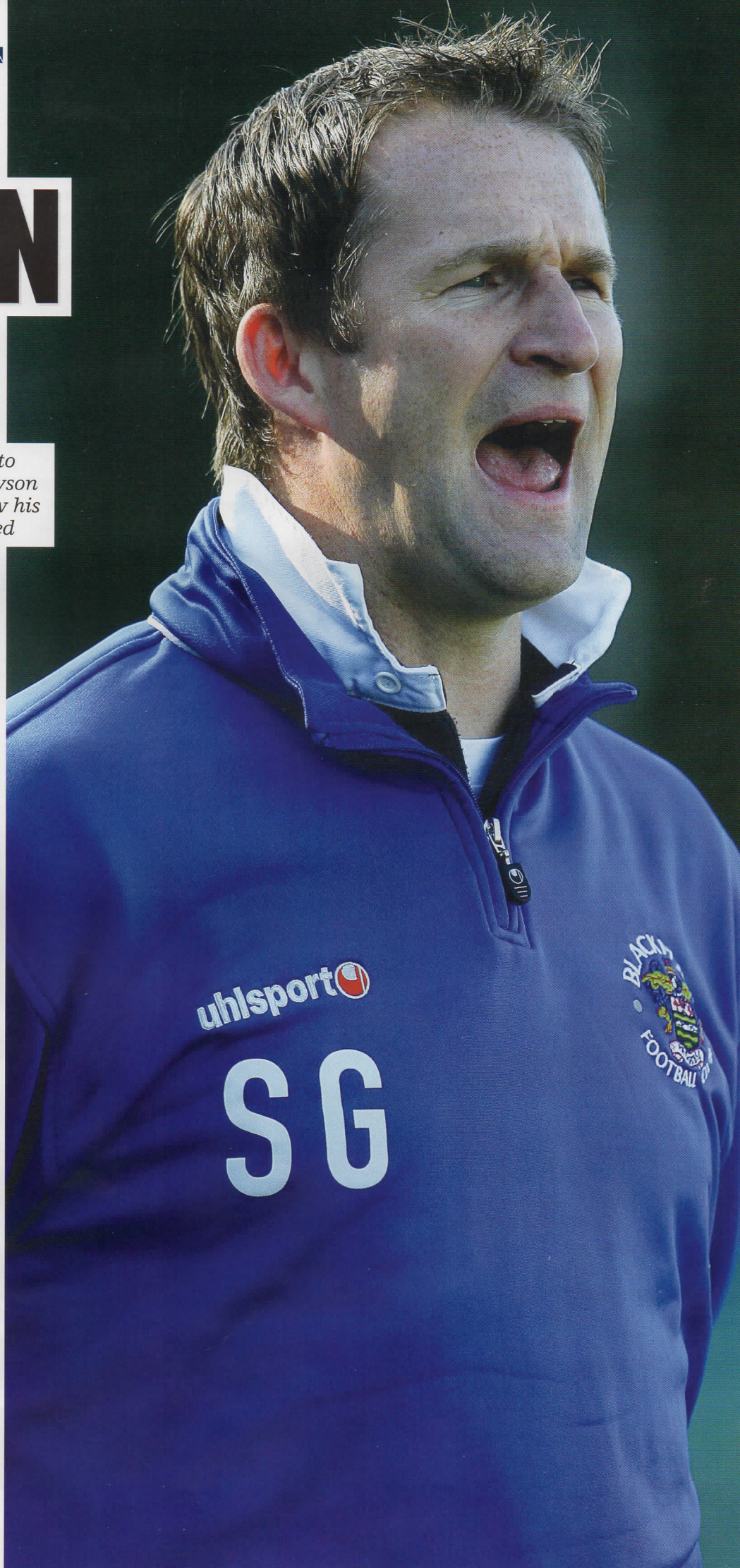
It was before that, with Leicester, that he gained great experience of the Play-Offs, though it wasn't always pleasant. In 1992 and again the following year, the Yorkshire-born player twice tasted defeat at Wembley as the Foxes lost to Blackburn and Swindon.

Eventually he cracked it. In 1994 Grayson captained Leicester to a 2-1 victory over Derby and walked the famous 39 steps at the old stadium to lift the trophy.

And after Leicester had been relegated from the Premiership the following season, Grayson helped Martin O'Neill's team bounce straight back by beating Crystal Palace in the 1996 Final.

"I did enjoy the Play-Offs eventually," admits the 37-year-old. "When we won the last two the feeling was terrific, just about as good as anything I've experienced in football.

"But there are no guarantees, that's the downside of them. The losers don't have a great day, they go home feeling completely miserable."





Which is exactly the feeling Grayson the manager wants to avoid today. He took over at Bloomfield Road in November 2005, initially on a temporary basis after Colin Hendry had been sacked.

Blackpool were in the relegation zone and Grayson – who had joined Blackpool as a player in July 2002 – was told to keep them up. He did just that and got the job permanently last summer.

Anyone who looks at the league table now will think that Grayson has had a wonderful time this season and has taken to management like a duck to water. Not quite, for it's not all been plain sailing.

At the start of the campaign, after a nightmare start that saw the side lose its opening three games and win only one of the first 11, Grayson was under severe pressure.

To his credit the manager remained calm and continued to insist that with the players he had signed in the close season – Andy Morrell, Claus Jorgensen, Wes Hoolahan, Ben Burgess, Shaun Barker, Ian Evatt, Michael Jackson, David Fox – things would improve.

This was Grayson speaking in September, after yet another miserable defeat and with his team entrenched in the bottom four, when you could almost see the vultures circling overhead.

"People have to be patient because the change was never going to happen overnight. With so many new players it will take time to gel," he told the media – a body who, if truth be told, didn't give him much chance of making it past September.

"I haven't got a magic wand to make things happen immediately and suddenly change a team that has been in the bottom half of the division for the last four years into a Championship club overnight.

"We all have to have patience and we are working as a group of players and staff to make sure that we can do as well as we can."

It might have taken a while for Grayson's magic wand to work, but my goodness how spectacular has the ride been since.

The manager was proved correct



Grayson, then of Leicester, challenges Derby's Tommy Johnson in the 1994 Division One Play-Off Final

on all counts. Results did improve, progression was made and, for the Blackpool board, remaining loyal to the manager and maintaining stability has paid off big time.

Grayson, who has won two Manager of the Month prizes along the way, is now able to look back on what he has achieved with pride and contentment.

"I am proud of this team and this group of players, but I was proud of them and pretty relaxed about the situation to a certain extent earlier in the season as well," he reflected.

"I know it's easy to say it now but I always felt I had a group here who could do something and they are now getting their rewards.

I sincerely hope we get to where we want to be by the time our season has finished, and that is into the Championship.

"But regardless of what happens it will have been a fantastic season. You sometimes look at what's going on and think, 'Is this really happening to us?' – a club like this, especially with what's gone on during the last few years and the struggles it has been involved in.

"It is too good to be true in a lot of respects but then again I think the club is due an upturn in fortunes. It proves we are going in the right direction.

"I suppose clubs can only go so far down before there is an upturn and

they start working their way back up again – hopefully this is the moment when Blackpool starts to get back to where it belongs."

That is in the higher echelons of English football, back to the glory days of the Fifties when Matthews and Mortensen weaved their magic and famously inspired the club to that memorable 4-3 FA Cup Final triumph over Bolton.

Today will see the largest gathering of Blackpool fans at the national stadium since that legendary game 54 years ago and they all want to see the same thing – a win for the Seasiders and a return to the top two tiers of English football for the first time since 1978.

"I was just a young kid when Blackpool were in those top two tiers in the Seventies," added Grayson, whose side go into the game on the back of a club record-equalling nine straight victories.

"It is a club that is steeped in history and tradition. You go back to the Fifties with Stanley Matthews and maybe this club has lived in the past too long. We want to be part of a new era where the club goes forward and there is no reason why we can't do that.

"We have some great support, there is a good catchment area and they are all waiting for some success to happen and for this sleeping giant to wake.

"It's been a long time since we were in the Championship – too long. It's about time we returned."

**"IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE WE WERE IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP. IT'S ABOUT TIME WE RETURNED"**



Coca-Cola®

Vs

Coca-Cola®



**Who has been the best player in the division?**

It's a toss up between Ritchie Wellens of Oldham and Kris Commons of Nottingham Forest. Commons has got a bit of class about him in his delivery of the ball. He is a goalscorer and has terrific creative ability.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

Russell Slade of Yeovil because of the resources he has at his disposal compared to the likes of Nottingham Forest and Bristol City. It's his first season in charge and he brought in a new team and they were always in contention and they play football in a good way.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Only six teams beat us this season and Blackpool did it twice, winning both games 3-1. They were superb in their home game and Simon Grayson said afterwards that it was their best display of the season.

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

I would have to say Keigan Parker from Blackpool followed closely by his teammate Wes Hoolahan. Parker has pace and scored in both fixtures against us. He is willing to run in behind defences and always works hard.

**Who has been the best player in the division?**

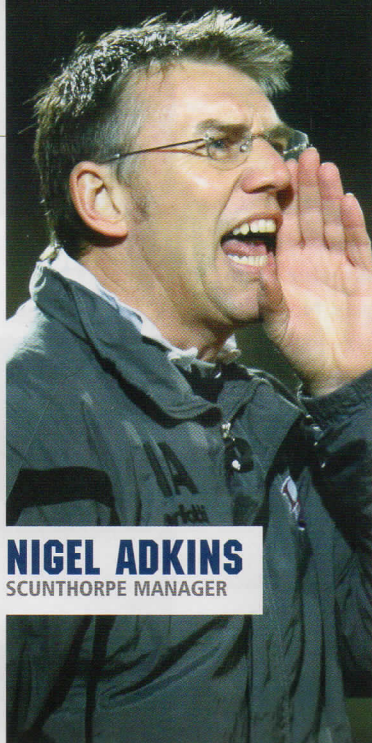
Nottingham Forest's Kris Commons is a quality player and I have liked him since I first saw him play for Stoke. He delivers a great ball in and scores important goals when there is nothing on.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

Russell Slade has done a tremendous job at Huish Park since taking over from our manager Gary Johnson. Taking Yeovil into the Play-Offs stands out and you have to say well done to him.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Blackpool had lost their opening three league games and had not scored a goal when they came to Ashton Gate and swamped us 4-2 which told us they were a better side than their first three results.



**NIGEL ADKINS**  
SCUNTHORPE MANAGER

**Who was the best young player in the division?**

The Northampton goalkeeper Mark Bunn. We played them in November and absolutely battered them and he saved everything thrown at him. He was a young goalkeeper thrown in to the deep end and he did very well.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

You could say Nottingham Forest should have gone up automatically with their resources. Millwall and Northampton will do well next season because they have good managers.

# SIX OF THE BEST

*With a long, hard League 1 campaign about to reach its conclusion this afternoon, we asked six participants to name their winners of the season, the only stipulation being that they could not vote for their own clubs*



**STEPHEN LANSDOWN**  
BRISTOL CITY CHAIRMAN

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

Bradford City were on a terrible run of form when they came to Ashton Gate but Joe Colbeck attacked us at pace and terrorised us all night. He played a big part in their 3-2 win.

**Who was the best young player in the division?**

In-form striker Billy Sharp may look like an experienced player but he is still only 21. His goals were a key part of Scunthorpe's success.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

I fully expected Huddersfield Town to be a top six club so they have underachieved, but manager Andy Ritchie will turn things around. ▶



**Who has been the best player in the division?**

Scunthorpe striker Billy Sharp. He's had a fantastic season and his goal record speaks for itself. He scored against us in both our games with Scunthorpe but he's more than a goal-getter – he works very hard for the team as well.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

From what I've seen of Gary Johnson I like his methods and he certainly had the Bristol City squad playing for him throughout a successful season.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Nottingham Forest beat us 4-1 at our ground just before Christmas and we knew after about 20 minutes that we were in for a real battle. We had no answer to them on that day and they absolutely annihilated us.

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

In that same game against Nottingham Forest Nathan Tyson scored a hat-trick in the last 10 minutes of the first half and that killed the game.

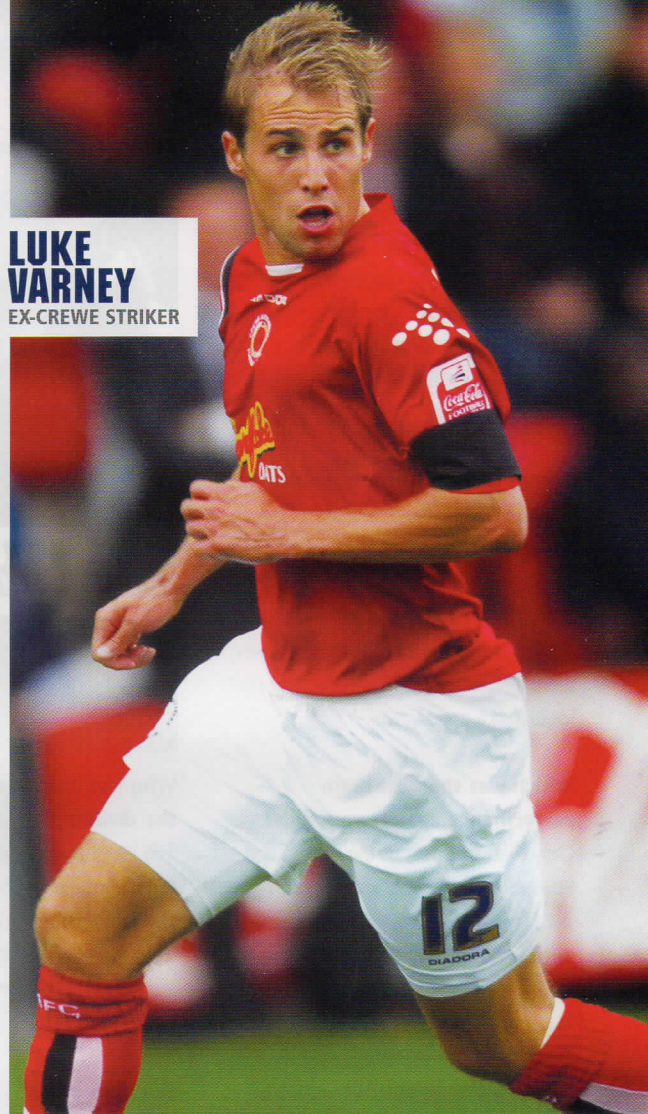
**Who was the best young player in the division?**

I was very impressed by Dean Cox of Brighton. He's not afraid to get stuck in but as well as his tenacity he's a good passer of the ball and has an eye for goal so he would get my vote.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

Tranmere Rovers. Midway through the season they got themselves into a good position to strike out for promotion, but they slid away. If they can keep their better players and add to them they'll be in contention next season I'm sure.

**LUKE VARNEY**  
EX-CREWE STRIKER



**GAVIN WARD**  
TRANMERE GOALKEEPER



**Who has been the best player in the division?**

Billy Sharp scored over 30 goals for Scunthorpe and can play at a higher level. He's a clever player and is

willing to try the unorthodox. Against us he ran through on goal and whereas most strikers would have tried to drill it, he looked up and tried to lift the ball over me.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

Nigel Adkins of Scunthorpe – the physio who came in when Brian Laws left and while a lot of people thought that the wheels would come off, he kept the momentum going and has been fantastic.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Carlisle did a good job on us at the end of the season. We played at home on a Friday night and it was a big game for both sides at the time. We were ahead of them in the league but they ran out comfortable winners by 2-0.

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

Will Hoskins had a great game against us for Rotherham and it was no surprise that he later moved on to Watford and played in their first team towards the end of the season. He is a very confident lad, dynamic and with good balance, and he scored a cracking goal against us.

**Who was the best young player in the division?**

The two strikers at Crewe, Luke Varney and Nicky Maynard, impressed me and Varney just gets the nod. He makes good runs, has a good touch and is unselfish.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

It's a toss up between Doncaster and Swansea but I go for Doncaster. You look at the squad and their financial clout and you would think they'd be a lot more competitive next season.



**Who has been the best player in the division?**

It's got to be Billy Sharp of Scunthorpe – he's been phenomenal. He's a young lad who's growing in stature and he top scored with 30 league goals this season. I think he'll be fine in the Championship.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

Nigel Adkins at Scunthorpe. I don't think anybody actually envisaged them winning the title but he kept them going so you've got to give him credit.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Oldham – twice! We lost 4-1 away and 3-0 at home. We didn't really have a sniff in either game. Oldham were very organised and robust and they caused us a lot of problems at the back.

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

That's a difficult one but I'll go for the Swansea striker, Adebayo Akinfenwa. Believe it or not, we beat them 3-1 at



**IAN COX**  
GILLINGHAM DEFENDER

the Priestfield Stadium but he caused us a lot of problems that day.

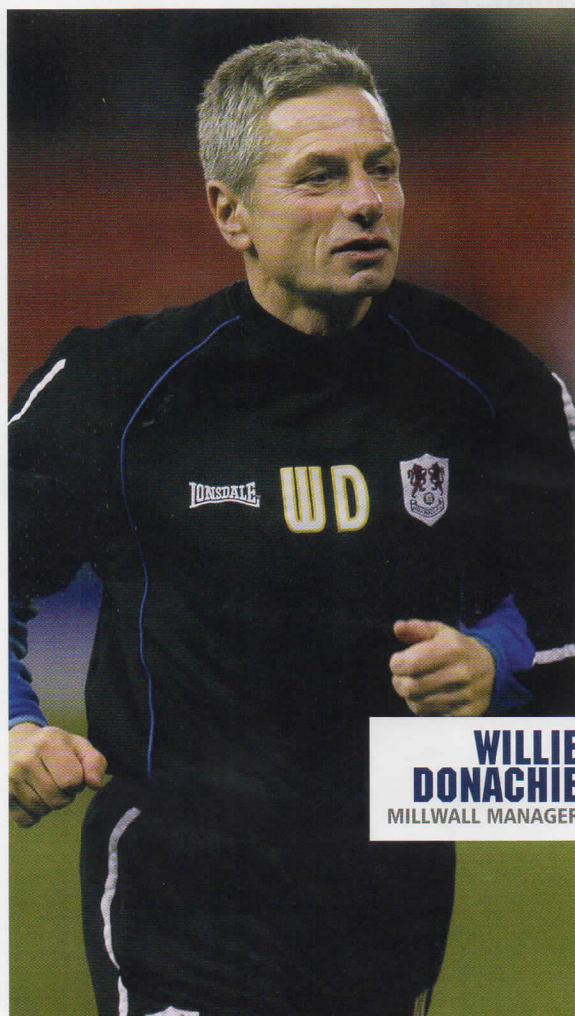
**Who was the best young player in the division?**

Nottingham Forest's Lewis McGugan is an 18-year-old midfield player who scored against us with a great free-kick when we lost 1-0 at their place in March. He has a lot of composure.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

Having got to last season's Play-Off Final in Cardiff, where they were beaten by Barnsley, Swansea City should have done better – especially after all the money they spent – but I think they'll certainly be a force to be reckoned with next season.

*\*Interviews by  
Lawrie Madden,  
Graham Nickless,  
Tony Leighton and  
Grahame Lloyd*



**WILLIE DONACHIE**  
MILLWALL MANAGER

**Who has been the best player in the division?**

Billy Sharp has been a goalscoring machine for Scunthorpe all season long. What he has done has guaranteed them promotion to the Championship.

**Who is the manager of the season?**

It's a fantastic achievement for Nigel Adkins to have got a club with Scunthorpe's resources into the Championship. There were much bigger teams in League 1 this season but Scunthorpe finished above them all and can be proud of their achievement.

**Which was the best team performance against your side?**

Again, I can't look beyond Glanford Park. We went there in January and we came up against strong opponents that day. Defensively Scunthorpe United were very difficult to break down and going forward they were inventive.

**Who gave the best individual performance against your team?**

Lee Trundle has the ability to do things that others can't but he didn't have a particularly good game against us. I'd have to go for Darren Anderton in the game with Bournemouth at The Den.

**Who was the best young player in the division?**

Nicky Maynard was very good for Crewe early on in the season but my vote would go to Dean Cox at Brighton. He's a hard working, skilful and intelligent player.

**Who has underachieved this season and will be contenders next time?**

Swansea City. The size of the club, the players they have and the location, are all advantages. It's like a trip to Europe when the crowd are with them so that gives them a massive boost. I think they'll do well next year and be up there challenging.



# 'IT'S DREAMLAND'

**Y**eovil manager Russell Slade has a pretty impressive CV. He kept Scarborough in the Conference when they were nine points adrift at the bottom before taking them on the best FA Cup run in their history. He guided Grimsby to the 2006 Coca-Cola League 2 Play-Off Final and masterminded The Glovers' amazing 5-4 aggregate win over Nottingham Forest to reach today's final.

But none of these feats can match the accolade he received earlier this month when he was chosen as League 1's Manager of the Season by his peers.

"It's the most prestigious achievement of my career – purely because it's an award from other managers," admits Slade. "I'm up against these men week in week out and they decided I was the best – I was just humbled by that."

"It was an appreciation of what we've done at Yeovil. We were one of the favourites to go down, the board and the fans were praying for a little bit of stability so we could stay in League 1 and here we are just 90 minutes away from the Championship – it's dreamland really."

Twelve months ago, John Ward helped to prevent Slade reaching League 1 via the Play-Offs when his Cheltenham side beat Grimsby 1-0 at the Millennium Stadium.

Fresh from successfully steering the Robins clear of relegation, Ward thinks the Yeovil boss is a worthy winner of the League 1 Manager of the Season award.

"It's very easy to choose people at the top of the division but for the managers to look at it this deeply and single out his achievement is terrific."

"Russell is as clever as manager as

I've come across. He's very down to earth, he's got no ego and that's a big thing in football these days. He works very hard and he'll ring other managers just for a chat.

"In fact, he rang me before their home game against Forest to ask for an opinion or an idea. That's the mark of a good manager – he's quite humble but a very determined man."

Slade, 46, spent 11 years as player, coach and manager with Notts County who he took to an Anglo-Italian Cup win in 1995.

"I was an old-fashioned centre-half," he recalls. "Our manager, Jimmy Sirrel, used to refer to me as 'The Destroyer' and told me to give the ball to somebody who could play."

"I was fortunate to work under Jimmy, Neil Warnock and Howard Kendall. When I became manager at Meadow Lane at the age of 33, I thought I knew everything but I didn't. It wasn't easy because we were in what is now the Championship but we did reach Wembley and Howard, who'd just taken over as manager, let me lead the team out against Ascoli."

"Howard was a fantastic influence and I moved with him to Sheffield United where I had two separate spells as caretaker before coaching for a while at Northampton."

The former PE teacher's first permanent managerial post was with Scarborough who were in danger of being relegated from the Conference when he arrived in late 2001.

But the euphoria of finishing 12th as 39 points were collected from the final 19 games of the season was replaced by the despair of

*Russell Slade has carved out a reputation for upsetting the odds and he aims to do it one more time here at Wembley*

administration six months later. The club survived and Slade took them on an FA Cup run which was ended by a narrow fourth round defeat by Chelsea in 2004.

"Keeping Scarborough up was one of the best achievements of my career and the cup run was good from a personal profile point of view, it did me no harm at all."

Successive relegations led to League 2 Grimsby sending for Slade and after a mid-table finish in 2005, The Mariners spent most of last season in the automatic promotion places before losing out on the last day to Leyton Orient and facing Cheltenham in the Play-Off Final.

"We weren't up to standard in Cardiff and the 1-0 defeat was hard to take but I think it made me stronger."

Three days later, Slade left Blundell Park because of "a failure to reach a contractual agreement" and was later appointed manager of Yeovil.

"Like at Grimsby, a lot of surgery was needed at Huish Park," Slade recalls, "but the important thing was that I still had the remains of the team – some good professionals like Terry Skiverton, Nathan Jones and Paul Terry."

"I brought in a few of my targets like keeper Steve Mildenhall from Grimsby where I'd also had Tyrell Forbes on loan and I'd been

**"THE FOCUS HAS GOT TO BE TO WIN THE MATCH AND NOT PLAY THE OCCASION"**





interested in Southend's Wayne Gray when I was at Blundell Park."

Having only reached The Football League under Gary Johnson in 2003 and then gained promotion to League 1 two years later, The Glovers were nobody's favourites to reach the Play-Offs in August but Slade has forced bookies and pundits to eat their words.

"The secret of our success is one thing really – attitude. We have a lovely attitude to the game. I've got players who, when they're asked to report at 10 o'clock, are in for half past nine.

"It's nice to be able to work with players like that. I don't have to go in every morning and wield the big stick because they want to improve and get better."

After losing 2-0 at Huish Park to Forest in the semi-final's first leg, few people gave the Glovers much chance

of reaching Wembley – especially without their inspirational captain Skiverton who had missed the first game with a groin injury.

But in his home city of Nottingham, Slade and his team – with Scott Guyett replacing the skipper in central defence – upset the form book again.

"My last message to the players was this:

'I believe you can do it, we've got enough quality to do it and whatever's happening out there at any stage, never question yourself: just keep telling yourself that you can do it.'

"It wasn't particularly sweet to win in Nottingham because I'm from there and Forest were the first club I supported but it was a nice touch to receive a standing ovation from the home crowd afterwards.

"You don't see that very often in

**Slade has the chance to avenge his defeat with Grimsby in last season's Coca-Cola League 2 Play-Off Final**

**"WE HAVE TO STRIVE FOR A REPEAT OF THE PERFORMANCE AT THE CITY GROUND – THEN WE HAVE A CHANCE"**

football and it just showed fantastic respect for me and my team. In turn, we respected them immensely."

As he prepares for a second successive crack at a Play-Off Final, Russell Slade is full of praise for his backroom staff, particularly Yeovil's chairman and chief executive John Fry.

"Arguably, he's been the best man I've ever worked with – and I stress worked with and not for. I have a very good relationship with John and his directors. Because everything is new it's a journey for both of us."

So will the latest chapter in Yeovil's amazing adventure story end with another promotion? Can League 1's Manager of the Season defy the odds yet again and beat Blackpool, the division's undisputed in-form team?

"Play-Off Finals are difficult games to control compared to league matches," says Slade. "They're such big occasions and you need your players to perform over the 90 minutes. The stakes are high and the focus has got to be to win the match and not play the occasion."

"After beating Forest, you hope the confidence is high but it's a whole new ball game – it's all about what happens on the day and how we play. We have to strive for a repeat of the performance at the City Ground – then we have a chance."



**A**ndy Morrell probably thought he had left Championship football behind, for good, when he said his farewells to Coventry City last summer at the age of nearly 32.

After all, Blackpool's pedigree as employers who were likely to lift him back to that level was hardly impeccable.

Remarkably for a club who famously won the FA Cup in 1953, reached another couple of Finals shortly before and finished runners-up in the League Championship soon afterwards, it's 29 years since the Seaside's competed even at the second tier of the English game.

Now, though, they stand one match away from returning to a grade at which they last competed under the likes of Harry Potts and Allan

Brown in the mid and late 1970s.

And one player has done more than any other to take them to the brink – Andy Morrell.

His 20 goals comfortably make him their top marksman and underline the roller-coaster ride that is sometimes the lot of a striker.

"When I arrived here last August, I was thinking that 15 goals might be a reasonable target to aim for," Morrell says. "Then, we had a disappointing start and I only scored once or twice in the first 11 matches and you're maybe thinking of revising the figure downwards!

# A MORRELL VICTORY

*The 20 goals of veteran striker Andy Morrell have ignited Blackpool this season, showing there's plenty of life in the old dog yet*

BY DAVID INSTONE





"But a few more started going in for me and naturally you start to set your sights higher as a result, although I have to say that scoring four in a game, as I did at Swansea just before the end of the season, is bound to help anybody's tally. Suddenly, I had exceeded my expectations with something to spare and we were on a tremendous roll as a team."

The impetus, for player and club, has been maintained in the Play-Offs, with Morrell scoring with a neat dink over the advancing goalkeeper from Wes Hoolahan's through ball to make it 2-0 with a quarter of an hour left in last weekend's 3-1 semi-final second-leg win at home to Oldham Athletic.

And now only Yeovil Town, spectacular conquerors of Nottingham Forest, stand between Blackpool and the climb back to somewhere near where the traditionalists think they should be.

So would Morrell be up for the challenge of another crack at

the Championship or was he wounded by his Sky Blue experience?

"I certainly don't look back at my time in that division as having been a failure," he adds. "I'd done pretty well at Wrexham and was delighted to move to Coventry when Gary McAllister came in for me early in the close season four years ago.

"I was quite happy with my form and return in the first year. I scored nine but then found myself playing on the right side of midfield, which isn't my favoured position. I regard myself very much as a striker.

"I was in and out of the side as well and, although I still came up with a few goals, I wasn't at my best. In my last season there, under Micky Adams, I was on the edge of things and it became a question of either being content with reserve football or trying to move somewhere else and taking on a new challenge.

"I didn't want my career just to peter out and felt this was the right move for me. Needless to say, I'm very pleased with how it has worked out."

It might now pain Oldham fans to be reminded that their club were one of several to be linked with the player last year, although he didn't get as far as having contract talks with them.

But their loss has certainly been Blackpool's gain at a time when Simon Grayson has emerged at Bloomfield Road as a managerial talent well worth keeping an eye on.

Not that the sizeable goal haul should have been too big a surprise. Morrell, who was born in Doncaster, left Wrexham in 2003 after amassing the useful record of 43 goals in 120 games – a total that was even more worthy for the fact that many of his appearances were from the substitutes' bench.

Now Blackpool are the beneficiaries of his predatory instincts, his 20 goals this season having included the only one of the game when Grayson's men followed up their 1-1 draw with Yeovil at Bloomfield Road in the autumn

by winning away at Huish Park in mid-March.

That latter success came shortly before the launch of the wonderful run of nine consecutive victories – the club's best since the late 1930s – which the Seasiders will be aiming to stretch into double figures at Wembley today.

So is it true that everyone on the Fylde Coast is pinching themselves at what has unfolded before their eyes after so many barren years? "It has certainly been a magnificent time for us," Morrell says. "Coming to play for a club like this, you can't help but read from time to time about the achievements of the famous players of past decades.

"Unfortunately, the supporters have had a long wait for any hint of success but they have stood by us through thick and thin on those winter Tuesday nights and they've been brilliant in the last few months. When we found

some form, we started to think about the Play-Offs and when you reach them, of course you aim for the Final and

then, to win that.

"It was always a huge incentive to try to reach this stage when the last promotion place was sorted out at the Millennium Stadium but now it's back at Wembley, it's extra special.

"It's everyone's dream to go and play there, something I've never previously done. My only trips have been as a spectator, notably when supporting Leicester against Middlesbrough in the League Cup Final, although the gaffer had moved on from playing for Leicester then!"

Often, players who enter the game late after sampling life in Civvy Street are said to be even keener to enjoy their careers to the maximum – and Warwickshire-bred Morrell appears to be no exception. Blooded by Wrexham at 23 following brief employment in a gym and a university education that brought him a sports studies degree, he can be excused for hoping the heroics of 2006-07 are very much new dawn rather than glorious sunset.

**"YOU ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELVES A CHANCE IF YOU DON'T CONCEDE AND WE'VE MANAGED TO NICK A FEW IMPORTANT GAMES"**



**BLACKPOOL**  
FOOTBALL CLUB

**ANDY MORRELL**

SQUAD NUMBER 18  
AGE 32  
APPS 06/07 47  
GOALS 06/07 20  
SIGNED  
AUGUST 2006  
NATIONALITY  
ENGLISH



Davies' goals against Forest have gone down in Yeovil folklore

# COMEBACK KID

*It was two goals from young Welshman*

*Arron Davies that both kick-started and sealed Yeovil's historic fightback against a shattered Forest in the semi-finals*

BY GRAHAME LLOYD



**T**o paraphrase a famous line from TV's *Mastermind* quiz programme, "He started it and he finished it."

Having scored the opening goal which gave the Glovers hope of overturning a 2-0 first-leg deficit, Arron Davies' extra-time strike completed the comeback of the season.

Nottingham Forest 4 Yeovil Town 5 was the sensational aggregate scoreline following a Play-Off semi-final second leg which Glovers fanatic Tim Lancaster, writing on Ciderspace, the independent club website, called, "The greatest Yeovil Town match of all time."

Bearing in mind the League 1 side's illustrious history – full to overflowing with FA Cup giant-killings, FA Trophy success at Villa Park and recent promotions from the Conference and up through The Football League – that is some claim.

"Our plan was to silence the Forest crowd and then score the first goal which I managed to do halfway through the first half," says 22-year-old Davies.

"I remember picking up the ball on the left in my own half, cutting inside and then going past John Curtis before stealing a yard and getting the shot off."

Then, to cap a dramatic night of fluctuating fortunes, he scored the winner. "I played a little one-two

with Lee Morris and he put a lovely weighted pass to me in the box. I let it run across my body and fired it past their keeper."

The modest midfielder immediately ran across to the 1,000 delirious Yeovil supporters behind the goal – including father Mike and mother Jayne who was crying her eyes out with joy.

"As we walked off, it was like a dream – unbelievable! I knew it had been a great game and I'd scored the winner but I honestly didn't know what the score was – the match had been so up and down."

Cardiff-born Davies felt he had to leave Southampton for Yeovil to kick-start his league career and the move has paid off. A key member of Gary Johnson's side which lifted the League 2 championship in 2005, he has scored eight goals in the current campaign – and topped the statistics charts for most shots and most shots on target.

Davies readily acknowledges the debt he owes Russell Slade who arrived at Huish Park last summer. "The manager knows what I'm good at and lets me play with a freedom – I have a licence to roam. He's always positive and if you're doing the right

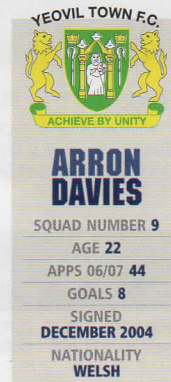
things in the right areas, then he'll back you – whatever."

"You couldn't wish to meet a nicer lad than Arron," says Slade, "and technically, he's one of the most gifted players that I've worked with. He has a great first touch and arguably could score more goals."

Davies won his first full Welsh cap as a substitute in the 2-1 win against Trinidad and Tobago a year ago. Today's match meant he was unavailable for yesterday's friendly against New Zealand but he will link up with the squad on Tuesday to prepare for next weekend's Euro 2008 qualifier against the Czech Republic.

Having stood on the Bob Bank at Ninian Park watching Cardiff City as a youngster, Davies could today win himself the chance to play against his boyhood idols in the Championship next season.

"I'd love to turn out for Yeovil at Ninian Park in front of all my family who support Cardiff. We feel we have one more big performance left in us. You don't want to go to Wembley and lose and if we get ourselves right, I'm pretty confident that we can beat Blackpool."





Blackpool's players have been on an amazing run in the second half of the season



*Blackpool defender Ian Evatt gives us the low-down on all the Seasiders who*

*might play a role today. From their performance on the pitch to their showing at the Christmas party, he's got their cards marked*

# TANGERINE DREAM

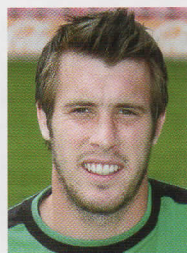
## GOALKEEPERS



### PAUL RACHUBKA

BORN 21/05/81  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 10  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
PETERBOROUGH (LOAN),  
HUDDERSFIELD (LOAN),  
OLDHAM (LOAN), MAN  
UTD, MK DONS (LOAN),  
NORTHAMPTON (LOAN)

Paul has done well for us since he got into the team away at Oldham. He has to be the quietest American I have ever met, come on 'Chubs' liven up!



### RHYS EVANS

BORN 27/01/82  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 38  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SWINDON TOWN,  
BRISTOL ROVERS  
(LOAN), QPR (LOAN),  
LEYTON ORIENT (LOAN),  
CHELSEA

Rhys, like 'Chubs', is one of the quieter men in the squad. He is a great shot-stopper and following his hernia operation he is itching to get back playing.



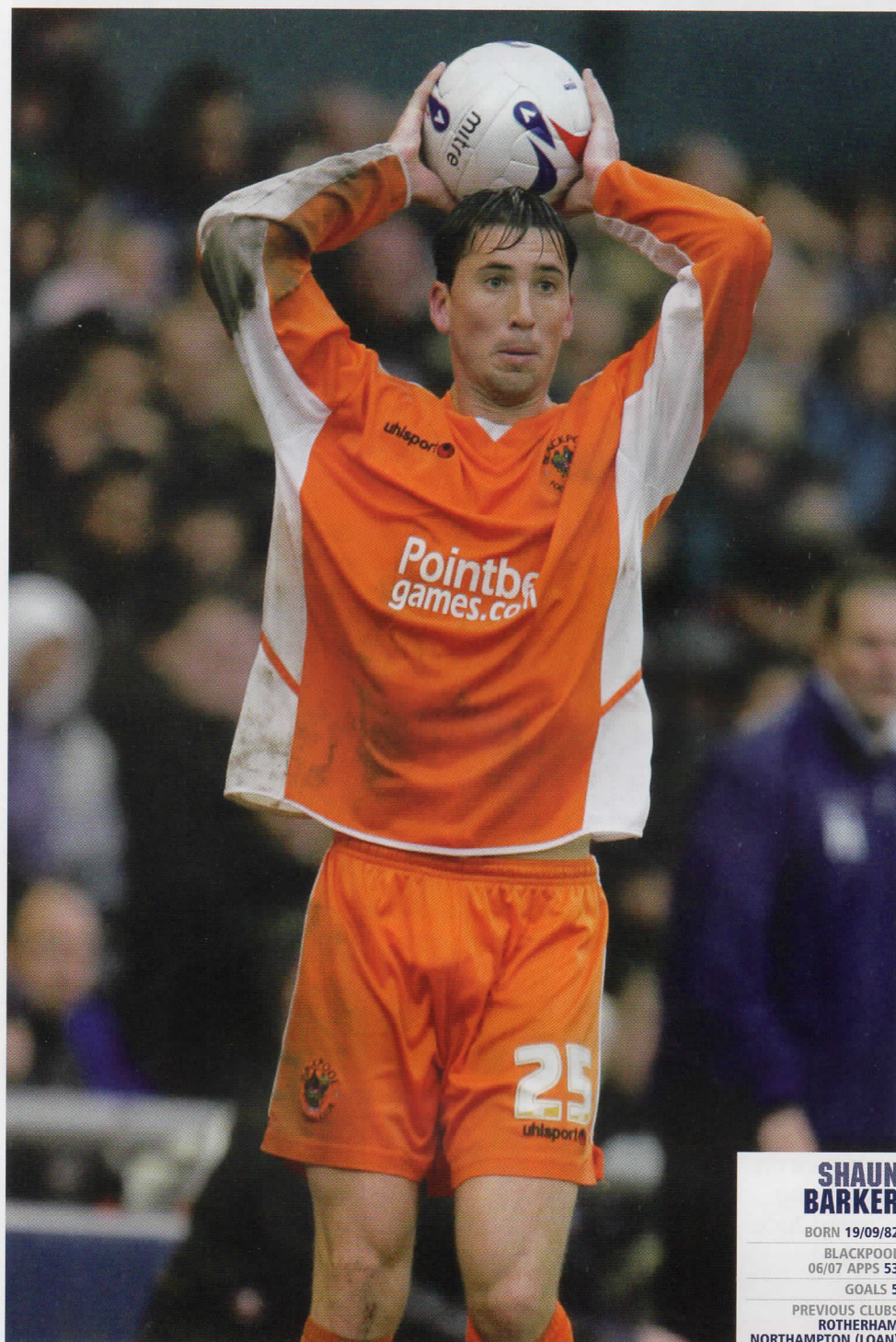
### LEWIS EDGE

BORN 12/01/87  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BURY

Lewis is a typical young goalkeeper – by that I mean he's completely off his head! He loves an impression and the funniest one has to be when he mimics Beany. ♦



## DEFENDERS



### SHAUN BARKER

BORN 19/09/82  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 53  
GOALS 5  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
ROTHERHAM  
NORTHAMPTON (LOAN)



### KASPARS GORKSS

BORN 06/11/81  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 13  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
FK VENTSPILS,  
OSTERS IF

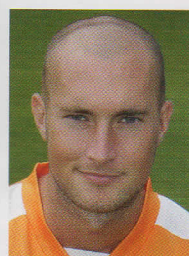
Kaspars is like a rash when you play against him and he trains as he plays. A great lad who has fitted in really well. The lads have christened him 'Chad' as his English accent has a hint of American.



### MICHAEL JACKSON

BORN 04/12/73  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 51  
GOALS 2  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
TRANMERE (LOAN),  
PRESTON, TRANMERE

I can't say anything about 'Jacko' as he might kill me. Both on and off the field he is one of the best skippers I have ever played with, he is a total professional who commands a lot of respect.



### DANNY COID

BORN 2/10/81  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 19  
PREVIOUS CLUBS NONE

Coidy gets a lot of stick from the lads for his gear, but I actually think it isn't too bad. He is now the longest serving player at the club and must have played in every position except in goal.



### ROBBIE WILLIAMS

BORN 2/10/84  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 17  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS NONE

Robbie, Robbie, Robbie! The way he stares at me sometimes worries me, it is as if he is going to attack me. On the field he has been quality for us – his left foot has caused all kinds of problems for people.



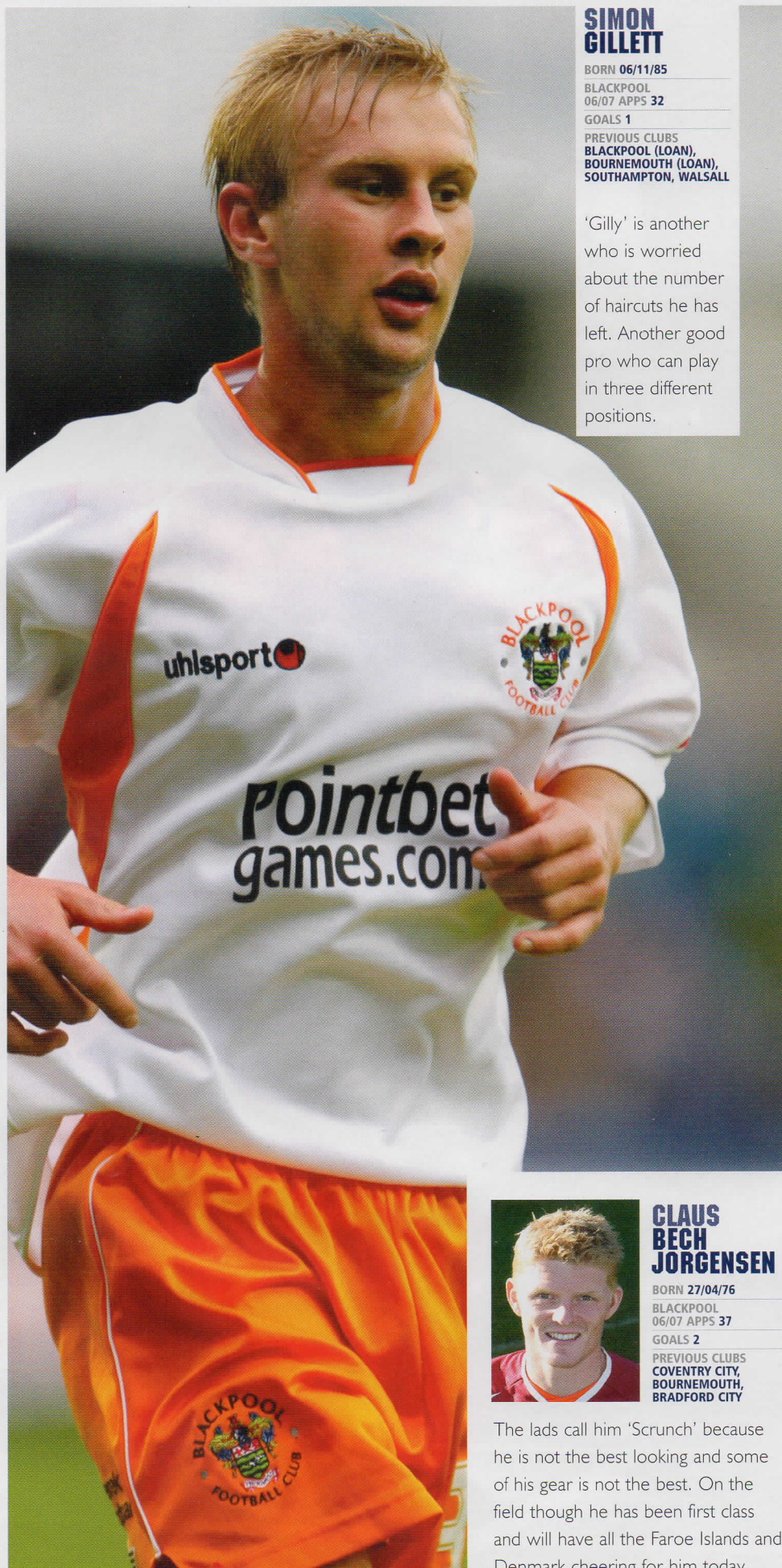
### MARC JOSEPH

BORN 10/11/76  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 8  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
PETERBOROUGH,  
BRISTOL CITY (LOAN),  
CAMBRIDGE, HULL CITY

MJ has probably the worst banter at the club, but we think that's because of his age. Like Jacko he is a model pro.



MIDFIELDERS



**SIMON GILLETT**

BORN 06/11/85

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 32

GOALS 1

PREVIOUS CLUBS

BLACKPOOL (LOAN),  
BOURNEMOUTH (LOAN),  
SOUTHAMPTON, WALSALL

'Gilly' is another who is worried about the number of haircuts he has left. Another good pro who can play in three different positions.



**PAUL TIERNEY**

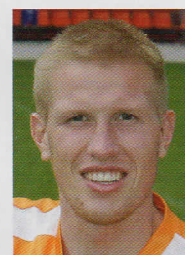
BORN 15/09/82

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 13

PREVIOUS CLUBS CREWE  
(LOAN), COLCHESTER,  
LIVINGSTON,  
BRADFORD CITY (LOAN),  
MAN UTD

'T' is a bit quiet and a bit of a dark horse, he tends to throw a couple of grenades into the banter and disappear. He has been unlucky with injuries this season and, contrary to reports, he was not Darren Huckerby's best man.



**KEITH SOUTHERN**

BORN 24/04/81

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 47

GOALS 6

PREVIOUS CLUBS NONE

What can I say about Keith? He has been one of the most consistent players in the squad this season. 'Gnashers', as he is nicknamed, takes a lot of stick about looking like a horse but he gives as good as he gets.



**MARCUS BEAN**

BORN 02/11/84

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 9

PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SWANSEA CITY (LOAN),  
QPR

What is that latest haircut all about? The lads think he is trying to be Mr T. Another good pro who gets on with his game without any fuss.



**CLAUS BECH JORGENSEN**

BORN 27/04/76

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 37

GOALS 2

PREVIOUS CLUBS  
COVENTRY CITY,  
BOURNEMOUTH,  
BRADFORD CITY

The lads call him 'Scrunch' because he is not the best looking and some of his gear is not the best. On the field though he has been first class and will have all the Faroe Islands and Denmark cheering for him today.



**SIMON WILES**

BORN 22/4/85

BLACKPOOL

06/07 APPS 0

PREVIOUS CLUBS  
MACCLESFIELD (LOAN)

I have not seen much of Simon, he has been injured or out on loan, but from the games I have seen he has a bag of tricks. He was one of the stars at the Christmas party with his Donald Duck outfit. ♦



MIDFIELDERS



**SCOTT VERNON**

BORN 13/12/83  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 43  
GOALS 14  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BLACKPOOL (LOAN),  
OLDHAM,  
COLCHESTER (LOAN)

He has been in great form this season and has weighed in with some important goals, but he has the worst hair of all the lads, it isn't too bad when he uses his straighteners for a night out but the rest of the time it is terrible.



**DAVID FOX**

BORN 13/12/83  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 44  
GOALS 4  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SHREWSBURY (LOAN)

A fox on and off the field. On the field his right foot is like a magic wand, he has great technique and has been different class this season.



**CHRIS BRANDON**

BORN 07/04/76  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 5  
GOALS 2  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
TORQUAY UNITED,  
CHESTERFIELD

I have known 'Brando' for a few years, we were at Chesterfield together and he hasn't changed, although he has replaced his love of sun beds for fake tan. A quality player who can turn a game.



**WES HOOLAHAN**

BORN 20/05/82  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 48  
GOALS 10  
PREVIOUS CLUBS NONE

A revelation this season and will be presented with the Players' Player of the Year award on Tuesday. He has a bag of tricks and does things I could never do. Wes enjoys a flutter, but I drew the line when he wanted me to bet on Ready Steady Cook!



**ADRIAN FORBES**

BORN 23/01/79  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 41  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
NORWICH CITY,  
SWANSEA CITY,  
LUTON TOWN

'Forbesy' is my room-mate and he is brilliant – a top man and I can't say anything bad about him. He is Mr 100% if you asked him to run into a wall for the cause he would do so. ♦



**KEIGAN PARKER**

BORN 08/06/82  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 52  
GOALS 15  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
ST JOHNSTONE

Keigan has been first-class since he got back into the team and his pace is a real threat. Off the field none of the lads want to share a room with him after he left his room looking like a Bush Tucker Trial in the New Year.

**MATTHEW BLINKHORN**

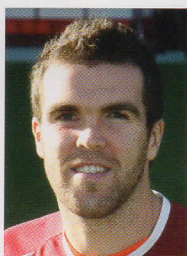
BORN 02/03/85  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 2  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BURY (LOAN), LUTON TOWN (LOAN)

Born and bred in Blackpool, Blinks will be living off this day for the next 30 years. He made legend status at Morecambe earlier in the season when he bagged a few goals in their push for promotion.

**ANDY MORRELL**

BORN 28/09/74  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 47  
GOALS 20  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
COVENTRY CITY, WREXHAM

For someone of his age he has been fantastic this season, his work rate is an example for everyone. He has had a great season with 20 goals, but at the back of his mind he is worried about the number of haircuts he has left.

**BEN BURGESS**

BORN 09/11/81  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 31  
GOALS 3  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BRENTFORD (LOAN), BLACKBURN, OLDHAM (LOAN), STOCKPORT, HULL CITY

Ben is the hairiest man in football, he has hair all over. Has had a frustrating time with injuries but is back fit and will be desperate to play today.

**IAN EVATT**

BORN 19/11/81  
BLACKPOOL  
06/07 APPS 52  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
CHESTERFIELD, DERBY COUNTY, QPR, NORTHAMPTON (LOAN)

**ANDY MORRELL ON IAN EVATT:**

'Evo' has a great tan and loves the sun beds nearly as much as he loves a moan. Always has a tip and when they win (whichever isn't too often) he goes on about it for weeks. On the field he has been rock solid for us.





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Club Every Success*

*Rising to the Challenge*



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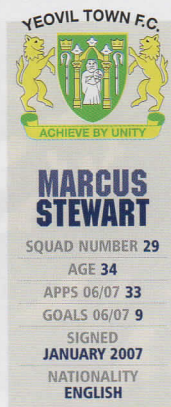
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**M**arcus Stewart knows all about the joy and despair experienced in Play-Off Finals after featuring in both winning and losing sides at the old Wembley.

The veteran Yeovil striker scored one of the goals as Ipswich beat Barnsley 4-2 in the 2000 Division One Play-Off Final. Five years earlier, he played for Bristol Rovers in the Division Two Play-Off Final when they were beaten 2-1 by Huddersfield.

Stewart ranks the contrasting results as the highest and lowest points in a long career which has taken in



seven clubs. He says: "The highest I've felt was after winning at Wembley with Ipswich because it got us into the Premier League and I'd never played there before. On the other side of the coin, being on the losing side at Wembley is the worst feeling you can have as a player."

Stewart is determined to use the memory of that defeat 12 years ago as a motivating factor today against Blackpool.

"It's not a nice feeling and that will inspire me," he says. "I don't like losing, it's as simple as that, whether

it's a five-a-side match, a kick-about with my kids or whatever."

At the age of 34, Stewart realises this may be his last chance to turn out at Wembley, although he doesn't rule out the possibility of making a return to the famous stadium at some point in the future.

"I might not get the opportunity to play at Wembley again. I'm coming to the end of my career and these things slip away from you as you get older. Who knows, I might go there as a manager one day."

Stewart was on target in the semi-final, second leg victory over Nottingham Forest and he thinks some of the Forest players were guilty of thinking they'd clinched a place in the Final after winning 2-0 in the first leg.

"I think that's what they got sucked into, to be honest. One or two of their lads celebrated after the first leg as if they'd won the tie, not just the game. That's how I viewed it, as did one or two of my team-mates. Thankfully, that came back to haunt them."

Stewart, who joined the Glovers on a free transfer in January after a spell on loan, admits Yeovil have exceeded even the manager's expectations this season.

"When I signed for the club, I asked Russell Slade where he thought we'd end up this season. He said to me, 'Mid-table and we might surprise a few people.' I think that we have surprised a few people."

"This club keeps going from strength to strength and my ambition is to get Yeovil into the Championship, which would be a fantastic achievement. There's great character in the squad. There are some players who can go on to be really good players."

"It's been a brilliant first season for the manager. He took Grimsby to the League 2 Play-Off Final last year and hopefully he can go one better and win the Final this time."

Drawing on his experience of Play-Off Finals, what advice will Stewart be giving to his team-mates before the game?

"It's a case of being mentally tough and handling the pressure," he replies. "I'll just tell the lads to hold their nerve because that's what it's all about."

*At 34, Marcus Stewart's goals have helped propel Yeovil to a dream date at Wembley, where he's experienced the highs and lows of the Play-Offs*

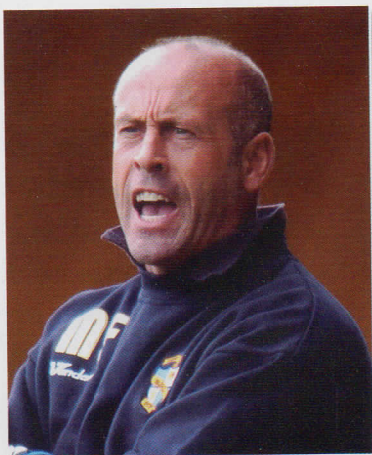
# STEW-PENDOUS!

BY NICK JOHNSON



Marcus Stewart will bring some experience to the Yeovil side today





# Mixing up their play is a strength

Port Vale manager **Martin Foyle** has seen both of today's contenders up close this season in League 1. Here, he analyses Blackpool and says Yeovil will have to be on the ball to stop their attacking threat

INTERVIEW **LAWRIE MADDEN**

**I** predicted beforehand that it would be a Yeovil versus Blackpool Final and I think Blackpool will win, but they have to turn up and perform on the day.

Blackpool have a big back four and they graft for each other.

The biggest factor for Blackpool is their four strikers. Ben Burgess, Scott Vernon, Keigan Parker and Andy Morrell are some of their key assets.

Simon Grayson can take them off if they are not doing the business and put on another striker instead.

Parker is on fire at the moment and all the strikers complement each other. Morrell pulls defences around while Parker uses his pace to come in behind.

We played Blackpool early in the season and beat them, but since then Simon has had an injection of money. He has a large squad and he will have to let some players down for the Final, but that's part of the job.

Nevertheless the club will be buzzing as they are on a roll.

I think Yeovil can cause Blackpool

a few problems at the back, especially on a big pitch like Wembley.

The Blackpool defence will drop deep and deny the opportunity to get behind them, but it enlarges the pitch.

Blackpool have the ability to mix up play. They can hit the ball long and try and get Parker in but they can play as well.

Wes Hoolahan has a great left foot, Simon did well to get him because there were a few clubs in for him. He is a very clever player, very bright, and he has the ability to pick out a pass – just look at the game against Oldham.

Hoolahan has that bit of quality that teams need to unlock tight defences.

I think the first

goal will be a major factor. Blackpool will be under pressure because they will have 30,000 to 40,000 fans at the game and the players will have to cope with their fans' expectations.

Having said that Blackpool also have more experience in the side but as the game goes on and players become tired then set pieces will come in to the game more.

The Seasiders were the team I fancied when the Play-Offs started and I am not going to change my mind, but Yeovil have shown that they are never beaten.

I expect Blackpool to win but they will have to be at their best especially against a Yeovil side who made a magnificent recovery against Forest.

Blackpool are hard to beat, though, as they have a squad of players that can adapt – you need to be big and strong at this level but they also have



players who can get the ball down and play.

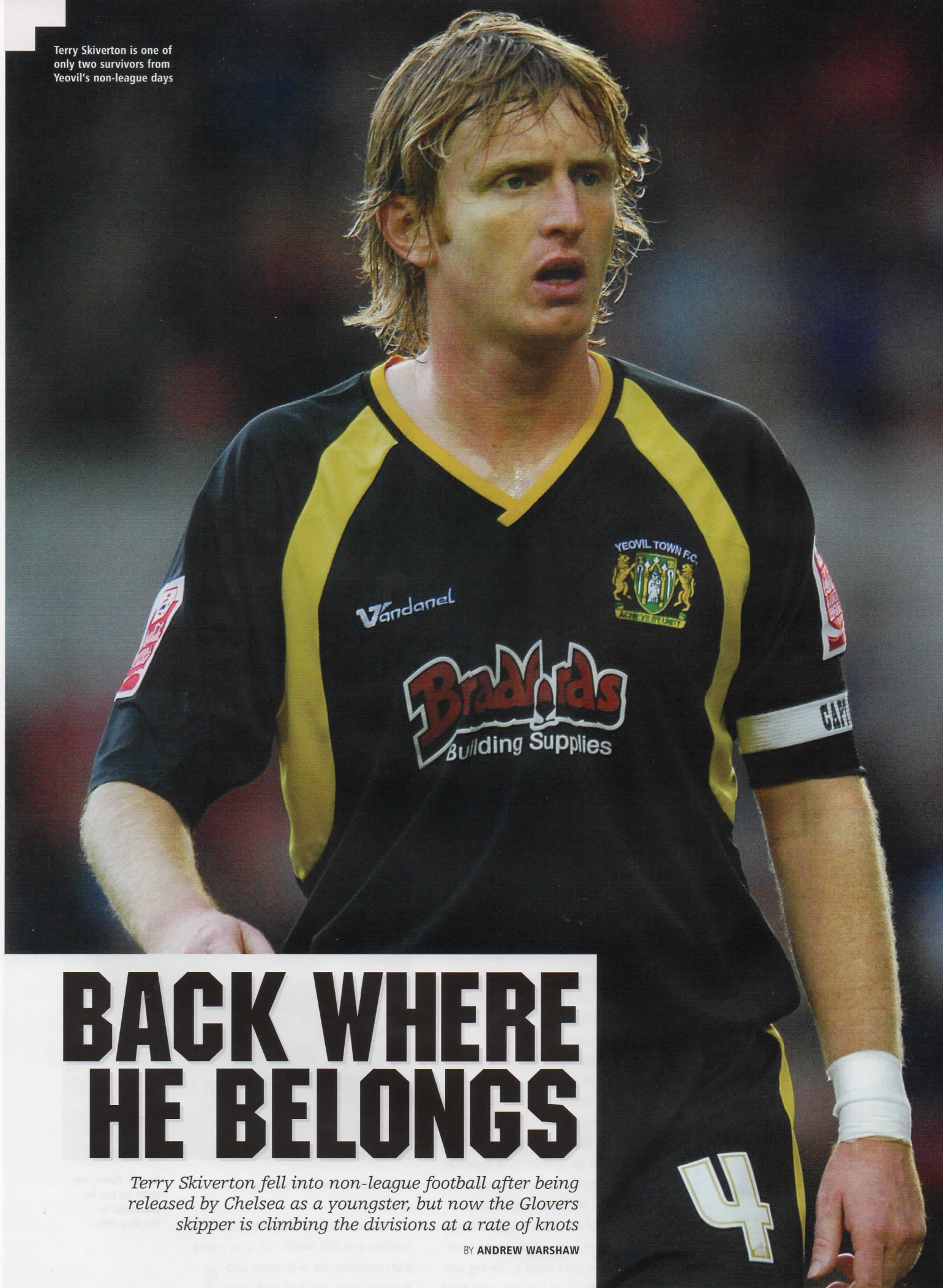
The downside is that they play very narrow and lack width but they more than compensate with pace and their counter-attack style of play.

Keigan Parker has been on fire for Blackpool in the Play-Offs





Terry Skiverton is one of only two survivors from Yeovil's non-league days



# BACK WHERE HE BELONGS

*Terry Skiverton fell into non-league football after being released by Chelsea as a youngster, but now the Glovers skipper is climbing the divisions at a rate of knots*

BY ANDREW WARSHAW



**Y**eovil captain, Terry Skiverton, could be forgiven for wondering whether he was ever going to experience a day like today.

Signed as an apprentice by Chelsea, where he later turned professional, Skiverton dreamed of titles and trophies, only to find himself cast out of Stamford Bridge before he even had a chance to kick a first-team ball in anger.

Not even a spell at Wycombe Wanderers gave him the satisfaction he craved as a professional footballer and it was only when he plummeted even further down the ranks at Welling United that his career finally began to take off.

The rest, as far Yeovil fans are concerned, is history.

When he leads out the Glovers for today's League 1 Play-Off Final against Blackpool, the 31-year-old central defender will be one of only two players remaining from their non-league days. If ever there was a case of good things coming to those who wait, this is it. The initial downward spiral in Terry's career path being a sobering reminder of how some players have to tough it out to get their reward.

"I'd done two years apprenticeship and three years as a pro at Chelsea," Skiverton recalled. "Glenn Hoddle was the manager but I never got a chance to play for the first team. I travelled with them once to a game in Europe but that was about it.

"It was round about the start of things happening for Chelsea, with an international mentality, and it got harder and harder to break into the team. I found myself on the outside waiting for my contract to expire.

"I'm not envious because let's face it, there aren't many players at Chelsea who have come through the ranks."

Wycombe should have presented a more realistic opportunity but that didn't work out either. Two brief spells there, one on loan, ended with another inglorious exit.

"You think, if you've been at a club like Chelsea, that you'll walk into another League club but it doesn't always work like that. If you haven't got league games under your belt, people are reluctant to take a chance on you."

Moving to Welling, for all its unheralded status, all but saved Skiverton's career.

"It was my last chance saloon really. They were the ones that helped me get my feet back into the game.

"The manager, Kevin Howells, made me go back to the basics of defending. I tried to think of Chelsea as going to football university, with all the right qualifications, but just needing to put them into practice.

"I was 21 and still young. I asked Kevin whether I was good enough to play League football again. He said it wasn't a question of being good enough but whether I'd be given the opportunity."

Along came Yeovil, another non-league club at the time. Skiverton was signed before the 1999-2000 season by former manager Colin Lippiat, and finally found the stability he had been

looking for.

"Colin used to come down to Chelsea's training ground so he knew a bit about me. He

dropped me for the first game of the season and I was dreading things not working out again. Luckily I got back in and never looked back."

He stayed in when Gary Johnson, who became a Yeovil legend, took over as manager and went on to carve his name in Somerset footballing history. They won the FA Trophy Final, got promoted a season later and finally ended up in League 1.

By then Skiverton was part of the furniture but had to wait until David Webb took charge to become captain – and only then because the former Chelsea defender didn't know anyone else among the playing staff.

"It's true," he confesses. "I was the only one he had heard of!"

Now, after almost a decade at Yeovil, comes Skiverton's defining moment. A torn groin forced him to miss the Play-Off semi-final games with Nottingham Forest and for a while he thought his chance had gone, only for Yeovil to stage the mother of all comebacks with a 5-4 aggregate win that defied the odds after losing the home leg 2-0.

"It was the worst moment of my life when I did my groin. I thought I'd miss out on everything but luckily I'm fit now. Of course it's up to the manager whether I'm in the side against Blackpool."

Few believe Russell Slade would dare leave him out even though, in his absence, Yeovil performed miraculously at Forest.

"We played so well at home, even though we lost, so we always thought we'd have a chance in the second leg. But the way the lads performed was unbelievable and the most nerve-racking game I've been involved in, even though I was in the dugout.

"Everyone kept saying that we were playing against such a big club but they were not the same Forest that won all that silverware under Brian Clough. We earned the right to play them and weren't in awe of them."

Now, on arguably the greatest day in Yeovil's history, comes the final hurdle and Skiverton is not going to Wembley to lose. Upwards of 30,000 fans are expected to roar the Glovers on, a legacy of the Gary Johnson days of fostering a collective spirit.

"He made everyone come and live in the area and we all stuck together. Even now, all the players go out on a Friday night before every home game. We don't have guys who live miles away and only come down for a couple of hours a day. It makes us more of a close-knit team and I'm convinced that's what really helped us climb through the divisions."

Blackpool, he knows, will provide formidable opposition.

"We drew and lost against them in the league and they were two close games. I can't wait because I'm one of those players who's had to win my way back up, rather than just get lucky.

"As a survivor from our Conference days, I'm proud of what I've achieved and being able to lead Yeovil out. They've been so good to me and I owe them a lot.

"The further you get, the greedier you get. Blackpool love to attack like us, but fingers crossed we can come up trumps one last time.

"A little-town team like Yeovil competing in the Championship – what a dream."

**"I'M PROUD OF WHAT I'VE ACHIEVED AND BEING ABLE TO LEAD YEOVIL OUT. THEY'VE BEEN SO GOOD TO ME AND I OWE THEM A LOT"**



**TERRY SKIVERTON**

SQUAD NUMBER 4

AGE 31

APPS 06/07 40

GOALS 06/07 2

SIGNED

JUNE 1999

NATIONALITY  
ENGLISH





# Glovers Lovers

*After ending a 108-year wait for league football in 2003, Yeovil have rapidly made up for lost time and now stand on the brink of the Championship. Four fans gave us their predictions for today's game*

**What are your predictions for the Final – who will be Yeovil's match-winners?**

**SG:** I predict that Yeovil will win 2-1. I believe Arron Davies will continue with his recent good form and not only help create chances but score a goal as well.

**PM:** I think it'll be a very tight game. Yeovil to win 1-0 in extra-time with the winner coming from Lee Morris.

**BB:** I think we'll win. Arron Davies and Lee Morris will be the match-winners.

**MS:** I predict a 2-1 win for the Glovers. As with the game at the City Ground, the match-winners will be the whole team.

**Did you honestly believe Russell Slade could be so successful in his first season at the club?**

**SG:** I don't believe that anybody expected such fantastic success this season – given the vast changes in playing staff last summer – but Russell made a number of quality signings.

**PM:** No, I thought at best we'd finish mid-table.

**BB:** Not really. I think he's done a better job than anyone realistically expected.

**MS:** If I'm being honest, no. I saw the first two home games and was convinced that the predictions of a long hard season were valid.

Nathan Jones and Russell Slade are overjoyed after defeating Forest



**STEVE GILLINGHAM**

LIVES: PORTISHEAD, BRISTOL  
SUPPORTED YEOVIL: 36 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER: TERRY SKIVERTON



**PETER MALE**

LIVES: NORTH DORSET  
SUPPORTED YEOVIL: 43 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER: GAVIN WILLIAMS



**BRAD BAXTER**

LIVES: YEOVIL  
SUPPORTED YEOVIL: ABOUT TEN YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER: WARREN PATMORE



**MIKE STURGES**

LIVES: PICKERING, NORTH YORKSHIRE  
SUPPORTED YEOVIL: 45 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER: LEE JOHNSON

**Who at the club will you be most happy for if Yeovil win today?**

**SG:** Chairman and chief executive, John Fry, who has stood behind the club in bad times and is now enjoying the good times.

**PM:** I think Fry as well. He's overseen three championships, an FA Trophy success and of course delivered league football following a wait lasting over 100 years.

**BB:** I couldn't pick out just one person. I'd be happy for everyone involved with the club.

**MS:** I will have a few thoughts for my father, a lifelong supporter who sadly passed away last summer. To have seen the Glovers at Wembley would have pleased him greatly.

**Which positions would Yeovil most need to strengthen if they go up?**

**SG:** Like a lot of teams, we need a proven goalscorer. Beyond this, I believe we have an excellent nucleus to our squad who deserve the chance to prove themselves.

**PM:** The forward line will need to be addressed. If Leon Best had been

here the whole season, we would have won League 1.

**BB:** We're solid in defence and midfield, but we lack fire-power so I'd perhaps sign a couple of strikers.

**MS:** Up front because we create chances but don't always put them away. We probably also need reinforcements at the back.

**What else are you hoping for from your day other than a Yeovil victory?**

**SG:** A good team performance that demonstrates to the watching TV viewers that we are a quality football team and a well-run club.

**PM:** To see Yeovil play at Wembley for the first time will be so emotional and fulfill so many dreams, so I think it would be greedy to wish for anything else. Oh, apart from a win for the Glovers!

**BB:** It will just be a great day out for everyone at the new Wembley.

**MS:** We obviously want to win but if not we must be able to hold our heads up high and know that we could not have done any better – we were just beaten by the better side on the day.







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**tour**



**M**ullets and Maradona were everywhere. The "Big Five" of elite English clubs included Tottenham Hotspur and Everton. Gary Mabbutt's knee had just sent the FA Cup to Coventry. And The Football League, showing a readiness to embrace radical ideas at the age of 99, was about to launch the annual festival of frayed nerves known as the Play-Offs.

As you bask in the futuristic splendour of the new Wembley, join me on a Life On Mars-style journey back to May 1987. Wayne Rooney was in nappies, Roman Abramovich was in the Soviet Army and the Premier League was still a twinkle in



Charlton celebrate their dramatic penalty shoot-out triumph over Sunderland in the 1998 Play-Off Final

# FOOTBALL'S COMING HOME

*After six years in the Welsh capital, Phil Shaw celebrates the return of the Play-Offs to Wembley Stadium*

someone's eye. This was the world into which The League brought their new concept, and, as with most innovations, there were those who railed against it.

"Some purists argued that it went against the values of a league structure, which is based on meritocracy," says Andy Williamson, who was then The Football League's press liaison officer and is now the chief operating officer. "But at the professional end of the game, we have to respond to the commercial realities."

Those realities were bleak. English football was beset by falling attendances, with an aggregate of just 16.5 million spectators watching fixtures in the four divisions compared with 30m today. Hooliganism had contributed to the decline, admits Williamson, but the main factor was the sense that too many matches during the second half of the season had nothing at stake.

The Play-Offs were proposed by

the then Brentford chairman Martin Lange, who had noted their success in American sport, and developed on a league working party with Crystal Palace's Ron Noades. They succeeded in their aim of cutting the number of 'end-of-season' games – and the formula has endured, with a few adjustments, to the present day.

Mid-table teams could put on a spurt and qualify for a crack at

The Bobby Moore statue at the new-look Wembley



promotion. Or they could be sucked into a relegation struggle – for in the first two years of the Play-Offs, the side finishing immediately above the drop zone were forced to slug it out with the three clubs finishing behind the automatic promotion places.

"That was a temporary measure to facilitate the reduction of the original First Division – what's now the Premiership – from 22 clubs to 20," Williamson explains. "They were always meant to be 'promotion' Play-Offs."

To coincide with the switch to a format excluding relegation candidates, Williamson proposed the change from two-leg, home-and-away finals to three one-off divisional finals. For the coup de grace, from 1990 onwards, he suggested staging them on successive days over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend – at Wembley.

His leap of imagination was thrillingly vindicated. Now, after an enforced six-year exile at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, these showcase fixtures have come 'home' to the sumptuous new Wembley. The architecture isn't the only thing that has been transformed, as the composition of those first Play-Offs shows. They say a week is a long time in politics. In football, 20 years is clearly an eternity.

In 1987, as in 2007, Sunderland exited the second tier, but in the wrong





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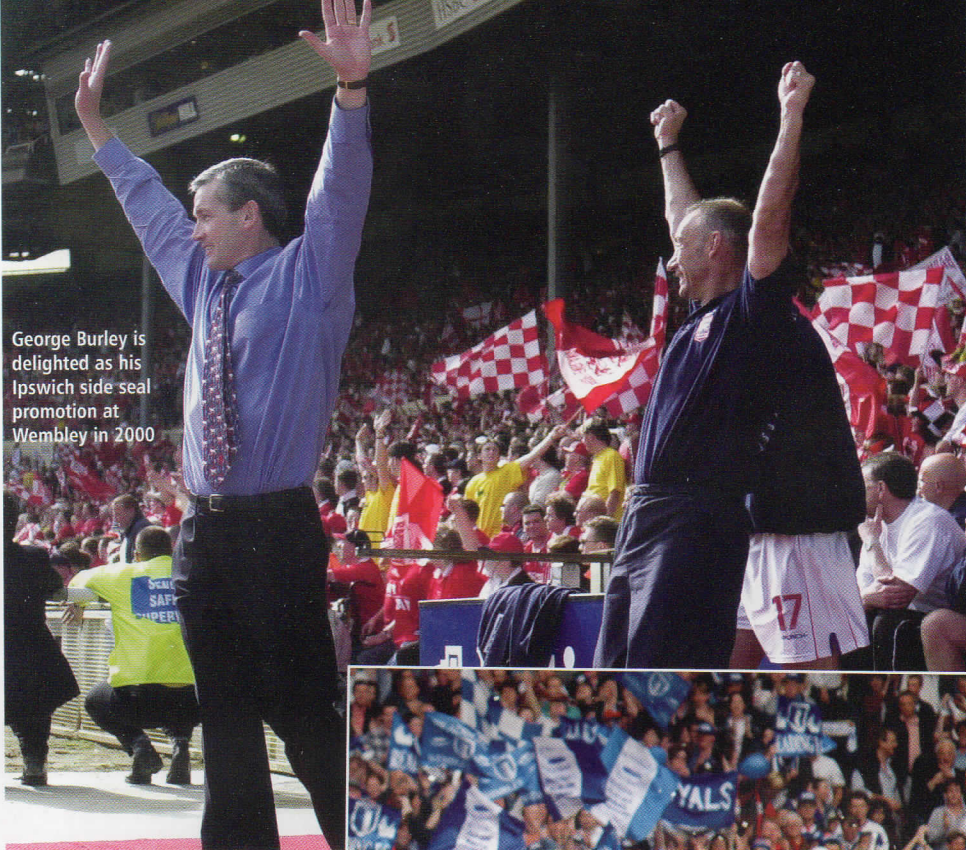


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George Burley is delighted as his Ipswich side seal promotion at Wembley in 2000

direction after bowing to Gillingham. Leeds United contested the final to play at the highest level, only to succumb in extra time of a replay to a Charlton Athletic team fighting to preserve their top-flight status.

A look back at those first Play-Offs for a Third Division place underlines the extraordinary fluctuation in fortunes in which English football specialises. Bolton Wanderers, who spent the 2006/07 campaign pushing Arsenal and Liverpool for the fourth Champions League spot, were relegated to the basement section for the first time after losing the semi-final to Aldershot.

The Shots, who would go out of business in mid-season within six years before re-emerging as Aldershot Town, went on to defeat Wolverhampton Wanderers, not less, to gain promotion.

The line-up for the inaugural Wembley finals three years later again highlights the extraordinary volatility of football. One of the Fourth Division semi-finals had pitted Cambridge United against Maidstone United – clubs who would vanish from The League radar (last month Cambridge avoided relegation to the Conference South while the 'other' MUFC, who re-formed

after folding, won promotion to the Ryman Premier League).

The honour of scoring the first Wembley Play-Off winner went to Cambridge's Dion Dublin, against Chesterfield. Neil Warnock's Notts County then defeated Tranmere Rovers. Twenty-four hours later, a slick-passing Swindon Town side under the guidance of Ossie Ardiles deflated a sea of inflatable black cats by beating Sunderland when a shot by Alan McLoughlin was deflected into his own net by Gary Bennett before 73,000 fans.



Bolton were involved in a Play-Off Final thriller with Reading in 1995



Dion Dublin scored the first Wembley Play-Off winner for Cambridge

Swindon had made it to the top flight for the first time. Or so they thought, yet the Play-Offs can bring heartbreak even to the victors. Within days, they were relegated to the Third Division after admitting 35 illegal payments to players, eventually being allowed to stay in the Second Division.

There were always going to be injustices, perceived and genuine, when clubs narrowly missing automatic promotion lost to teams who had scraped into the top six 15 points behind them. But the sheer excitement and tension of the finals, and increasingly the financial stakes involved, mean they have become integral to the nation's sporting life as well as being copied throughout the non-League pyramid, in Scotland and in Europe.

"I believe the Play-Offs have contributed significantly to bringing the crowds back," says Williamson. "The beneficial effect on the regular season has been considerable. The mini knock-out tournament at the end of the season is the icing on the cake. The finals have the potential to become the most

dramatic matches of the season. I think back to when Bolton came from behind to beat Reading 4-3, when Swindon defeated Leicester by the same score, and of course to when Charlton and Sunderland drew 4-4 and went to an amazing shoot-out.

"It's not just the game for a place in the Premiership either. In 1999, Gillingham were all but promoted into the second tier when they led Manchester City 2-0 after 89 minutes. But City got two late, late goals, took it to extra time and won on penalties. Incredible stuff.

"In 2001 we sampled Welsh hospitality for the first time and we had six fantastic years at the Millennium Stadium. Its proximity to Cardiff city centre made it a popular location with fans and the Play-Offs became a big social event. But it's brilliant to be going to the new Wembley. It's the traditional home of English football and the great occasions belong there."



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**WILL R**  
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**GLOVERS**

**Superfan Stevie G**

**Come on**  
**Glovers**  
**get it done.**

**Superfan Allan R**

**Yeovil your**  
**supporters**  
**believe -**

**SUPERFAN**

**E-I, MIKE V**

**E-I, E-I, O.**

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**league we go!**



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**the**  
**Faith!!**

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**and get into the**  
**Championship!**  
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# HOOLA HOPE

*Wes Hoolahan has enjoyed a highly successful loan season with the Seaside, earning himself a place in the League 1 Team of the Year. Now the fans will want him to sign permanently this summer*

BY NICK JOHNSON



The attack-minded Hoolahan looks to take on his man

**O**n-loan midfielder Wes Hoolahan admits that his future at Blackpool could hinge on the result of today's game.

The little Irishman has been at Bloomfield Road on a season-long loan from Scottish club Livingston and promotion to the Championship could convince him to remain at the club.

Hoolahan was an instrumental figure in Blackpool's rise up the table and it was no surprise when he was named in the PFA's League 1 Team of the Year.

Blackpool boss Simon Grayson has made it clear that he wants to keep him, but the player is waiting to see which division they'll be playing in next season before committing himself.

"I've been offered a deal," he reveals. "But I said I'd hang on until the end of the season. I'm waiting to see what the story is. At the moment, I'm just looking forward to playing at Wembley and trying to get Blackpool into the Championship."

Blackpool got off to a poor start to the current campaign and Hoolahan admits that thoughts of finishing the season with such a big game didn't

even come into consideration.

"When I first came here at the start of the season, I never expected to get to Wembley.

"At the start of the year, we were fourth from bottom, but we picked up and got some good results."

The former Shelbourne player has been impressed with the quality of League 1 and feels Blackpool have what it takes to make the step up to the Championship.

"I've been surprised at how good the standard is in League 1," he admits. "Simon Grayson likes us to get the ball down and play football, which suits our game."

A Manchester United fan who lists Eric Cantona and Roy Keane as his boyhood idols, Hoolahan has won 15 Republic of Ireland Under-21s caps and featured once as an unused substitute in the senior squad.

He acknowledges that playing in the second tier of English football would improve his chances of winning a full cap. "The Championship is a good level of football and it would do me the world of good to be playing there because there are a lot of televised

games. "It raises your profile if you're playing in the Championship."

He scored his tenth goal of the season in Blackpool's 2-1 semi-final first leg win and pointed out that Yeovil's win at Nottingham Forest the night before their return game with Oldham served as a warning to guard against complacency.

"We saw what happened between Forest and Yeovil. The gaffer got that into his head and told us before the game, 'Don't think it's over.' I think a lot of people expected us to win, but we just thought of it as 0-0 and went out to win the game. We didn't sit back and go for the draw."

The 3-1 win at Bloomfield Road was secured on the eve of Hoolahan's 25th birthday and he believes that whatever happens today, Blackpool can look back on a successful season.

"I think it's a great achievement to get to the Final. Simon Grayson has been in charge for a year and a half and he's brought in a lot of new players.

"We never expected to get to Wembley and we're underdogs, so I don't think there's pressure on us."

**BLACKPOOL**  
FOOTBALL CLUB

**WES HOOLAHAN**  
SQUAD NUMBER 27  
AGE 25  
APPS 06/07 48  
GOALS 06/07 10  
SIGNED JULY 2006  
NATIONALITY IRISH



# This tie really is too close to call

Cheltenham manager **John Ward** got the better of Russell Slade in last season's Play-Off Finals but he believes the Yeovil manager has enough armoury to make up for that disappointment today

INTERVIEW GRAHAME LLOYD



**T**he good thing for Yeovil is that Russell Slade has been to Play-Off Final before – only last year with Grimsby in League 2 – and he now has what I think is a more flexible team.

He's able to move people around, like Wayne Gray, Lee Morris and Marcus Stewart – to not necessarily utilise them in a 4-4-2 but to play them just off the centre-backs.

Stewart, for example, does not operate like a traditional centre forward up against a central defender. He comes off, drifts into midfield areas and picks up the pace for players like Arron Davies, Gray and Morris to use the spaces that he has dragged markers from.

From the outside looking in, you'd think that Terry Skiverton, who's been out with a groin injury, would be a big loss if he's not fit, but with Scott Guyett coming in to central defence, the squad has coped to reach the Final.

While Yeovil do concede a goal or two, I think it's because of their readiness to get forward rather than anything to do with Steve Mildenhall.

With the advanced play of their full-backs, Andy Lindegaard and Nathan Jones, they're probably not like a normal back four in terms of defending first and I particularly like Jones for his pace and the way he links up with the forwards.

Gray is a little bit more

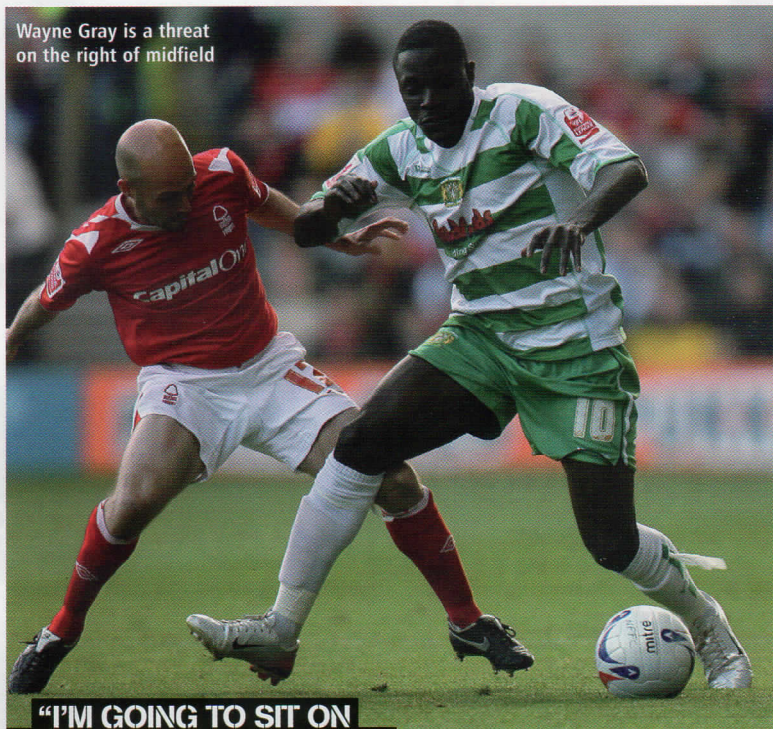
straightforward, up and down on the right of midfield whereas Davies cuts in across the middle and has Jones coming up behind him to fill in the spaces. Davies has got the pace and the coolness to deliver a pass, a cross or a shot.

He exploits the spaces created by Stewart and when he tucks inside, he

players and they provide the insurance to allow flair players like Davies to perform.

The physical size of the players is important: there's no big centre forward who they lump the ball up to – they pass the ball and get it in and around feet. Morris is given licence to roam free and use his pace and touch

Wayne Gray is a threat on the right of midfield



**"I'M GOING TO SIT ON THE FENCE. ON THEIR DAY THEY'RE TWO VERY EXCITING TEAMS"**

becomes a problem for the full back who's marking him.

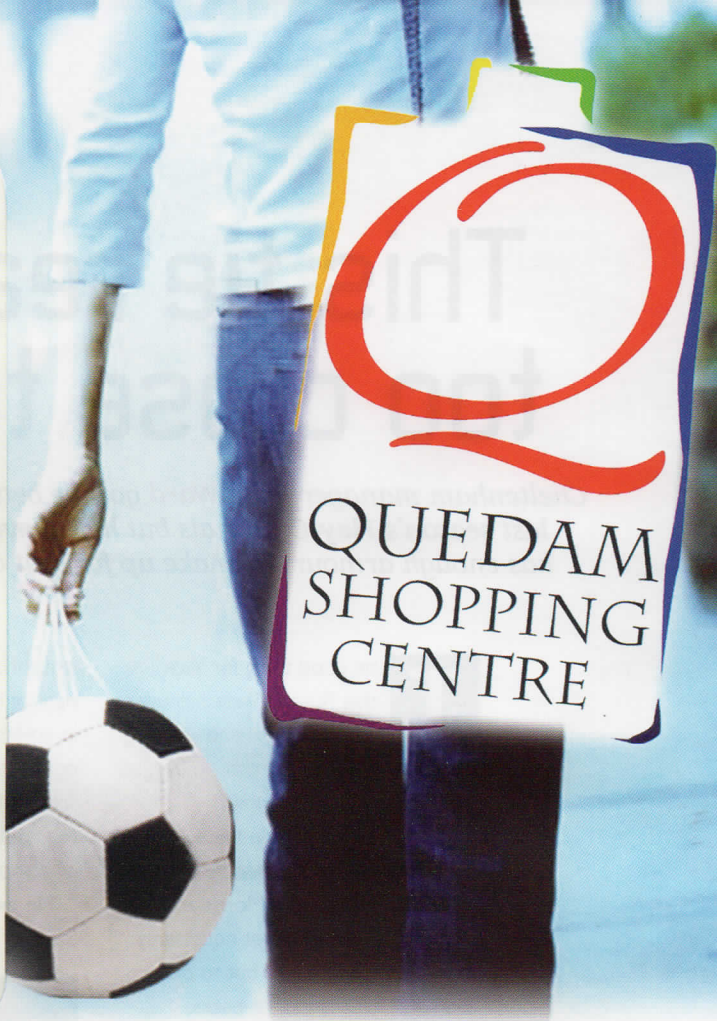
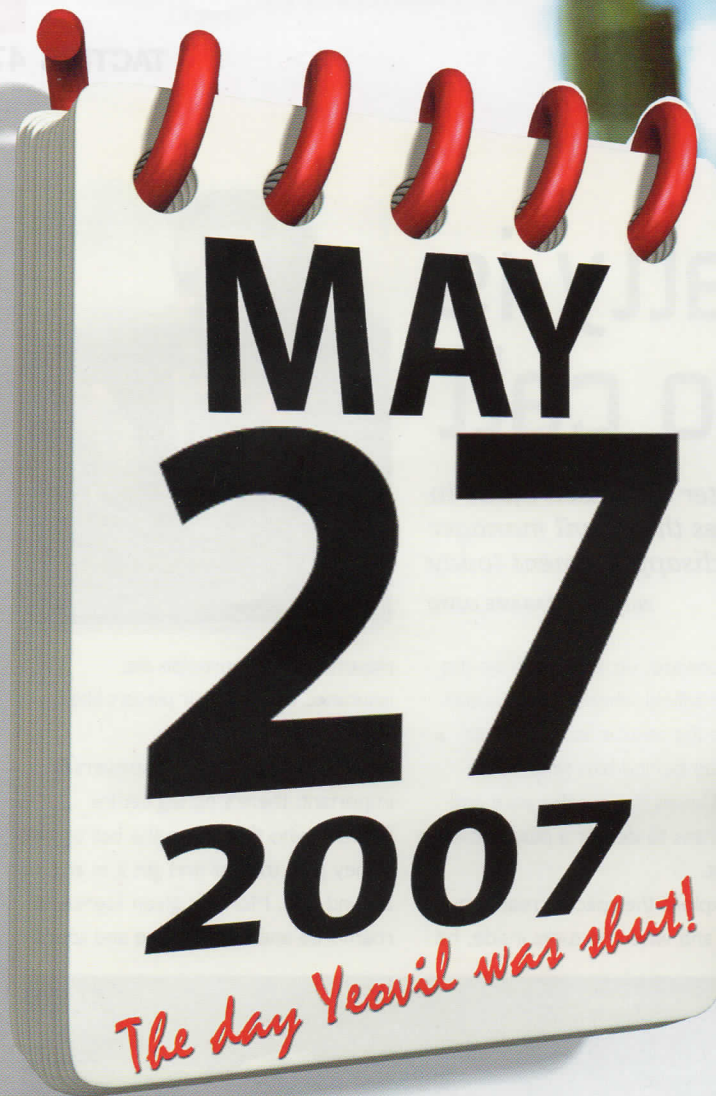
I believe the strength of a team lies down the middle and Yeovil have that with Mildenhall, Skiverton, Guyett, Forbes and Anthony Barry and Chris Cohen in central midfield. Barry and Cohen are the unsung heroes of the side – they're solid and reliable

and when he's on song, he's a handful for anybody.

Blackpool may be slight favourites because of their nine straight wins but Yeovil will be on a major high after beating Forest. Both teams are going into the Final after scoring five goals which is absolutely incredible. I just hope they can live up to expectations and produce a really good advert for League 1.

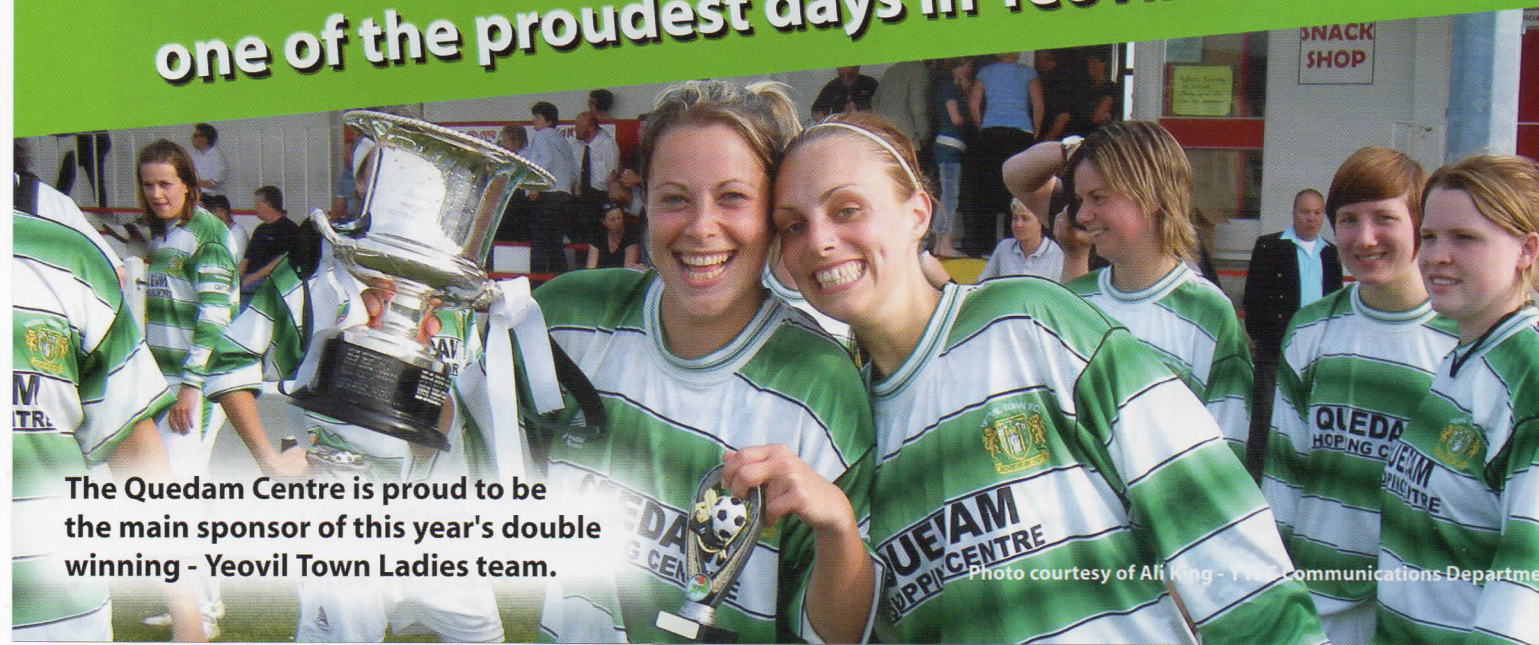






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Photo courtesy of Ali King - Yeovil Communications Department



Yeovil have come a long way in the last five years and they want to go further



# THE SOMER SET

*Tony Pounder enjoyed two spells at Huish Park in a playing career that also took in Bristol Rovers and Hereford. He provides an expert's view on the players in Yeovil's squad this afternoon*

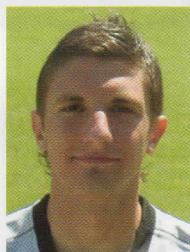
## GOALKEEPERS



### STEVE MILDENHALL

BORN 13/5/1978  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 51  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SWINDON, GLOUCESTER  
(LOAN), SALISBURY  
(LOAN) NOTTS COUNTY,  
OLDHAM, GRIMSBY

Will be looking to go one better than last year after losing the League 2 Play-Off Final with Grimsby. Has been ever present this season with some fine individual displays. Outstanding shot-stopper with a commanding presence in the box, he deservedly picked up the Player of the Year award.



### DARREN BEHCET

BORN 18/10/1986  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
WEST HAM, CAMBRIDGE  
UNITED (LOAN)

Signed last summer from West Ham after coming through their youth ranks, Behcet is very much still learning his trade under Mildenhall's watchful eye and, at 20, he has to be considered one for the future.

Just being involved with the squad on a day like today is a fantastic experience for someone so young.

## DEFENDERS



### NATHAN JONES

BORN 28/5/1973  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 46  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SOUTHEND,  
SCARBOROUGH (LOAN),  
BRIGHTON

This left-back is an exceptional athlete who covers most of the grass on the left-hand side. He brings a wealth of experience and often acts as skipper in Terry Skiverton's absence. With his precise left foot he is an excellent crosser of the ball and loves a Chris Waddle-style stepover. ▶



## DEFENDERS

**TERRY SKIVERTON**

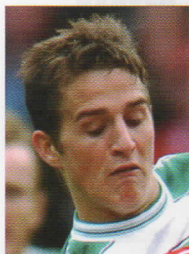
BORN 20/6/1975  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 40  
GOALS 2  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
CHELSEA, WYCOMBE,  
WELLING

Quite simply Mr. Yeovil. The club captain has green blood running through his veins. Fans favourite who seems to raise the performance bar each year. The tough-tackling 31-year-old signed from Welling eight years ago and has been the rock of Yeovil's defence in their push for glory. Named by his fellow professionals in the League 1 Team of the Year.

**SCOTT GUYETT**

BORN 20/1/1976  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 18  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SOUTHPORT, OXFORD,  
CHESTER, ALDERSHOT  
(LOAN)

An Aussie, 6'2" and a man mountain at the heart of the defence. The former Chester man provides extra competition for places at the back with his strong heading ability. Dangerous from set pieces, he'll be looking to make his presence felt today.

**ANDY LINDEGAARD**

BORN 10/9/1980  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 16  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
CRAWLEY (LOAN)

Homegrown local lad who has come through the youth and reserve teams. A very fit 26-year-old with a great engine. An excellent crosser of the ball, he is comfortable with both feet and despite some injury setbacks will be looking to finish this season on a high.

**TERRELL FORBES**

BORN 17/8/1981  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 51  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
WEST HAM, BOURNEMOUTH  
(LOAN), QPR, GRIMSBY,  
OLDHAM

One of the manager's first signings last summer from Grimsby, a very aggressive tackler who rarely misses the ball. Likes to get tight to his man giving them no time on the ball. Very adept with both feet and rarely flustered.

**MARK LYNCH**

BORN 2/9/1981  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 20  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
MANCHESTER UNITED,  
ST. JOHNSTONE (LOAN),  
SUNDERLAND, HULL

Former Manchester United player who is comfortable playing at full-back or centre-half. Just returning to full fitness after being sidelined for most of the season. Very steady and consistent player, who will be hoping to play some part today.



MIDFIELDERS

Another of the fans' favourites, 'Mr Consistent', he rarely has a poor game. The side's playmaker, he has excellent vision and passing and loves to make those driving runs into the box, where he gets his fair share of goals. Still only 20 and has a bright future in front of him.

**CHRIS COHEN**

BORN 5/3/1987  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 49  
GOALS 7  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
WEST HAM



**PAUL TERRY**

BORN 3/4/1979  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 23  
GOALS 2  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE



Epitomises Yeovil's spirit. Having spent most of the season out after a knee operation, he is one of the first on the pitch to congratulate the players. Signed from Dagenham & Redbridge, he can play anywhere across the middle of the park and has scored many a vital goal in Yeovil's climb through the divisions.

**MARTIN BRITAIN**

BORN 29/12/1984  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 15  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
NEWCASTLE, IPSWICH

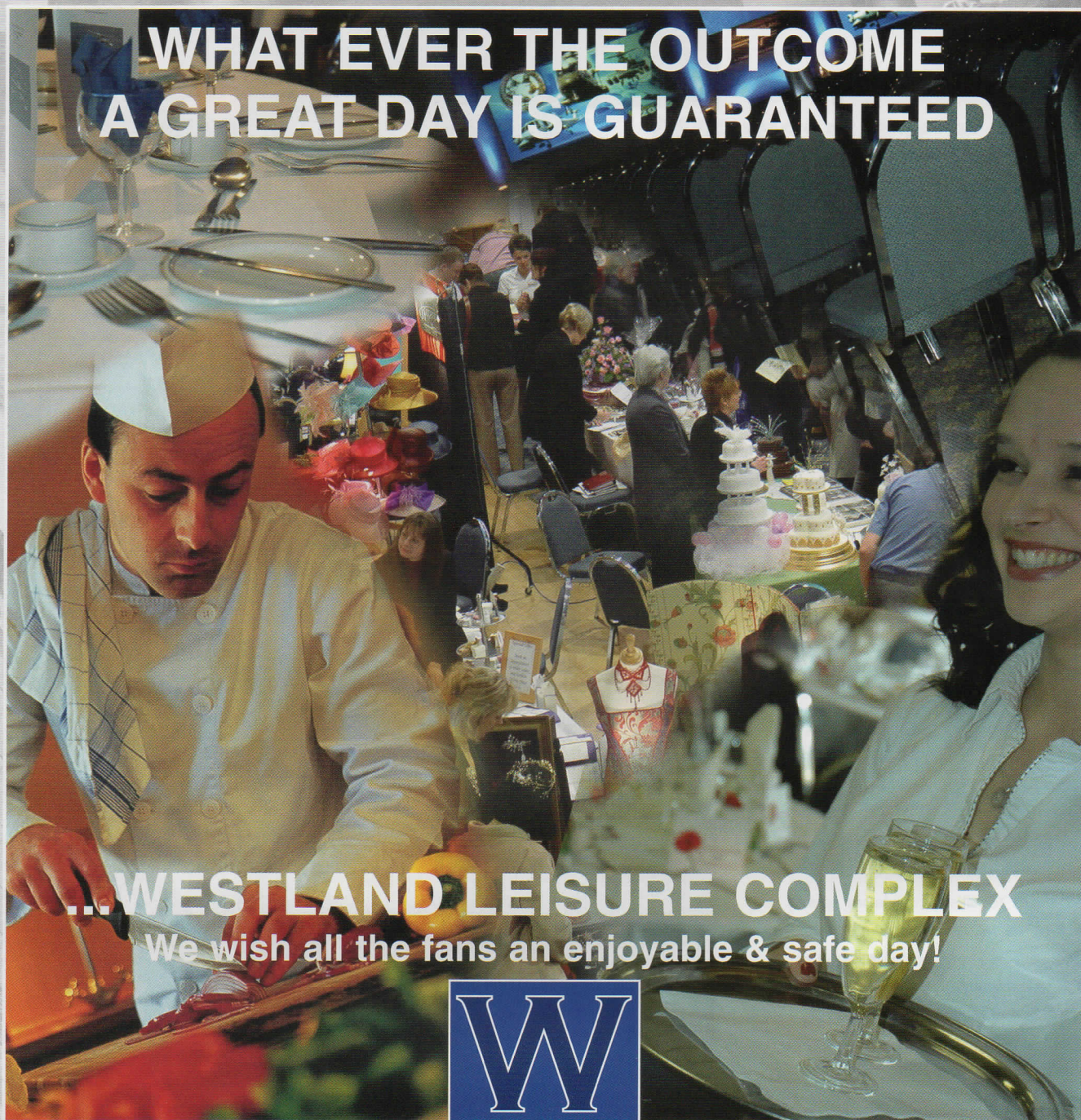


In his second loan spell of the season from Ipswich. The 22-year-old loves to hug the touchline, where he can weave his magic and is an excellent crosser of the ball. Formerly with Newcastle United where he turned down a new contract to move to



# GOOD LUCK YEOVIL TOWN F.C

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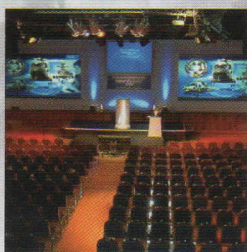


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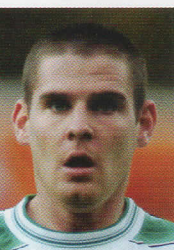


MIDFIELDERS

Has had experience of the French league with Nice and was another of Russell Slade's summer signings from Grimsby. A hard-tackling midfield player, the DR Congo international will be battling it out for a starting place today.

**JEAN-PAUL KALALA**

BORN 16/2/1982  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 41  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
NICE, GRIMSBY



**ANTHONY BARRY**

BORN 29/5/1986  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 28  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
ACCRINGTON STANLEY

A workmanlike terrier who never gives his opponent time on the ball. After signing from Accrington Stanley two years ago, he spent his first season out with a dislocated knee. Has been in and out of the side, but a timely return towards the end of the season was rewarded with a top drawer performance in the Play-Off semi-final win at Nottingham Forest.



**ARRON DAVIES**

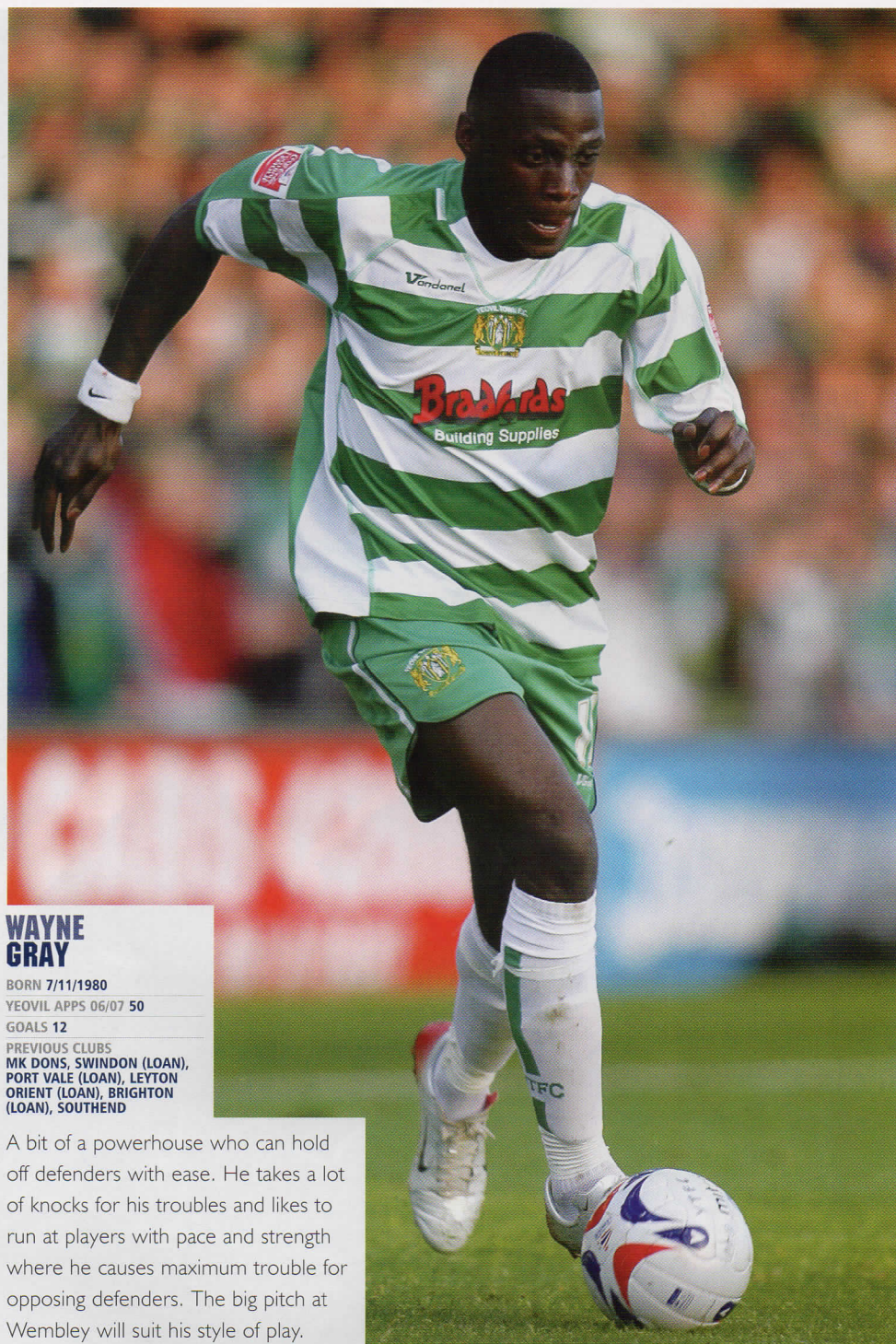
BORN 22/6/1984  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 44  
GOALS 8  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BARNSELY

On his day he would not look out of place in the Premiership. Scored two vital goals in a man of the match performance to see off Nottingham Forest. Has made an increasing impact after signing from Southampton three years ago and made his full Welsh international debut last year. A potential match winner this afternoon.





## FORWARDS

**WAYNE GRAY**

BORN 7/11/1980  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 50  
GOALS 12

PREVIOUS CLUBS  
MK DONS, SWINDON (LOAN),  
PORT VALE (LOAN), LEYTON  
ORIENT (LOAN), BRIGHTON  
(LOAN), SOUTHEND

A bit of a powerhouse who can hold off defenders with ease. He takes a lot of knocks for his troubles and likes to run at players with pace and strength where he causes maximum trouble for opposing defenders. The big pitch at Wembley will suit his style of play.

**DANNY WEBB**

BORN 2/7/1983  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 6  
GOALS 0

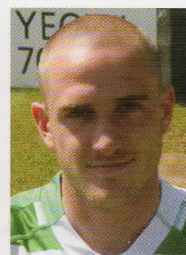
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SOUTHEND, BRIGHTON  
(LOAN), HULL, LINCOLN  
(LOAN), CAMBRIDGE,  
RUSHDEN (LOAN),  
WOKING (LOAN)

Joined Yeovil last season having previously played for Southend, Brighton, Hull City, Lincoln and Cambridge United. Has spent most of the year out on loan and will be hoping for a place on the bench today.

**DARRYL KNIGHTS**

BORN 1/5/1988  
YEOVIL APPS 4  
GOALS 0  
PREVIOUS CLUBS IPSWICH

A 19-year-old on loan from Ipswich, he made four appearances for Yeovil from the bench towards the end of the season. A very lively player who could change the course of the game with his pace.

**LEE MORRIS**

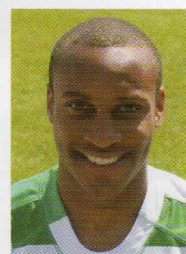
BORN 30/4/1980  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 37  
GOALS 6  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
SHEFFIELD UNITED,  
DERBY, HUDDERSFIELD  
(LOAN), LEICESTER

Formerly of Sheffield United, he moved to Derby in a £3 million deal and joined Yeovil last August. A very pacey front runner who creates a lot of opportunities for others. Had an excellent game with a vitally timed goal in the semi-final, he'll be hoping to take that form into today's game.

**MARCUS STEWART**

BORN 7/11/1972  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 33  
GOALS 9  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
BRISTOL ROVERS,  
HUDDERSFIELD,  
IPSWICH, SUNDERLAND,  
BRISTOL CITY, PRESTON  
(LOAN)

Having played with Stewy, you realise the hard running he puts in off the ball. A productive goalscoring career has taken him from the lower leagues to the Premiership and his awareness and weight of passing puts him in the same mould as Teddy Sheringham. A big-stage player who could have a lot of say today – but I still think I've got a better left foot!

**ISHMAEL WELSH**

BORN 4/9/1987  
YEOVIL APPS 06/07 20  
GOALS 1  
PREVIOUS CLUBS  
WEST HAM,  
WEYMOUTH (LOAN)

After impressing during trials last summer, Yeovil signed him from West Ham where he had come through the youth ranks. A young and speedy winger he scored on his debut at Carlisle and with limited opportunities this season he will be one to watch for the future.



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from all the  
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# What becomes of the broken-hearted?

*Simon Hart looks back at the Play-Off finalists who failed to win the day*



**T**hey call it the "Curse of the Play-Offs" and certainly there is no more compelling evidence for the debilitating effects of falling at the season's final hurdle than the struggles of Leeds United.

Those subscribers to the theory that defeat in a Play-Off Final means not just instant heartache but also a lengthy hangover have only to point to events at Elland Road to lend their argument substantial weight. On 21 May 2006, Leeds stood just 90 minutes away from a place in the Premiership as they stepped out at the Millennium Stadium to face Watford. A 3-0 reverse that afternoon closed the door to the top flight and its attendant riches, however, and 12 months later, following a season in freefall, the Yorkshire club are now facing life in the third tier of English football for their first time in their 88-year history.

Leeds are not the only side to have suffered in this manner. Only 12

**Devastated Leeds players Erik Bakke (left) and Paul Butler after losing to Watford in the 2006 Play-Off Final**

months earlier, Hartlepool United slipped into the bottom tier of English football having failed to recover from their 2005 League 1 Play-Off Final defeat by Sheffield Wednesday.

Between 1997 and 1999, Notts County, Brentford and Northampton Town all succumbed to the same fate in successive seasons, while in 1992 Brighton were the first team to 'do a Leeds', stumbling from the threshold

of the top division and down into the third in the space of a year.

**"MOST CLUBS HAVE A TENDENCY TO STRUGGLE AFTER LOSING THE PLAY-OFF FINAL, IT TAKES A WHILE TO TURN IT AROUND"**

Former Leeds boss  
**Kevin Blackwell**

"A massive psychological blow" is how Kevin Blackwell, Leeds' then manager, describes the Yorkshire club's defeat in Cardiff. "It is the biggest one-off game in world sport and it was an opportunity to go back into the Premier League so quickly after coming out. But the chance to go to Old Trafford, Liverpool, Arsenal goes away from you and that's a blow for everybody."

For Blackwell himself, it was the beginning of the end, his Elland Road reign ending with his dismissal just five matches into the new campaign. At that stage Leeds had taken four points from a possible 15 yet this is not unusual for a defeated Play-Off finalist. Of the nine most recent losing sides only one has recovered to gain promotion the next year and like Leeds, Swansea City and Grimsby Town – the other teams to taste defeat in Cardiff last May – both made stuttering starts to 2006/07, each winning just three of their first ten matches.

"Most clubs have a tendency to struggle in the early part of the season after losing the Play-Off Final, it just takes a while to turn it around," explains Blackwell. According to the current Luton Town manager, Leeds suffered subsequently for their failure to strengthen a squad that had gone so close. "After a disappointment like that it is important to freshen things up and give the team a lift by getting



better players in. It didn't happen. We had 13-14 players leaving and other than Kevin Nicholls, Ian Westlake and Seb Carole, we didn't bring people in to help lift the team."

If Leeds offer a cautionary tale, however, the good news for today's Wembley losers is there is statistically a greater likelihood that they will be celebrating promotion next May than suffering relegation. In the 20 years of the play-off system, 16 out of 60 beaten finalists have bounced back with promotion, compared with the six who were demoted. West Ham in 2005 were the last team to achieve the feat while 1993 proved a vintage year as Leicester City, Port Vale and Crewe Alexandra were all swapping tears for cheers the following May.

One man well placed to advise on finding an antidote to Play-Off pain is Ian Holloway. As both a player with Bristol Rovers and a manager with Queens Park Rangers, Holloway's teams missed out on a place in the second tier – but won promotion outright the next year. Recalling the first instance, an aggregate loss to Port Vale in 1989, Holloway credits the inspirational words of manager Gerry Francis for Rovers' positive reaction.

"What Gerry did was something I will remember the rest of my life. He said, 'You're all big strong

blokes trying to cope with it but lads if I was you I wouldn't be afraid to cry. You should be very proud of yourselves, I'm proud of you.'

"As a kid growing up I was told you weren't supposed to cry and I used to get a whack on my backside if I did. But he said, 'As you're crying I want you to remember this feeling and how devastated you feel right now in every single game and in every training session next year, I want you to take that disappointment and not let you feel that again'."

"He galvanised us on that day," adds Holloway, now manager of Plymouth Argyle. "We grew so strong because of that that the following

year, we sold our best two players, Nigel Martyn and Gary Penrice, and still ended up champions anyway."

Holloway remembered those words when his QPR side lost 1-0 to Cardiff City in 2003. "I used the disappointment to tell them I didn't believe we were going

to feel that again and I had enough of them still with me – in fact all of them – and also some decent characters in the new players that I added."

"Remember last year, it was a great achievement, you stepped forward but I want you to better that" was Holloway's rallying cry but he says the key to QPR's recovery was the presence in his squad of "strong characters who cared", his recruitment of a trio of experienced players from a

**Above: Hartlepool went down the season after losing in Cardiff to Sheffield Wednesday**  
**Below: Ian Holloway bounced back from the pain of defeat with Bristol Rovers**

higher division, and the team's good start to the next season.

Blackwell and Holloway had contrasting fortunes in the wake of their Play-Off disappointments yet both believe the losing manager today should try and remain philosophical.

"He has not got to crucify himself too much," says Blackwell. "The very fact you've got to that Play-Off Final means you've done most things right over nearly 50 games and what you need is a one-off situation to go your way."

For his part, Holloway cites a telephone conversation with Graham Taylor, from whom he sought advice following QPR's 2003 heartbreak. "He said to me, 'It's about you, son. You have to show them that losing is just part of winning. They're looking for your reaction and do you believe you're going to do it?' That is what Graham Taylor told me and he is right – being a winner is about handling defeat. I believe that you are only a winner if you've lost and you're not scared to go back up and face it again."

That will be the challenge facing one manager leaving Wembley tonight.







### What are your predictions for the Final – who are the likely Blackpool match-winners?

**TH:** As someone who saw Blackpool play Manchester United in the 1948 FA Cup final, I remember the glory days and I think we'll win this one.

**SO:** I can't imagine it will be anything other than a tight and tense game, like our two league matches with Yeovil this season. I'll say we'll win 2-1 and that Andy Morrell will score one of the goals.

**SED:** Blackpool to win 3-1 and Keigan Parker, who doesn't lack confidence and who scored a beauty against Oldham last weekend, to net two and Wes Hoolahan the other.

**SEL:** I'll say 3-1, the same as in the second leg against Oldham, with Hoolahan man of the match. I love watching him play and this is his stage.



### What were your thoughts when Simon Grayson was appointed?

**TH:** I was a bit apprehensive because it was his first shot at management. But we have had a brilliant run and seem to have a good squad.

**SO:** Great. He was such a good professional as a player and I thought he was the right man for the job.

**SED:** I didn't know much about him in terms of management potential, although he was a good player and solid professional. He has removed all our doubts.

Despite a slow start Simon Grayson has got the Tangerines up and running this season

# Blackpool rocks!

*The old Wembley stadium contained special memories for Blackpool fans and at the start of a new era in North London they are hopeful of opening a new chapter in their history. Four supporters gave us their views on today's occasion.*



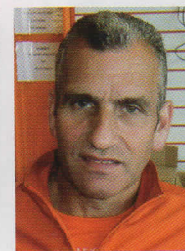
**TED HINCHCLIFFE**

LIVES: BLACKPOOL  
SUPPORTED BLACKPOOL:  
OVER 60 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER:  
STAN MORTENSEN



**SANDRA O'NEILL**

LIVES: BLACKPOOL  
SUPPORTED BLACKPOOL:  
30 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER:  
ADRIAN FORBES



**STEWART EDGE**

LIVES: BLACKPOOL  
SUPPORTED BLACKPOOL:  
40 YEARS PLUS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER:  
ALAN SUDDICK



**STEVE ELSENDER**

LIVES: LYTHAM ST ANNE'S  
SUPPORTED BLACKPOOL:  
MORE THAN 20 YEARS  
FAVOURITE ALL-TIME PLAYER:  
DAVE BAMBER

**SEL:** After three games, it was panic stations and I was probably one of those calling for his head. What a mistake.

### Who at the club will you be most happy for if Blackpool win today?

**TH:** The manager as he has been absolutely marvellous for us after a very iffy time over the first ten or 11 games and has signed better players.

**SO:** Just the team as a whole because they're such an honest lot and have pulled out all the stops. They have surprised plenty of supporters considering how bad the first few matches were.

**SEL:** I'm going to say Simon Grayson because he has created such a spirit and buoyancy among the squad. The players clearly love working for each other and that's down to him.

### Which positions would Blackpool most need to strengthen if they go up?

**TH:** As long as we sign the goalkeeper permanently, I think the defence will be okay but we may need another

proven goalscorer and someone wide on the right in midfield, a new Stanley Matthews perhaps!

**SO:** Probably in midfield. Although I'm a big fan of Adrian Forbes and call him Roadrunner, he might need some back-up in the Championship.

**SEL:** We'd need some back-up in the goalkeeper department and general reinforcements through the squad. A few more Hoolahans and Parkers would be welcome.

### What else are you hoping for from your day other than a Blackpool victory?

**TH:** We're seeing our son and daughter down there, so it should be a great family weekend but it will be so much better if we get the right result at Wembley.

**SED:** Nothing else. It's all about winning now, I can't imagine the losers have a great day at Wembley so we need the result.

**SEL:** The chance to take my daughters Rachel and Sarah, plus my partner Keeley, to their first game away from Bloomfield Road, and to give them a taste of the big-match atmosphere.





# THE GLOVERS ARE OFF .....TO WEMBLEY. SO ARE WE!

Enjoy the highlights all over again in a special edition of Soccer Night.  
Presented by Jed Pitman. Match commentary by Phil Duffell.

Soccer Night Special, ITV West,  
Monday 28 May, half-past midnight.

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# ONE NATHAN

*Fresh from leading his side to an historic semi-final victory over Nottingham Forest, Nathan Jones can't wait to claim another scalp at Wembley today*

BY GRAHAME LLOYD

**I**f you Google Nathan Jones, you can take your pick from an Australian Rules footballer, a former bank robber turned wrestler, an artist, a photographer, an American footballer and a 1971 hit song by The Supremes.

There's no mention of Yeovil Town's stand-in skipper who has led the team to Wembley for this afternoon's showdown with Blackpool.

But as the 1,000 Glovers supporters who cheered on their side to that improbable 5-4 aggregate victory at Forest nine days ago will tell you: "There's only one Nathan Jones"

They sang it on that unforgettable night in Nottingham and they've been singing it ever since the much-travelled defender arrived at Huish Park nearly two years ago.

In the absence of injury-hit captain Terry Skiverton, Jones has helped bring the unfashionable West Country side to the brink of the Championship – just four years after they entered The Football League.

The so called 'hicks from the sticks' fully deserved to beat the 'city slickers'

at the City Ground after clawing back a two-goal first-leg deficit in the Play-Off semi-final and then going on to score an extra-time winner.

"It was an awesome fightback," says the former Southend, Scarborough and Brighton left-back. "We thought we were the better side in the first leg when they scored from two penalties and our second-leg performance just showed everyone what we've got.

"Who would have thought that little Yeovil could come to the City Ground and win 5-2? It was beyond anyone's wildest dreams but we believed we could do it.

"We were 3-1 down with eight minutes left but we didn't think that was it. We just fought to the end – we were absolutely magnificent! That win is what we work for as footballers and it was the culmination of 10 months – if not a career – of hard work."

After failing to make the grade at Cardiff City, Rhondda-born Jones played for Maesteg Park, Ton Pentre and Merthyr before joining Luton and then Numaicia in the Spanish Second Division.

On his return to Britain, he spent three years at Southend and five with Brighton who he helped win promotion to the Championship via the Play-Offs in 2004.

An ever-present for the last two

**Joyous Jones celebrates reaching Wembley with the Yeovil faithful**

seasons, Jones has made nearly 100 appearances for the Glovers and become a key figure at Huish Park.

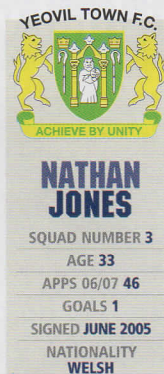
"Nathan is one of the fittest professionals I have ever worked with," says Yeovil manager Russell Slade. "He does everything right and his enthusiasm, not just on match day but all week, has been a massive influence.

"A team always needs direction and clearly that comes from the manager but when they cross that white line, it also has to come from the experienced players – and he's one of them."

Jones knows his appearance at the Millennium Stadium with Brighton three years ago will prove invaluable this afternoon as Yeovil make their debut at the new Wembley.

"It's great to reach the Final but it will only mean something if we get promotion. One of my career highlights was winning in Cardiff but, in all honesty, the high for me is coming in every day and being a professional footballer. My parents have worked hard and given me massive support and I never taken any day for granted."

This fiercely proud Welshman turns 34 tomorrow, what better birthday present could there be for such a model pro than victory this afternoon?





**K**eith Southern has only to make it safely down the tunnel and on to the pitch today to confirm this as a happier personal occasion than the one he experienced when Blackpool last reached a prestige final.

The Seasiders' second longest-serving player was one of the cornerstones of the side that went all the way to Cardiff in the LDV Vans Trophy three years ago and beat Southend United in the Final.

Not that he escaped without massive let-down, though, the kind he is desperate to avoid this afternoon.

# SOUTHERN COMFORT

*After missing out on the squad the last time Blackpool reached a major final, Keith Southern will be determined to make an impression if selected to start this afternoon*

BY DAVID INSTONE

"I scored in front of 25,000 in the semi-final at Hillsborough and figured in most of the rounds up to the Final," he recalled this week. "Then, when we got to the Millennium Stadium, I found an hour before kick-off that I wasn't in the 16.

"I was delighted we won but very disappointed on a personal level, as I think anyone would be in those circumstances.

"It would have been the best day of my career, so hopefully this one now will be, although you learn not to take anything for granted."

There's a parallel for the 26-year-old now in as much as he also scored the opening goal at home to Oldham Athletic last weekend in the second leg of their Play-Off semi-final.

But, having made 47 senior appearances this season and played in each of the last seven games in the club's best winning run for 70 years, he will surely be seen by Simon Grayson as less dispensable for this Wembley clash than Steve McMahon viewed him at the end of the knockout trail in



Keith Southern hopes to hold the Blackpool midfield together this afternoon

2004. And, if he does stride out on to the turf trodden by the multi-million pound stars of Manchester United and Chelsea eight days ago in the FA Cup Final, he will do so in high spirits.

"To reel off nine straight victories is unbelievable, whether it's in the Premiership, Sunday football or this division," added the Geordie, who was a contemporary of Leon Osman and Tony Hibbert in his unfulfilled years as an Everton youngster, as well as an occasional reserve-team colleague of Wayne Rooney. "And I'm quite pleased with my tally of six goals this season – it's not bad for a defensive midfielder.

"I've been here five years now and really taken the club to my heart. There has been a wonderful

atmosphere and family feel to the place and I think I'm getting used to saying 'Gaffer' now instead of 'Larry!'

"It was a bit weird when the manager first switched from my central midfield partner to taking charge but he has adapted brilliantly to what is a cut-throat business and we're all delighted to have done this for him.

"I have never experienced anything like this in terms of league success and those of us who were here at the end of last season haven't forgotten how lucky we were just to stay in the division.

"The gaffer had quite a clear-out in the summer and, to be at Wembley now, one match from promotion, is an absolutely fantastic turnaround."

**BLACKPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB**

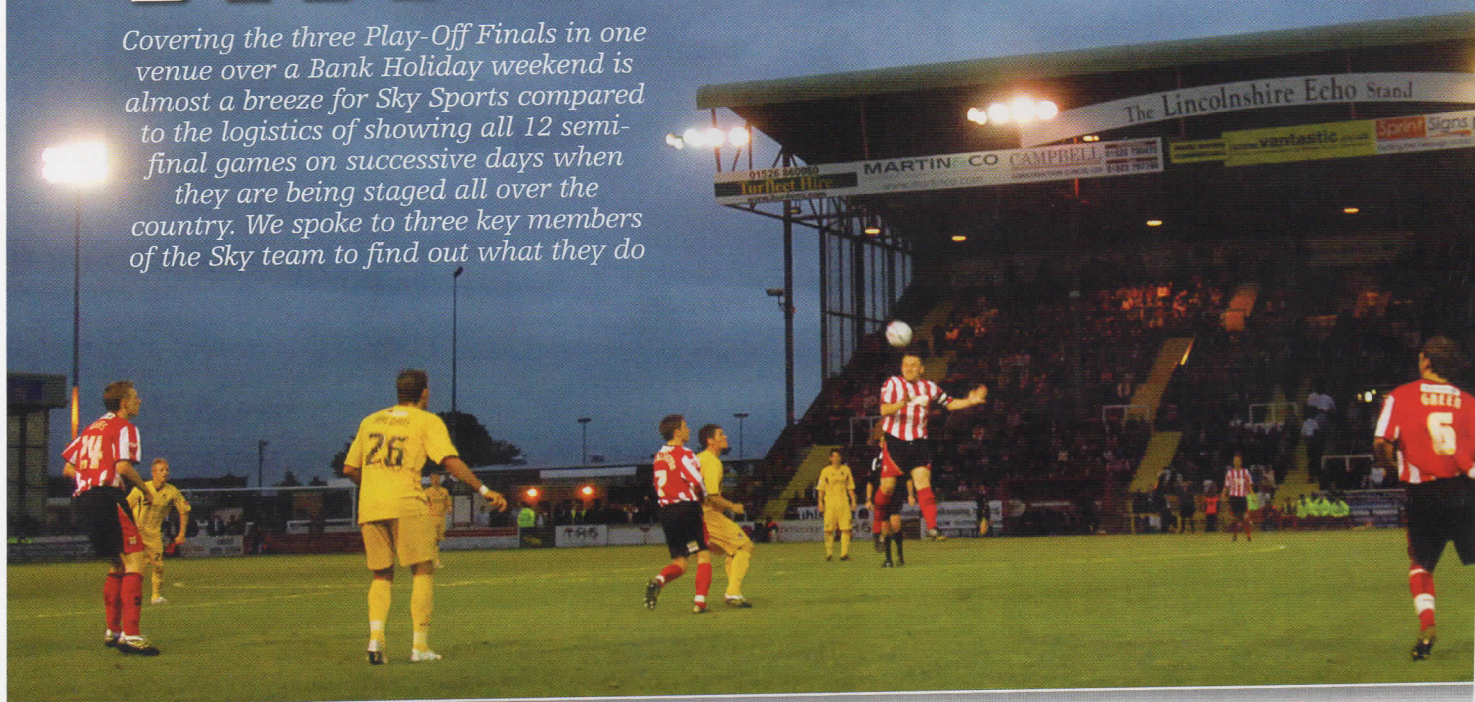
**KEITH SOUTHERN**

SQUAD NUMBER 4  
AGE 26  
APPS 06/07 47  
GOALS 06/07 6  
SIGNED  
NOVEMBER 2002  
NATIONALITY  
ENGLISH



# SKY HIGH

*Covering the three Play-Off Finals in one venue over a Bank Holiday weekend is almost a breeze for Sky Sports compared to the logistics of showing all 12 semi-final games on successive days when they are being staged all over the country. We spoke to three key members of the Sky team to find out what they do*



## DAVID WADE

*Sky Sports Executive Producer*

This season has been one of the tightest ever in all three divisions and we couldn't get anything definite in place until we knew the outcome of the league games on the very last day of the season, giving us four days to put what is by any measure an ambitious plan into action.

We start off with the intention of covering every semi-final live, with the Championship games the priority. It is a logistical nightmare and there was no time to waste. As soon as the results came in on the final Saturday I was in discussions with Andy Melvin, Sky Sports' head of production, about the arrangements for all the League 1 and League 2 matches, starting with Yeovil v Nottingham Forest on the following Friday.

Then the next day following the end of the Championship season, we finalised the plans for those semis.

There are also police considerations to be put into the mix – for instance we knew that if Nottingham Forest were at home in the second leg, that game would have to take place on the Friday night and that any second leg

involving Blackpool would be played at noon on the 19th before the FA Cup Final.

My focus was just on the first four games because after that I had to start preparing for the FA Cup Final coverage. One of the key discussions is with our facilities company Arqiva who own the high definition outside broadcast trucks we use. The match schedule meant that they would have to de-rig everything at Yeovil immediately after the game and then drive through the night to Bristol for the Bristol Rovers v Lincoln game the following day, while during that Friday their second truck was rigging everything for the Saturday lunchtime kick-off at Southampton.

Andy decides who commentates on which game while I decide who should sit beside them in the 'Andy Gray' role and also who should be in the studio with our presenter George Gavin. Nottingham Forest have been one of the major stories in League 1 all season, having

**Bristol Rovers knocked Lincoln City out in the League 2 semi-finals, which were covered live on Sky Sports**

**David Wade (below) had a frantic few days as Sky Sports covered the Play-Off semi-finals, while Garry Birtles (bottom) commentated on four games**



been a Premiership team just ten years ago, so for that first Yeovil game we had the former Forest striker David Johnson in the studio. He has experienced the highs and lows of the Play-Offs with Ipswich and Forest. I hope we didn't offend too many Yeovil fans by choosing him, but I have to say David was impeccably fair on the night.

In the days leading up to the first batch of semi-final games I'm also sorting out which reporters will go to which games and what the running order and titles will be for each programme. I'll write the script for the opening sequence and liaise with George Gavin to make sure we are on the same wavelength. Then when kick-off arrives I watch it all unfold much as it was planned!

## GARRY BIRTLES

*Co-commentator*

The viewer can see for himself what is happening in a game, but my role sitting alongside the commentator is to bring my experience as an ex-player to bear in explaining why a shot flew over the bar or someone





was unable to take that chance. Honesty is all-important as well, the viewer is not stupid, he can tell when you are trying to protect a player.

I don't have to know all the relevant stats, that's not part of my job, but I do have to keep on top of what is happening so before a game I will go onto the websites of the teams concerned to check recent developments.

In addition I keep all the teamsheets and notes of previous games involving the teams and a book listing all the strengths of players so my homework will include checking up on those. I'll get to the ground about three hours before kick-off and that gives me a chance to have a chat with the managers or coaching staff about any players I'm not too sure about.

I did four of the Play-Off semi-finals, including both the Nottingham Forest and Yeovil games. I didn't agree with those who thought the tie was over after the first leg. I believed the Forest pitch

**Yeovil caused an upset at Forest by dumping them out at the semi-final stage of the League 1 Play-Offs**

would suit Yeovil who had players in forward areas that I thought could really hurt Forest and that's how it turned out. I was brought up as a Forest fan and, having played for them as well, of course I wanted them to win but in my job you have to stay impartial and call it exactly as you see it. It was disappointing for me and the 28,000 who were there desperate to see Forest back in the second tier but the best team won over the two legs by a distance and you have to give due praise to Yeovil.

## ROB PALMER

*Commentator*

I covered both games between Bristol Rovers and Lincoln and, as my focus during the season tends to be the

Premiership and Spanish football, I was grateful for Sky's

statistical department, which produces about 20 pages of notes and pen pics on each team. Normally you would have time to go and see the teams in training and

get more of an idea of the players, who takes the set-pieces, that sort of thing. But that was impossible with these games so I spent two or three hours in the Sky library going through recent games involving the teams. I guess that in total I spend two days in advance of the game on preparation.

For the return leg at Lincoln I made good time on the road and there was an opportunity, like the players, to grab an hour's kip in the hotel in mid-afternoon. I usually like to get to the ground about two hours before kick-off, have a quick chat with the managers and get some idea of their likely line-

ups. Once the green sheets that go to the referee with the line-ups are available I have to prepare 25-30 seconds on each team for when the studio comes over to me on air for team news. That normally happens six minutes before kick-off.

The game at Lincoln was amazing because Bristol Rovers took an early 2-0 lead to go three up on aggregate, though Lincoln kept coming back. It eventually finished 5-3 to the away team. In one way it's the easiest game to cover because so much is going on – you don't have to delve into the background stats. But it's hard when there are so many goals going in to keep track of the score and, in this case, the aggregate score. So I make a point of writing down every goal and scorer and what it means for the overall score.

In my very first game on the radio, I reported that my home town team Hull City were beating Liverpool 2-1 in an FA Cup tie when it was the other way round. I'm sure there have been others since but that one stands out because I wasn't allowed to forget it.

**Rob Palmer had a lot of homework to do before the Play-Offs**







**T**uesday 29 May... the day following the emotional rollercoaster of the Play-Off Finals weekend and a return to normality at The Football League with the conclusion of the domestic season. Hardly. With all the promotion issues cut and dried, Tuesday is when the grafting really begins on next season's fixtures.

What gets decided over the coming days will, in effect, act as a diary for millions of people across England and Wales for the best part of the next year. People do after all organise weekends, evenings, holidays and even weddings around their favourite club's fixtures schedule.

It's a mind-bogglingly confusing process, one that without wishing to exaggerate football's place in the grand scheme of things carries plenty of responsibility. And directing traffic at the centre of it all is David Cookson, fixtures secretary at The Football League for the past 19 years.

"I know that an awful lot of people wait for the day when the fixtures are released," says Cookson. "For them it can be one of the biggest days in the year. For me it gets to the stage when you're almost glad to get it out there and see the back of it, although even that isn't the end because you have to maintain the fixture calendar throughout the year to accommodate all the changes that need to be made.

# It's a date!

*It's hard to believe but next season's fixture lists are already being calculated. **Spencer Vignes** of *The Observer* meets the man in charge*

Most of the work gets done during late May and June right after the Play-Offs, but really it's an all-year round process."

For anyone naive enough to think that scheduling an entire season's fixtures involves some kind of pot luck/balls-out-of-a-hat lottery, Cookson soon demolishes that. "Our starting point is when we receive what is called the co-ordinated match calendar from Fifa and Uefa, which is effectively put together on a four-yearly basis.

"That includes all friendly and competitive international dates. We fit in around those. The next thing that goes in to our calendar are the dates from Uefa not only for the European Championships but also the Champions League, the Uefa Cup and the Intertoto Cup. After that the FA Cup rounds go in. Only then can you start work on the league fixtures.

"At The Football League we work backwards. We begin with the May Bank Holiday for the Play-Offs, and where they fit in really dictates when

we finish the season. For example, this season the Play-Offs started on 26 May. Obviously we need three weeks prior to that in order to fit the semi-finals in and have a lead time up to the finals.

"That automatically meant we finished the regular season on 5 May. Then you put in all the Saturday and bank holiday fixtures. Depending on how many of those you've got within the season you then slot in the midweek games. It's all done in tandem with

the Premier League. It has to be.

"You can't have two neighbours, one in the Premier League and say one in the Championship, playing at home on the same day."

Except it's still not quite as simple as that. Hard as it is to believe on a day like today, but people do other things besides watching football. There's a multitude of big music festivals such as Reading and V2007, carnivals in Notting Hill, Leicester, Swansea and

**PEOPLE ORGANISE WEEKENDS, HOLIDAYS EVEN WEDDINGS AROUND THEIR FAVOURITE CLUB'S FIXTURES SCHEDULE**





Big derby games like Wolves v West Brom have to be carefully scheduled

Leeds, the Nottingham Goose Fair, the Shrewsbury Flower Show, Gay Pride in Brighton... and so on.

They do their level best to organise fixtures around such events, but with every passing year the task becomes more difficult. "There are just so many of them now. When we receive a request from the police or a club not to arrange a game on a specific date because it coincides with something else we will try and accommodate them. But you can't please everyone and sometimes you have to sit down and prioritise. Where there are clashes we have to say 'Well, that one has to take priority', or if we can't accommodate we'll try and lower the profile of the opponent on the day, so that we can avoid dislocation of the

fixture schedule. Those requests are increasing and the demands are harder than ever to meet."

As indeed are the wishes of individual clubs concerning who they do – or more specifically don't – want to play over the Christmas period. 'Derby games on Boxing Day are very much a thing of the past now. That's down to two things. One is that police forces don't want them for obvious security reasons. But the other is that the clubs don't particularly want them either. Clubs don't want to travel too far but they don't want to play their neighbours because at Christmas you're always going to get a good gate. Why have your best fixture on the best day?

"More and more clubs are sending us, I kid you not, a list of 13 or 14 clubs they don't want to play at Christmas, which makes our life almost impossible. Again there are policing reasons for that which aren't always to do with public order. Police forces charge double time for bank

Christmas is always a busy time, when clubs make specific requests for their fixtures

holidays. If a club has got a high profile opponent their police bill might go through the roof, so many clubs request that we avoid the bigger fixtures over the Christmas period. All of this means that travelling distances aren't as short as fans would like."

His job is thankfully made slightly easier by two things. One is Atos Origin, the company that compiles the computer software which helps produce the fixture list. The other is Glenn Thompson, the man who devises the home and away match sequence for each club and inserts it into the Atos system. "I really cannot underestimate the work that Atos does for us," Cookson admitted. "As for Glenn, he's been working on the sequencing now for 12 years. We really couldn't do it all without him. He's as much a part of it as I am."

Hardly surprisingly mistakes do sometimes happen. He still winces at the memory of scheduling Liverpool to play at Sheffield Wednesday on the first anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster (the error was luckily spotted before the fixture list saw the light of day).

Thankfully considering the vast array of permutations and logistics involved the buck doesn't stop at his own door. His work has to be ratified by a fixtures committee made up of representatives from The Football League, the Premier League, six clubs and, on behalf of supporters everywhere, a representative of the Football Supporters Federation, a necessary step given the complexities of the task. Yet with 72 chairmen and club secretaries to please, not to mention several million supporters, you're never going to please everyone.

"It works as well as it possibly can bearing in mind all the external pressures. "You'll always miss something but I think we do a pretty good job of it, all things considered."



**WE TRY TO ACCOMMODATE REQUESTS, BUT YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE AND SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO SIT DOWN AND PRIORITISE**





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**RSW wishes Yeovil Town Football Club  
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**A**n appearance at Wembley today will cap a remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of Yeovil striker Lee Morris, who was on the verge of quitting the game last summer.

After being plagued by injury problems over the last few years, Morris confesses he seriously considered hanging up his boots after suffering another setback.

"We were on a pre-season tour of Cornwall when I ran onto the pitch, pulled my hamstring and had to come straight back off," Morris recalls, "and I thought to myself, 'I can't carry on like this'.

"I didn't play any games last season and only made a few starts the season before. I had one injury after another and just couldn't get fully fit, so I was just about ready to pack up."

Glovers boss Russell Slade, who nurtured Morris' development as a



**LEE MORRIS**  
 SQUAD NUMBER 25  
 AGE 27  
 APPS 06/07 37  
 GOALS 06/07 6  
 SIGNED AUGUST 2006  
 NATIONALITY ENGLISH

youngster at Sheffield United, persuaded him to carry on playing and he acknowledges the debt he owes to his former youth coach.

"I had a long chat with the manager who sat me down and assured me that I'd be eased through," he says. "Russ helped me through it and really saved my career in some respects. He's been good for me and I'm very thankful to him."

After bursting onto the scene as a highly promising teenager at Sheffield United, big things were expected of Morris when he moved to Derby County in a £3million deal in 1999.

But injury problems hindered his progress and he was sold to Leicester City for a cut-price £120,000 fee three years ago. After making just two starts in two-and-a-half years at the Walkers Stadium, Morris was released and he linked up with Yeovil as a free agent in pre-season.

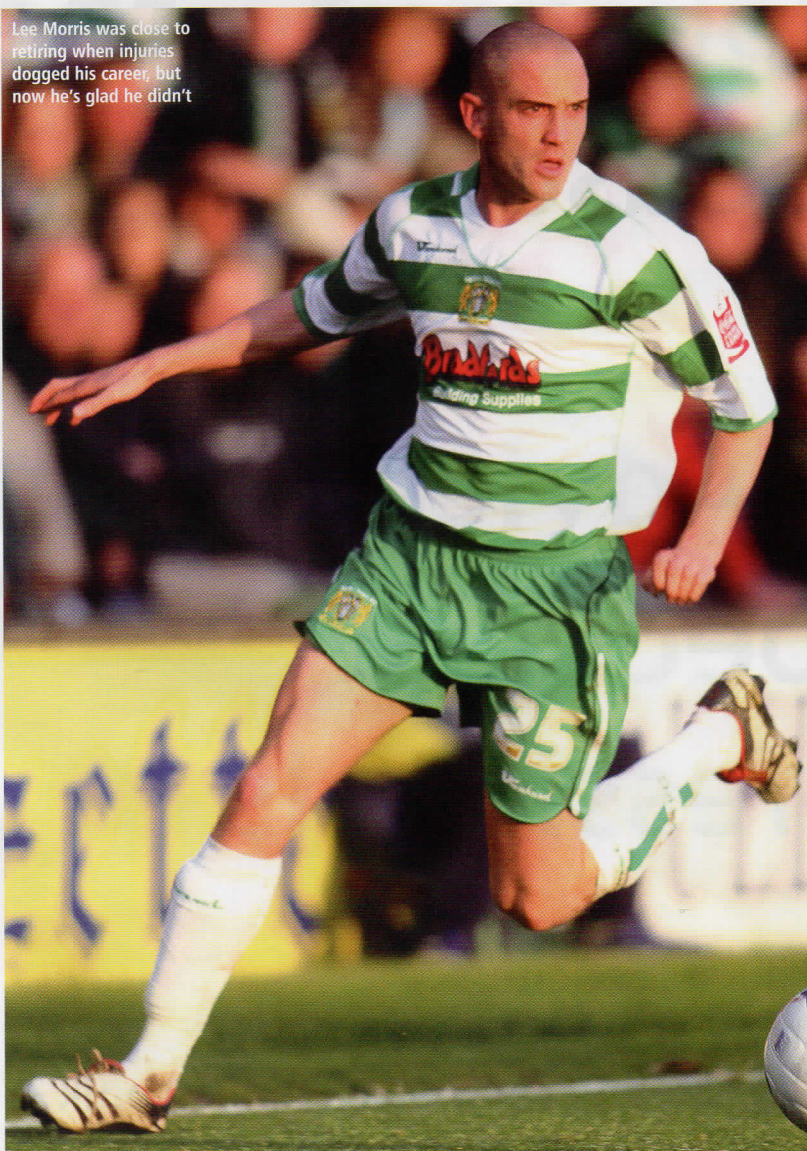
The 27-year-old scored in the Play-Off semi-final second leg victory over Nottingham Forest and he is delighted with the way things have gone in his first season with the Glovers.

He says: "Over the course of the season, I've got stronger and stronger. On a personal note, it was fantastic for me to last 120 minutes against Forest. I've had all sorts of problems, but they're behind me now."

Morris, who was born in Blackpool at a time when his father Colin was starring for the Lancashire club, has seen the drama of Play-Off matches at close quarters.

"I travelled down to Wembley when I was in my first year as an apprentice at Sheffield United in 1997 when we lost to Crystal Palace in the First Division Play-Off Final," he says. "We lost to a David Hopkin goal in the 119th minute. I was also in the squad the following season when we

Lee Morris was close to retiring when injuries dogged his career, but now he's glad he didn't



# MORRIS DANCING

*Once considered a wonderkid worth a £3 million transfer fee, Lee Morris' career has been hit hard by injury, but now he is rebuilding in a Yeovil side moving in the right direction*

BY NICK JOHNSON

lost to Sunderland in the semi-finals."

Reflecting on the current campaign, Morris insists that he and his teammates were always confident of making a strong challenge for promotion.

"I think we always had belief and as the matches went by and we were creeping up the table, we felt stronger and stronger," he adds. "Promotion was the goal since about October time.

"Having the chance to go up to the Championship is fantastic when you consider it's only a few years since the club was in the Conference.

"It's an exciting, roller-coaster time for the club. It's important we go into the game in the right frame of mind, thinking we're going for promotion."



**B**lackpool goalkeeper Paul Rachubka was lucky enough to learn from the great Peter Schmeichel at the start of his career and he's determined to show that the lessons have not gone to waste.

The American was limited to just three appearances for United, but he recognises that the help and advice he received from the Danish stopper during his time at Old Trafford was invaluable.

"Raimond van der Gouw was very helpful and I was also there with Fabien Barthez and Mark Bosnich, but Schmeichel probably had the biggest influence on me," says Rachubka.

"As his boot-boy, I was able to talk to him in a way that perhaps no other keeper had a chance to. He'd give me advice in training, saying things like, 'This is what I do, have you tried that?'

"That was a great start to my career, although I knew I wasn't going to play regularly because the manager told me they were always going to buy the best players. But I've paid attention to the education I've had and I want to prove to people that I'm not going to waste it."

*Having seen Huddersfield through a penalty shoot-out in the 2004 League 2 Play-Off Final, Paul Rachubka is now prepared to be Blackpool's saviour if called upon*

BY NICK JOHNSON

After leaving United to sign for Charlton in 2002, Rachubka played for several clubs on loan before joining Huddersfield. He helped the Terriers win the League 2 Play-Off Final at the Millennium Stadium three years ago when they beat Mansfield on penalties.

"In a penalty shoot-out, the pressure is on the outfield player," added the 26-year-old. "The goalkeeper is in a win-win situation because you're not expected to make a save.

"I saved the first penalty and then the second one hit the bar to put us 2-0 up and we ended up winning 4-1.

Rachubka rallies the troops against Oldham in the semi-finals



# ALL AMERICAN HERO

You focus so much on the game that it just flies by. You enjoy it more watching it back on the video once you've won."

After losing his place in the Huddersfield side, Rachubka joined Blackpool on loan in January. He has an open mind as to what will happen after today's game, preferring to concentrate on the immediate task in hand.

"I'm looking at the game first and everything will happen after that. I can't say what's going to happen and it's not even worth thinking about because there are so many possibilities."

Rachubka insists there is no shortage of confidence in the Blackpool squad as they bid for a repeat of the result of their game at Yeovil two months ago.

"It's a massive game for us, but

we're confident because we are playing well and scoring goals. We're going to be positive because we went down to their place and beat them 1-0 with ten men."

If Blackpool do come out on top today, Rachubka believes they have what it takes to compete in a higher division.

"This is the best group of players I've played with, week in, week out. There's a good balance in the team and all the lads want to be playing in the Championship next season – they don't want another season in League 1.

"Playing Norwich in the FA Cup was a good taster and proved we can do it at that level. I think we would do quite well in the Championship, but we've got to get there first."

PHOTO: MATTHEW ASHTON

**BLACKPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB**

**PAUL RACHUBKA**

SQUAD NUMBER 1

AGE 26

APPS 06/07 10

CLEAN SHEETS 06/07 4

SIGNED JANUARY 2007

NATIONALITY AMERICAN



**T**he players competing in this weekend's Coca-Cola League Play-Off Finals are among the elite from their division, an example to every youngster who is just starting out on the long road to a professional career and dreams of making his own mark one day on the Wembley stage.

The development of young players is more topical than ever as the game prepares to implement the recommendations of a report into youth coaching undertaken by Richard Lewis, the executive chairman of the Rugby Football League. At its core is the need to develop players for the professional game and future England teams, whilst also ensuring that young players are all-round personalities who can pursue alternative careers should they fail to make it as footballers.

"It's about having a youth development system that serves clubs from top to bottom of the professional game, the England team and the young players themselves," says The Football League spokesman, John Nagle. "We are looking to deliver quality coaching in the right environment whilst also enabling players to continue with their academic education. It is important to strike the right balance as our clubs get less time with their young players than those on the continent."

The success of the Charter for Quality introduced by former FA technical director Howard Wilkinson is

**"EVEN AT ARSENAL, NOT ALL THE YOUNG PLAYERS ARE COMING FROM FRANCE OR SPAIN, THEY COME FROM BRENTFORD OR LEYTON ORIENT"**

being demonstrated now with the emergence of the current batch of 17 and 18-year-olds. Graham Hawkins, head of youth development at The League, said there is real quality among young players at League clubs and the elite are also reaping the rewards.

"Kids from all age groups are being transferred to Premiership clubs," he

said. "Even at Arsenal, not all their young players are coming from France or Spain, they come from Brentford or Leyton Orient, at 14 and 15. Look at Manchester City: Micah Richards was at Oldham Athletic 18 months ago. Where did Shaun Wright-Phillips come from? Nottingham Forest. Tom Huddlestone was at Derby County. So talent is being produced all around.

"I think Trevor Brooking (the FA's director of football development) is right with his moves to introduce skills coaches and age-specific coaches. Eight years ago, we thought an A licence coach was a great coach but now we realise what you do with an eight-year-old player is very different from what you do with a 15-year-old. We need horses for courses.

"We've got an absolutely fantastic template to work from and we can tweak one or two things to move on. We need more quality time with the children, which we can do by building bridges with the schools. These boys mostly train three nights a week, but that is not the optimum learning time. Some of the clubs are in front of the game on this, and are bringing even the eight to ten-year-olds in during

# Faith in the future

*Football League clubs are busy developing the next generation of footballing talent, with more than 8,000 young footballers receiving specialist coaching at League clubs. Peter Lansley, of The Times explains*



Northern Ireland's Kyle Lafferty and Wales' Lewin Nyatanga now represent their countries after coming through the ranks at Burnley and Derby





The Football League's head of youth development Graham Hawkins (left) and youth development business manager Jim Briden

mornings. We then need to ensure the children do not suffer educationally."

Hawkins believes most clubs "are doing an absolutely fantastic job" at the Academies and Centres of Excellence but more coaches, education welfare officers and transport from schools costs money. A £10million annual pot is currently shared out equally between the 72 League clubs but the average £138,000 they receive has not been increased in nine years so Jim Briden, The Football League's youth development business manager, trusts that base level will go up to help clubs maintain an enhanced level of quality coaching.

"We hope that there is additional funding available for clubs demonstrating best practice," Briden said. "We want to improve the levels of coaching at the younger age groups. We also want to make sure the courses we need people to go on are accessible and cost effective."

One example of best practice within The League can be found at Hawkins' old club Wolves. Robbie Keane, Matt Murray, Joleon Lescott, Lee Naylor and Mark Davies have been produced in recent seasons under the guidance of Chris Evans. "In a billion pound industry where only the minority command large transfer funds, homegrown players are the lifeblood for the vast majority of clubs," Molineux's Academy



Dario Gradi has achieved incredible results at Crewe



director said. "Homegrown players are not only the more prudent option, they have a greater affinity with the fans and display loyalties all too often disappearing in the game."

What about the other players, those who do not make the grade? League Football Education, a partnership between The League and the Professional Footballers' Association, promotes educational and vocational training for over a thousand apprentices at League clubs.

"Their support, and the holistic development of young hopefuls, is crucial to the whole development process," Evans said. "Rounded players are better decision makers, and players who do not quite make the required football standard are equipped to transfer to a new career."

Alan Sykes, chief executive of LFE, explained that boys aged 16-18 study for ten classroom hours a week, undertaking key skills in Maths and English, their FA Level 2 coaching certificate and an NVQ portfolio on what it takes to become a professional footballer.

"Within this there's aspects generic to other sports as well, such as psychology and nutrition," said Sykes, mindful that on average up to 40 per cent of apprentice footballers turn professional. "We're finding that

boys coming through this programme, which obviously gears them towards the leisure industry, are becoming increasingly attractive prospects to employers who recognize what's gone into getting these qualifications. The marines, for instance, recruit lads because they share many of the attributes a professional footballer would need: dedication, fitness and hard work.

"We're equipping them with skills for the future that will serve them beyond being a footballer, whether they seek alternative employment at 18 or at 30. This is what the Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence is all about".

LFE is also setting up a sophisticated exit package, partnering career-fairs companies and setting up exit trials at other clubs, and a monitoring programme to track boys for five years to see what they do with their qualifications.

One player who, given his time again, would relish such a structured educational support network is Seth Johnson, the Derby County midfielder. Any analysis of youth development usually takes Dario Gradi's work at Crewe Alexandra into account and Johnson, at 28, is now at an age where he can place his own career path into perspective. James Collins and Neil

## "IN A BILLION POUND INDUSTRY HOMEGROWN PLAYERS ARE THE LIFELOOD FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF CLUBS"

Critchley, two of his fellow apprentices under Gradi's tutelage, may not have enjoyed high-profile playing careers but they have now stepped up to help bring through the next generation of potential stars.

"They're now in charge of the Academy so it just shows that the boys Crewe bring through, have such a knowledge of the game that Dario can entrust them with coaching the kids," Johnson said. "I didn't pay too much attention to my academic studies when I joined Crewe at 14. If I was to do my time again, I definitely would. If I hadn't become a pro footballer, I wouldn't have a clue what I'd have done with my life. If you get a decent education, you're set up for life."





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# Stat attack

## OUTFIELD PLAYER STATS

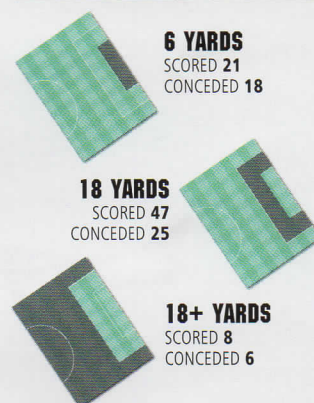
	Minutes on pitch	Appearances	Match starts	Completed matches	Substitute appearances	Subbed off	Goals scored	Minutes since scoring	Assists	Shots on target	Shots off target	Crosses	Defensive clearances	Defensive blocks	Fouls committed	Free-kicks won	Caught offside	Yellow cards	Red cards
SHAUN BARKER	4260	45	45	44	0	0	3	132	5	13	11	49	83	9	51	57	3	2	1
MARCUS BEAN	267	6	2	6	4	0	0	-	0	3	1	2	0	0	5	5	0	1	0
MATTHEW BLINKHORN	13	2	0	2	2	0	0	-	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHRIS BRANDON	332	6	5	13	1	14	2	148	1	4	2	4	1	0	8	7	3	1	1
BEN BURGESS	1423	27	13	22	14	5	2	108	4	9	24	5	15	0	35	14	16	0	0
DANNY COID	1449	18	15	17	3	1	0	-	0	0	3	14	11	3	9	15	1	1	0
IAN EVATT	3999	44	42	42	2	2	0	-	3	6	13	10	95	14	53	38	2	4	0
ADRIAN FORBES	2223	34	26	16	8	18	1	606	5	12	18	47	23	7	30	54	14	3	0
DAVID FOX	2995	37	33	26	4	11	4	545	1	23	39	62	9	4	26	27	2	5	0
SIMON GILLETT	1958	31	20	29	11	8	1	981	1	8	14	64	4	3	24	20	5	5	1
KASPARS GORKSS	756	10	8	9	2	1	0	-	0	0	0	7	17	1	9	5	0	0	0
WESLEY HOOLAHAN	3442	42	37	28	5	13	8	298	11	25	19	103	11	2	14	80	2	9	1
MICHAEL JACKSON	3810	43	42	37	1	6	1	3507	0	2	4	4	75	26	58	30	0	4	0
CLAUS JORGENSEN	1999	31	21	25	10	6	2	173	5	17	11	14	4	3	26	26	4	3	0
MARC JOSEPH	484	8	3	8	5	0	0	-	0	1	0	4	9	0	4	1	0	1	0
ANDREW MORRELL	3080	41	35	22	6	18	16	6	6	44	27	16	10	2	39	42	40	6	0
KEIGAN PARKER	2690	47	26	35	21	10	13	5	6	47	36	108	0	3	31	39	70	7	0
KEITH SOUTHERN	3516	39	37	35	2	4	5	198	2	17	25	19	36	11	49	50	5	2	0
PAUL TIERNEY	642	10	8	4	2	6	0	-	0	2	0	8	3	2	2	7	0	0	0
SCOTT VERNON	1973	39	22	25	17	13	11	109	0	27	20	7	8	1	29	13	31	0	0
ROBBIE WILLIAMS	849	9	9	8	0	1	4	245	0	5	9	12	6	5	12	6	0	2	0

## GOAL DETAILS

### HOW THE GOALS WERE STRUCK

SCORED	CONCEDED
37 RIGHT FOOT	28
26 LEFT FOOT	10
13 HEADERS	11
0 OTHERS	0
48 OPEN PLAY	33
12 CROSS	10
5 CORNER	0
5 PENALTIES	3
3 DIRECT FROM FREE KICK	0
1 FREE KICK	2
2 OWN GOALS	1

### DISTANCE FROM GOAL



**actim**  
STATS

## GOALKEEPER STATS

	Minutes on pitch	Appearances	Match starts	Completed matches	Substitute appearances	Subbed off	Saved with feet	Punched	Parried	Tipped Over	Fumbled	Tipped Round	Caught	Blocked	Clean Sheets	Goals conceded	Minutes since conceding	Save %	Saved	Resulting in goals	Opposition miss	Yellow cards	Red cards
LEWIS EDGE	99	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	2	49	77.78	0	0	0	0	0
RHYS EVANS	3060	32	32	32	0	0	0	15	9	5	0	9	122	0	5	36	66	81.73	0	2	1	1	0
JOE HART	472	5	5	11	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	22	0	2	14	39	66.67	0	1	1	0	0
PAUL RACHUBKA	761	8	8	8	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	3	33	1	4	5	3	88.89	0	0	0	0	0

## CARDS RECEIVED

59

4

## MATCH RECORDS

GOALS SCORED PER MATCH						GOALS CONCEDED PER MATCH						RECORD WHEN...					
	MATCHES	W	D	L	PTS		MATCHES	W	D	L	PTS		P	W	D	L	PTS
FAILED TO SCORE	12	0	3	9	3	CLEAN SHEET	10	7	3	0	24	SCORING FIRST	25	21	4	0	67
SCORED 1 GOAL	11	3	6	2	15	CONCEDED 1 GOAL	25	14	6	5	48	CONCEDING FIRST	18	3	4	11	13
SCORED 2 GOALS	10	8	2	0	26	CONCEDED 2 GOALS	9	2	2	5	8	LEADING AT HALF-TIME	18	15	3	0	48
SCORED 3 GOALS	9	9	0	0	27	CONCEDED 3 GOALS	2	1	0	1	3	DRAWING AT HALF-TIME	17	8	5	4	29
SCORED 4 GOALS	3	3	0	0	9	CONCEDED 4 GOALS	0	0	0	0	0	LOSING AT HALF TIME	11	1	3	7	6
TOTAL GOALS SCORED: 76. AVERAGE PER GAME: 1.65						TOTAL GOALS CONCEDED: 49. AVERAGE PER GAME: 1.07											

## GAMES SINCE...

A WIN	0
A HOME WIN	0
AN AWAY WIN	0
A DEFEAT	7
A HOME DEFEAT	6
AN AWAY DEFEAT	3
A SCORE DRAW	12
A NO SCORE DRAW	10
CONCEDING A GOAL	0
SCORING A GOAL	0

All statistics for League 1 matches this season only (does not include Play-Off fixtures)

PLAY-OFF FINAL







# Stat attack

## OUTFIELD PLAYER STATS

	Minutes on pitch	Appearances	Match starts	Completed matches	Substitute appearances	Subbed off	Goals scored	Minutes since scoring	Assists	Shots on target	Shots off target	Crosses	Defensive clearances	Defensive blocks	Fouls committed	Free-kicks won	Caught offside	Yellow cards	Red cards
CRAIG ALCOCK	18	1	0	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ANTHONY BARRY	1283	24	13	17	11	7	0	-	1	8	6	13	6	2	16	9	0	3	0
MARTIN BRITTAIN	1099	15	12	10	3	5	0	-	5	1	1	44	0	0	9	15	2	0	0
CHRIS COHEN	4203	44	44	44	0	0	6	1344	11	24	34	63	22	3	68	52	6	8	0
ARRON DAVIES	3102	40	35	27	5	12	6	295	3	31	29	57	6	2	16	30	15	2	0
TERRELL FORBES	4342	46	46	45	0	1	0	-	1	0	0	5	52	21	39	21	0	3	0
WAYNE GRAY	2653	47	25	33	22	13	11	20	2	31	21	28	12	2	39	40	25	3	0
SCOTT GUYETT	1078	16	10	11	6	3	0	-	0	2	4	0	24	5	11	20	1	0	2
NATHAN JONES	3945	42	42	38	0	4	1	582	4	3	4	102	15	8	42	40	1	11	0
JEAN-PAUL KALALA	3280	38	35	33	3	5	1	29	0	4	15	16	19	6	53	33	0	6	0
DARRYL KNIGHTS	99	4	0	4	4	0	0	-	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
NICHOLAS LAW	474	6	5	5	1	1	0	-	0	2	2	6	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
ANDY LINDEGAARD	1171	14	12	12	2	2	0	-	0	1	0	17	17	2	11	16	1	1	0
MARK LYNCH	1622	17	17	17	0	0	0	-	0	1	2	19	3	4	11	14	0	0	0
STEPHEN MAHER	6	1	0	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
GAVIN MCCALLUM	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LEE MORRIS	1828	33	23	14	10	19	5	800	0	18	11	20	0	1	29	19	16	5	0
ADAM ROONEY	120	3	1	2	2	1	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
MATTHEW ROSE	677	9	7	8	2	1	0	-	0	0	0	8	10	3	6	7	0	0	0
TERRY SKIVERTON	3478	39	39	34	0	5	2	2101	1	7	14	1	95	11	55	44	0	2	0
MARCUS STEWART	2738	31	31	22	0	9	8	146	3	16	16	10	8	3	41	36	51	3	0
PETER SWEENEY	496	8	5	6	3	2	0	-	1	2	3	8	0	0	6	7	1	0	0
PAUL TERRY	1748	20	20	14	0	6	2	865	0	5	7	3	17	1	22	8	2	2	0

## GOAL DETAILS

### HOW THE GOALS WERE STRUCK

SCORED		CONCEDED
26	RIGHT FOOT	27
14	LEFT FOOT	7
14	HEADERS	5
1	OTHERS	0
42	OPEN PLAY	21
4	CROSS	5
4	CORNER	3
1	PENALTIES	4
0	DIRECT FROM FREE KICK	0
2	FREE KICK	3
2	OWN GOALS	3

### DISTANCE FROM GOAL



**actim**  
STATS

## GOALKEEPER STATS

	Minutes on pitch	Appearances	Match starts	Completed matches	Substitute appearances	Subbed off	Saved with feet	Punched	Parried	Tipped Over	Fumbled	Tipped Round	Caught	Blocked	Clean Sheets	Goals conceded	Minutes since conceding	Save %	Saved	Resulting in goals	Opposition miss	Yellow cards	Red cards
STEVE MILDENHALL	4391	46	46	46	0	0	2	18	19	7	0	22	154	4	18	37	309	85.88	0	2	0	0	0

## MATCH RECORDS

	MATCHES	W	D	L	PTS
FAILED TO SCORE	15	0	5	10	5
SCORED 1 GOAL	13	7	5	1	26
SCORED 2 GOALS	13	11	0	2	33
SCORED 3 GOALS	4	4	0	0	12
SCORED 4 GOALS	1	1	0	0	3
TOTAL GOALS SCORED: 55. AVERAGE PER GAME: 1.20					

	MATCHES	W	D	L	PTS
CLEAN SHEET	18	13	5	0	44
CONCEDED 1 GOAL	20	8	5	7	29
CONCEDED 2 GOALS	6	2	0	4	6
CONCEDED 3 GOALS	1	0	0	1	0
CONCEDED 4 GOALS	1	0	0	1	0
TOTAL GOALS CONCEDED: 39. AVERAGE PER GAME: 0.85					

	P	W	D	L	PTS
SCORING FIRST	23	21	2	0	65
CONCEDING FIRST	18	2	3	13	9
LEADING AT HALF-TIME	14	13	1	0	40
DRAWING AT HALF-TIME	23	8	8	7	32
LOSING AT HALF-TIME	9	2	1	6	7

## GAMES SINCE...

A WIN	0
A HOME WIN	0
AN AWAY WIN	0
A DEFEAT	3
A HOME DEFEAT	4
AN AWAY DEFEAT	1
A SCORE DRAW	30
A NO SCORE DRAW	11
CONCEDING A GOAL	3
SCORING A GOAL	0

All statistics for League 1 matches this season only (does not include Play-Off fixtures)



## FINAL LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
SCUNTHORPE	46	15	6	2	40	17	11	7	5	33	18	91
BRISTOL CITY	46	15	5	3	35	20	10	5	8	28	19	85
BLACKPOOL	46	12	6	5	40	25	12	5	6	36	24	83
NOTTM FOREST	46	14	5	4	37	17	9	8	6	28	24	82
YEOVIL	46	14	3	6	22	12	9	7	7	33	27	79
OLDHAM	46	13	4	6	36	18	8	8	7	33	29	75
SWANSEA	46	12	6	5	36	20	8	6	9	33	33	72
CARLISLE	46	12	5	6	35	24	7	6	10	19	31	68
TRANMERE	46	13	5	5	33	22	5	8	10	25	31	67
MILLWALL	46	11	8	4	33	19	8	1	14	26	43	66
DONCASTER	46	8	10	5	30	23	8	5	10	22	24	63
PORT VALE	46	12	3	8	35	26	6	3	14	29	39	60
CREWE	46	11	4	8	39	38	6	5	12	27	34	60
NORTHAMPTON	46	8	5	10	27	28	7	9	7	21	23	59
HUDDERSFIELD	46	9	8	6	37	33	5	9	9	23	36	59
GILLINGHAM	46	14	2	7	29	24	3	6	14	27	53	59
CHELTENHAM	46	8	6	9	25	27	7	3	13	24	34	54
BRIGHTON	46	5	7	11	23	34	9	4	10	26	24	53
BOURNEMOUTH	46	10	5	8	28	27	3	8	12	22	37	52
LEYTON ORIENT	46	6	10	7	30	32	6	5	12	31	45	51
CHESTERFIELD	46	9	5	9	29	22	3	6	14	16	31	47
BRADFORD	46	5	9	9	27	31	6	5	12	20	34	47
ROTHERHAM	46	8	4	11	37	39	5	5	13	21	36	38
BRENTFORD	46	5	8	10	24	41	3	5	15	16	38	37

\*ROTHERHAM DEDUCTED 10 POINTS FOR ENTERING ADMINISTRATION

## RESULTS

In the Coca-Cola Football League 1 this season there have been 6,240 shots on target, goals constitute 22.2% of all shots (doesn't include own goals). The woodwork has come to the rescue of the defending side on 255 occasions (the biggest beneficiaries being Crewe with 19). There have been 130 penalties awarded this season and of those 103 have been scored (a success rate of 79.2%). Nottingham Forest have been awarded most penalties – 10. Brentford have given most penalties away – 10. The team to score the most penalties is Oldham with eight. Swansea missed four penalties in League 1 this season.

How many times each result has occurred this season - home sides score shown first

0-0	38	2-1	49	4-0	3
0-1	47	2-2	33	4-1	6
0-2	37	2-3	12	4-2	4
0-3	7	2-4	3	4-3	2
0-4	5	2-5	1	4-4	-
0-5	-	3-0	21	4-5	-
1-0	72	3-1	25	5-0	4
1-1	65	3-2	15	5-1	4
1-2	30	3-3	3	5-2	-
1-3	15	3-4	-	5-3	-
1-4	5	3-5	-	5-4	-
1-5	1	3-6	1	5-5	-
2-0	44				

## GOAL COUNTER



OWN GOALS 23 (1.7%), OTHER BODY PART 6 (0.6%)

## DISCIPLINE



## TOTALS

SUBSTITUTES USED 2,580  
OFFSIDES 3,431  
CORNERS 6,023  
SHOTS OFF TARGET 6,098

# Magic numbers

All the vital statistics from the Coca-Cola League 1 season

## SHARP SHOOTERS

PLAYER	TEAM	LGE	CUP	TTL
BILLY SHARP	SCUNTHORPE	30	2	32
LEON CONSTANTINE	PORT VALE	22	4	26
LUKE VARNEY	CREWE	17	8	25
CHRIS PORTER	OLDHAM	22	1	23
PAUL HEFFERNAN	DONCASTER	11	10	21
LEE TRUNDLE	SWANSEA	19	1	20
CHRIS GREENACRE	TRANMERE	17	2	19
ANDREW MORRELL	BLACKPOOL	16	3	19
NICKY MAYNARD	CREWE	16	3	19

## WHERE TO SEE GOALS BY GROUND

GROUND	HOME TEAM	M	GLS	G/MT
THE ALEXANDRA STADIUM	CREWE	23	77	3.35
MILLMOOR	ROTHERHAM	23	76	3.30
THE GALPHARM STADIUM	HUDDERSFIELD	23	70	3.04
BLOOMFIELD ROAD	BLACKPOOL	23	65	2.83
GRIFFIN PARK	BRENTFORD	23	65	2.83
MATCHROOM STADIUM	LEYTON ORIENT	23	62	2.70
VALE PARK	PORT VALE	23	61	2.65
BRUNTON PARK	CARLISLE	23	59	2.57
INTERSONIC STADIUM	BRADFORD	23	58	2.52
GLANFORD PARK	SCUNTHORPE	23	57	2.48
WITHDEAN	BRIGHTON	23	57	2.48
LIBERTY STADIUM	SWANSEA	23	56	2.43
ASHTON GATE	BRISTOL CITY	23	55	2.39
FITNESS FIRST STADIUM	BOURNEMOUTH	23	55	2.39
PRENTON PARK	TRANMERE	23	55	2.39
SIXFIELDS	NORTHAMPTON	23	55	2.39
BOUNDARY PARK	OLDHAM	23	54	2.35
CITY GROUND	NOTTM FOREST	23	54	2.35
PRIESTFIELD	GILLINGHAM	23	53	2.30
KEEPMOAT STADIUM	DONCASTER	23	53	2.30
WHADDON ROAD	CHELTENHAM	23	52	2.26
THE NEW DEN	MILLWALL	23	52	2.26
RECREATION GROUND	CHESTERFIELD	23	51	2.22
HUISH PARK	YEOVIL	23	34	1.48

## TEAM LEADERS

TEAMS WITH THE MOST...

SHOTS ON TARGET **324** SWANSEA  
SHOTS OFF TARGET **330** BRISTOL CITY  
CORNERS **322** CARLISLE  
HIT WOODWORK **24** SWANSEA  
OFFSIDES **203** BLACKPOOL • FOULS **639** MILLWALL  
YELLOW CARDS **92** MILLWALL • RED CARDS **8** SWANSEA

## PLAYER POWER

PLAYERS WITH THE MOST...

SHOTS **140** BILLY SHARP (SCUNTHORPE)  
SHOTS ON TARGET **81** BILLY SHARP (SCUNTHORPE)  
SHOTS OFF TARGET **59** BILLY SHARP (SCUNTHORPE)  
ASSISTS **14** ANDY LIDDELL (OLDHAM)  
CROSSES **184** CHRIS SHUKER (TRANMERE)  
OFFSIDES **81** BILLY SHARP (SCUNTHORPE)  
FOULS **93** GARETH TAYLOR (TRANMERE)  
FREE-KICKS WON **87** RICHARD WELLENS (OLDHAM)



**T**he second year of The Football League's "Fans of the Future" initiative saw thousands of young supporters throughout England and Wales being given the opportunity to begin a lifelong passion for their local club, with free tickets available at more than 800 matches.

The Football League aims to encourage the next generation of supporters to watch live football at their local League club by providing a range of innovative ticketing initiatives for young supporters, with tens of thousands of tickets being given away free.

More than half of The League's 72 clubs have introduced a "Kids Go Free" scheme, offering free entry



# Just the ticket for fans



*The next generation of football fanatics are helping ensure the future of the beautiful game, thanks to The Football League's Fans of the Future initiative*

to children accompanied by a paying adult. In total, 38 of these applied the scheme at all home matches. Additionally, other clubs offered ticket discounts, "kid-a-quid" matches, family tickets, and free tickets for school groups.

"Fans of the Future", which is a core part of The Football League's re-branding programme, breaks new ground for the world's original league

football competition by being its first ever centrally co-ordinated attendance-building initiative. For its part, The League provided clubs with a range of marketing materials that could be individually tailored by each club.

Football League Chairman Lord Mawhinney said: "By continuing to make League matches more accessible to young supporters, Football League clubs are making a genuinely impressive contribution in getting the next generation of football supporters into their grounds."

"They are helping themselves by helping young people to enjoy football locally. I congratulate the clubs on continuing their commitment to an initiative that will deliver real results for generations to come."

"This season saw hundreds of thousands of young supporters attend games and I encourage them to take advantage next season, too. Having the chance to see their local side in action will, I'm sure, begin a lifelong football passion for many young fans."

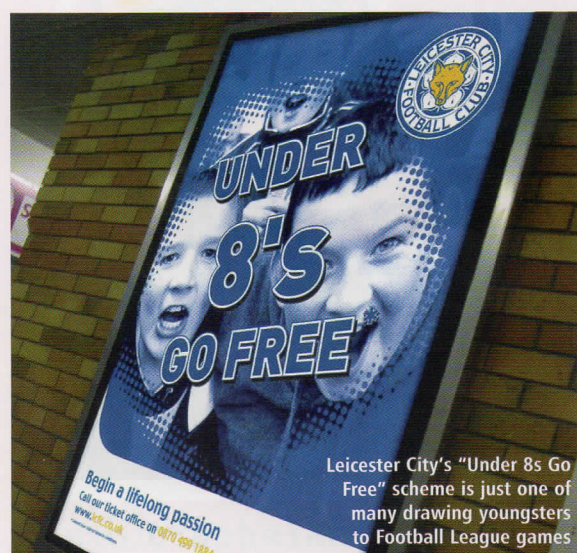
Sixty one Football League clubs from all divisions are contributed to the "Fans of the Future" initiative with a range of clubs, such as Leicester City, Chesterfield and Stockport County, all offering free entry to young fans.

Leicester City provided free season tickets to children under eight as part of its Junior Foxes scheme. The club has over 12,900 junior members enrolled, making it one of the largest children's clubs in the country.

This season, Chesterfield launched an "Under 7s Go Free" season ticket scheme. The club has also extended the initiative by holding a Family Open Day and a series of "£1 per child" tickets for selected matches throughout the season.

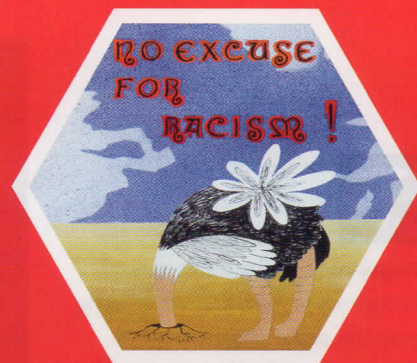
Stockport County introduced a similar ticketing policy to encourage its next generation of fans. The Mini Hatters "Under 7s Go Free" scheme gives hundreds of kids the opportunity to watch their local Football League side at every home match.

For further information go to [www.football-league.co.uk](http://www.football-league.co.uk)





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# A fair deal for fans

**S**upporters are the lifeblood of football. Around 18 million fans attend matches in Football League competitions each season.

Although we can't guarantee you three points on a Saturday, The Football League and its member clubs want to make sure you enjoy following your club.

That is why The League and its clubs have Customer Charters to ensure supporters know what standard of customer care they can expect.

These charters highlight football's commitment to you the supporter and include details regarding ticket prices, facilities available for the disabled, and the cost and development of merchandising.

Your own club's charter will be available on its official website and also through club outlets. Take time to find out about what your club does to help you.

The Football League and its 72 member clubs have led the way in

domestic football by undertaking to make "promises" to supporters outlining the improvements they'll strive for over the coming season.

And all charters outline how you can give feedback to The League and its clubs – whether this be in the form of praise, a complaint or a suggestion for improvement.

A complaints procedure is laid down in all League club charters. If you have a complaint regarding a specific League club, you should address it in the first instance to that club. However, if you believe the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved in the timescale laid down in that club's charter you can then address your complaint to us, The Football League.

Our Customer Services department will investigate the complaint objectively within the timescales laid down in our Charter.

Some complicated matters may not be resolved within the timescale laid down but we promise we will keep you updated every step of the way.

If you feel we are not dealing with your complaint effectively you can contact the Independent Football

Commission, the body established to oversee the work of football's governing bodies.

However, the work of our Customer Services department does not only cover complaints. Our customer relations staff constantly answer supporters' queries, ranging from explanations of League rules to answering quiz questions.

We also work hard to ensure stewarding at football grounds is of the highest possible standard and have helped introduce new guidance about tackling racism and promoting disability awareness.

We are also the listening League. We play an active role in progressing positive action in football through discussions with the Football Supporters Federation, Supporters Direct, Kick it Out, Football in the Community and Playing for Success.

We are here to help, advise and listen. Please feel free to contact us or your club. Together we can make football even more of an enjoyable experience.

View The Football League Customer Charter at [www.football-league.co.uk](http://www.football-league.co.uk)







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**T**he views of supporters nationwide were a key element in The Football League's decision to introduce the 'Smoke Free' policy which is set to take effect at all League grounds from the beginning of the 2007/08 season.

Almost 80 per cent of the 43,000 fans that participated in The Football League Supporters' Survey 2006 advocated the introduction of some form of smoke-free policy at matches, with half wanting an outright ban.

Leicester City's chief executive Tim Davies, who chaired The League's working party which paved the way for the new policy, says: "Fans around the country were clearly in favour of going smoke free and that certainly mirrored the feelings at my own club.

"Traditionally there have been a lot of smokers at Leicester City, but during the season before last we had a half-time vote during our home match against Leeds United and 80 per cent of the supporters were in favour of going smoke free.

"We then implemented the policy and I'm pleased to say we've not had one problem. We provide areas outside the stadium for people who still want to smoke, but that doesn't impact on fans inside the ground and everyone seems happy with the way it's worked."

The new policy anticipates and exceeds expected government legislation and will see smoking prohibited throughout stadium confines from July 2007 onwards. The League's decision has delighted Caroline Flint, the Minister of State for Public Health.

In endorsing the policy the minister said: "It's great to see The Football League taking such a forward looking approach, which goes above and beyond the requirements of the smoke free legislation that is being introduced in July.

"Secondhand smoke kills, so I applaud this move which can only have a positive affect on the health both of staff working at The Football League stadiums and of football supporters watching the matches."

The introduction of the new policy



Leicester fans showing the red card to smoking in the Walkers Stadium when they voted on the issue

# No smoking

*The Football League has introduced a smoke-free policy at matches.*

*Tony Leighton explains why*

followed a unanimous decision by Championship clubs to move to a smoke free matchday environment. The League then held lengthy consultations with all clubs before finalising the detail of the policy.

Tim Davies explains: "When the working party was set up a couple of years ago we met several times to discuss the logistics of such a move and to look at best practice in football and other areas where a smoke free environment had been implemented.

"Smoking had become a real issue at Championship

meetings and, as a major sport, we obviously wanted to promote a healthy lifestyle. So we decided to take an advance stance on the issue, and I'm pleased the policy will now cover the entire Football League."

The Football League's chairman, Lord Mawhinney, adds: "In re-branding The Football League we made a serious, long-term commitment to encouraging a new generation of supporters to our matches. This is the latest stage in that process.

"We aim to get more families and more young fans going along to watch their local Football League club, and this new policy will ensure that doing so does not have a negative affect on their health."



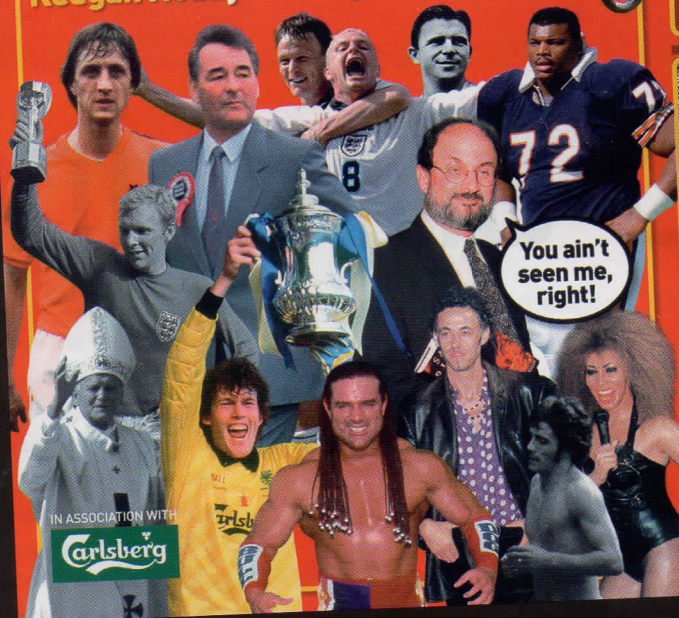


# 80 years of hurt, Hurst and hilarity...

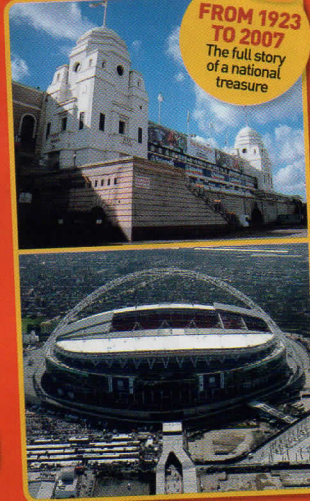
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# PLAY-OFF FINAL SQUADS



## Blackpool

Manager **Simon Grayson**

<b>Paul Rachubka</b>	1
<b>Danny Coid</b>	2
<b>Paul Tierney</b>	3
<b>Keith Southern</b>	4
<b>Michael Jackson (c)</b>	5
<b>Robbie Williams</b>	6
<b>Keigan Parker</b>	7
<b>Adrian Forbes</b>	8
<b>Scott Vernon</b>	10
<b>Chris Brandon</b>	11
<b>Marc Joseph</b>	12
<b>Kyle Clancy</b>	13
<b>Matthew Blinkhorn</b>	14
<b>Ciaran Donnelly</b>	15
<b>Simon Wiles</b>	17
<b>Andrew Morrell</b>	18
<b>Phil Doughty</b>	19
<b>David Fox</b>	20
<b>Rhys Evans</b>	21
<b>Marcus Bean</b>	22
<b>Lewis Edge</b>	23
<b>Shaun Barker</b>	25
<b>Claus Bech Jorgensen</b>	26
<b>Wes Hoolahan</b>	27
<b>Ben Burgess</b>	28
<b>Ian Evatt</b>	29
<b>Simon Gillett</b>	30
<b>Matthew Kay</b>	32
<b>Kaspars Gorkss</b>	33



## Yeovil Town

Manager **Russell Slade**

<b>Steve Mildenhall</b>	1
<b>Nathan Jones</b>	3
<b>Terry Skiverton (c)</b>	4
<b>Scott Guyett</b>	5
<b>Terrell Forbes</b>	6
<b>Paul Terry</b>	7
<b>Anthony Barry</b>	8
<b>Arron Davies</b>	9
<b>Wayne Gray</b>	10
<b>Chris Cohen</b>	11
<b>Martin Brittain</b>	12
<b>Darren Behcet</b>	13
<b>Jean-Paul Kalala</b>	14
<b>Andy Lindegaard</b>	16
<b>Bradley Thomas</b>	17
<b>Danny Webb</b>	18
<b>Gavin McCallum</b>	19
<b>Craig Alcock</b>	20
<b>Jake Smeaton</b>	21
<b>Tom Clarke</b>	22
<b>Danny Barker</b>	23
<b>Mark Lynch</b>	24
<b>Lee Morris</b>	25
<b>Stephen Maher</b>	26
<b>Ishmael Welsh</b>	27
<b>Marcus Stewart</b>	29
<b>Darryl Knights</b>	30
<b>Matthew Rose</b>	32

### MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee **AP D'Urso** (Essex)

Assistant Referees **SP Beck** (Essex), **JD Stokes** (Cheshire)

Fourth official **TM Kettle** (Leicestershire and Rutland)

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