



2

HALVES

2 HALVES | 31 | 10 | 2009 |



| the-rebel-alliance.com | A Fan Made Publication

# A Rivalry Rooted In History

*Chemi of the arseblog forums opens up the history books to understand why Spurs and Arsenal became the best of enemies.*

As some of you may know, Arsène Wenger recently celebrated his 13 year anniversary with the club. However, for a significant (and growing) proportion of fans, the anniversary of the man is the anniversary of the club. Wenger's towering presence is such that pre-Wenger history represents a mystery barely worth knowing. What the inductee to the world of Arsenal must know is essentially what their Liverpoolian equivalent must avoid, with the only universally recognisable images being Charlie George and Michael Thomas doing their duty. Even those who still grace the club's record books are memorable only in reference to modern day Wengerites, summed up by the bust of Herbert Chapman juxtaposed alongside guess who.

This ignorance is a shame because there is so much to discover and celebrate about the past which formed the club we love today. For example, while the ardour of new fans to engage in hatred of Tottenham makes one ponder heart-warmingly whether it is an innate capacity, knowing why we hate is particularly crucial as the club's life becomes ever more entwined with a single, and undeniably great, man's life.

We start in 1910. In just 24 years, Woolwich Arsenal - formerly Dial Square and then Royal Arsenal - had moved out of the armaments factory in Woolwich and into the Football League, gone professional and made their way up to the First Division. One small problem - the club was broke. Languishing in Plumstead on the outskirts of London and with every football fan's decision over whom to support still dictated by where he lived, what would become one of the most popular clubs in the world couldn't get anyone to watch them. Such was their parlous state that the club entered voluntary liquidation, as its demise loomed. To this miserable scene, enter Sir Henry Norris. Born in 1865, Sir Henry had made his fortune in the south and west London property market and earned his knighthood during the First World War. A remarkably well-connected philanthropist and Freemason, he already had a very strong connection to the football world via his chairmanship of Fulham (during which time he rejected the chance to take over the Stamford Bridge stadium, bringing about the creation of Chelsea FC). However, for a man who was all about accumulation, one club wasn't enough and he thus became majority shareholder of Woolwich Arsenal in 1910 and chairman two years later. Norris' first thought was to merge these two enterprises to dominate the London area. However, when this plan was thwarted by the Football League, he focused his attentions on his new plaything.

The term 'plaything' may seem a tad anachronistic but the truth of the early 20th century was that wealthy owners abounded and with extra flamboyance. In Norris, Arsenal had someone whose impact on the club would be comparable to Abramovich's on Chelea. His methods would have dumbfounded the Russian, and the results would make Norris la bête noire for a certain white-shirted club.

The club moved. Recognising the dearth of support in Plumstead, Norris pulled some strings with his personal friend, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and wangled the recreation ground of St. John's College of Divinity in Highbury for a new stadium. Despite the existence of another club in North London, Norris considered competition a perfectly healthy thing and the new Arsenal Stadium was opened in 1913, with the Archbishop himself naturally signing the title deed. The stadium cost Norris a cool £125,000 (over £8 million by today's prices). The name changed. Why call a club Woolwich Arsenal when it was in North London? The Woolwich was dropped and Arsenal Football Club was born, or The Arsenal as they became known in the press.

The only thing which didn't change was the results. Relegated after the 1912-1913 season to the Second Division, The Arsenal remained there until 1919. Not that promotion had anything to do with the team's footballing ability. Instead, it was Norris, who saw an opportunity when the Football League announced it was expanding the First Division from 20 to 22 teams. At the AGM to decide who would take the extra spots, the Football League unsurprisingly announced that one of the relegated teams (Chelsea) that season would remain in the First Division. Rather more surprisingly, the Football League also announced that the other place would be taken by the club who had finished fifth in the Second Division that season - Arsenal FC. As a result, the other team who had been relegated that season would indeed go down to the Second Division - none other than Tottenham Hotspur. Although no wrongdoing was conclusively proved, it was football's worst kept secret that Norris's financial clout and personal magnetism had elevated his club and condemned their rivals to the shame of the Second Division. At a stroke, Norris had added enough fuel to the fire of the conflict between red and white to make it the quintessential rivalry in the capital.

Ultimately, Norris came a-cropper. Myriad financial irregularities came to light, with stories of under-the-counter payments and abused expense accounts culminating in Norris' eventual ban for life from football. It marked Norris out as the archetypal dodgy owner and may still provide solace to those wishing ill tidings on another capital club with a benefactor. However, some years before his departure in 1929 from the game and The Arsenal, Norris made the final contribution to his legacy by appointing a certain Herbert Chapman to the post of Arsenal manager. No doubt he would have felt very pleased with himself indeed as the club he named, moved and established picked up its third successive league title before his death in 1934. For Arsenal fans today, however, it's perhaps more enjoyable to think of how Tottenham fans must have felt. That the ire of Tottenham fans everywhere is still directed at the former Arsenal chairman is a constant reminder that, as we celebrate the achievements of the present under Wenger, we should look back and realise the achievements of men like Sir Henry Norris in our club's long and glorious history.

## Derby Day Breakfasts

*Preparation is everything. With that in mind, Two Halves scouted out some of people behind the best Arsenal breakfasts going.*



**NEWECAN**  
**Café Red Zone**  
255, Seven Sisters Rd, London, N4 2DD  
Prediction: "Arsenal to edge it 1-0. Van Persie will probably score."



**LEO**  
**The Happening Bagel Bakery**  
284A Seven Sisters Rd, London, N4 2AA  
Prediction: "3-0 to Arsenal. Jermaine Jenas to receive red card."



**ERIC**  
**The Little Wonder Café**  
48-50 Hornsey Road, London, N7 7B  
Prediction: "I'll go 2-1 Arsenal"



**CHRIS**  
**The Hope Workers' Café**  
111 Holloway Road, London, N7 8LT  
Prediction: "It'll be a tight game but Arsenal will squeeze it 3-2."

### Contributors

Editor: James McNicholas | Design: Guy Featherstone (gotta love that title case)  
Arseblogger of arseblog.com | Rotorgoat of Eastlower.co.uk | Goodplaya of goodplaya.com | Gilbertsilver of Gunnerblog.com | Chemi of the arseblog forums | Barking, arseblog columnist | E. Fyle, Gunnerblog moderator  
Goonerholic of Goonerholic.com | With thanks to: Chris Toy, Simon Rose, Grant Tabard, The Gooner, Jamie Sanderson, Danny Karbassiyoon, Paul Kay, Ben Terrett, Russell Davies, Katie Baldwin & Arsenal Football Club.  
A Fanmade Production in association with Rebel Alliance & Parlour Magic Productions.



---

# It's Not All About The Benjamins

---

*Can success be bought? Arseblogger of arseblog.com examines how the two North London clubs have spent their money – and how wisely.*

---

Since the inception of the Premier League Spurs have spent a grand total of £366,850,000 on players, taking in a total of £202,017,500. In the same period Arsenal have spent £269,940,000, bringing in £237,324,000. That makes Spurs' average spend per season over £9m; Arsenal's is just below £2m.\*

It's even more interesting when you look at the figures from 2004 to the present day. Spurs have spent £249,000,000 while player sales have brought in £163,550,000. That's an average spend of £14m+ per season. Since 2004 Arsenal have spent £112,050,000, brought in £138,320,000 and made an average profit per season of £4,378,000.

Spurs are obviously an ambitious club. They've gone out and hired managers who, at the time, have been lauded as among the best in Europe. Jaques Santini was the former French national team manager; he lasted just 13 games before he resigned. Juande Ramos did great things with Sevilla and Spurs wanted him badly, but the way they went about bringing him in left much to be desired. Martin Jol was effectively a dead man walking after what appeared to be good work from where I was watching. He got them to fifth, their highest ever Premier League finish, consolidated them in that position, then was remarkably sacked during a UEFA Cup game by Daniel Levy. It was on Sky Sports News before Jol knew anything about it.

And while Ramos brought silverware in the shape of the Carling Cup he struggled in the league and he too was sacked. It wasn't for lack of money to spend either: in his short period at the club he brought in Alan Hutton, Jonathan Woodgate, Luka Modric, Giovanni dos Santos, Heurelho Gomes, David Bentley, Roman Pavlyuchenko and Vedran Corluka for a combined total of over £80m.

A poor start to the 2008-9 season saw Ramos sacked and replaced by Harry Redknapp who has so far spent well over £70m on new players. Spurs have thrown a lot of money around, desperate to try and break into the top four. They nearly did it under Martin Jol but the magic of Highbury and dodgy lasagna meant Arsenal pipped them to the post on the final day of the season.

Since Arsène Wenger joined Arsenal in 1996 Spurs have had, including caretakers, 13 managers. One manager for every year

of Wenger's reign. They tried the unknown foreigner approach which worked so well for Arsenal but Christian Gross was no Wenger. They tried the successful ex-Arsenal man but George Graham and Spurs were never going to be lengthy bedfellows. The legendary former player, Glenn Hoddle? Nope, that didn't work either. The foreigners with top class reputations ended up sunk at White Hart Lane, and now it's Harry Redknapp, who'd manage a Serial Killers XI if the money was right.

And the one constant throughout has been Arsène Wenger. Going back to the numbers above it is quite remarkable that in the 2004-2009 period Arsenal have made a profit whilst maintaining their position in the top four - as well as making the huge move to a new stadium. Spurs have spent a fortune for one Carling Cup and a team which has, one season apart, never troubled the top four. And the manager who got them to that position was shafted, humiliated and sacked.

Now, I'm not suggesting Arsène Wenger is perfect. We all have our opinions about what he should do, what he should have done or what he didn't do, but against the backdrop of what happens at White Hart Lane you have to look at the facts and what he has achieved with the resources at hand. Is there another manager in the world who could do what he has done? Is there another manager in the world who would have chosen to go down the path he has, knowing how little he'd have to spend? Could any other manager keep a team of youngsters in the top four in the most competitive league in the world whilst making a net profit on transfer dealings?

The last four years have been frustrating for Arsenal fans, waiting for the team to grow up, waiting for the league title to come home, seeing the lack of experience cost the team dearly at times, but the backdrop of constant managerial upheaval and huge spending at White Hart Lane proves that spending big is not always the way to success.

For all their big money deals, and there have been plenty, Spurs have never come close to matching Arsenal's best ever signing - Arsène Wenger in 1996 on a long-term contract for an undisclosed fee.

\* figures sourced from [www.topspurs.com](http://www.topspurs.com)

---

# We've Got Vermaelen

---

*Rotorgoat of Eastlower.co.uk on Arsenal's surprising early contender for the Golden Boot...*

---

Under normal circumstances, the signing of a Belgian defender for £10m would hardly merit column inches. But as if the spotlight of being the club's only summer signing and most expensive defender ever wasn't enough, then five goals in his first eleven games and some high-octane performances quickly ensured early season cult hero status for Arsenal's new centre-half Thomas Vermaelen.

Of course, most Arsenal fans have been crying out for a high quality central defender since a by-then deteriorating Sol Campbell left the club in 2006. Gallas and Toure rarely seemed ideal bedfellows - and they certainly weren't best buddies - and yet the threesome of Senderos, Djourou and Silvestre never did enough to dislodge them permanently. Indeed, the latter trio remain little more than a supporting cast this season.

For those schooled on the legendary back four - a snarling, compact and rarely-changing unit that in its 1991 heyday conceded a mere 18 league goals - the very fact that last season Wenger used eight separate centre-half pairings, at the cost of 37 league goals, says it all.

So it really was no surprise to see Wenger put his hands in his notoriously zipped-up pockets to buy a centre-back - if anything, it was a blessed relief. However, in true Wenger style, nobody knew much about the man he bought - at least not at the time.

Doubts were immediately raised about his height, a recurring theme the previous season when set pieces were our defensive undoing and our back line seemed at times compulsively incapable of keeping a lead. Being fed on a diet of Brede Hangeland rumours all summer didn't help, either. However, the official Arsenal site says he's six foot on the dot, and while he's clearly not colossal, Wenger has nevertheless been at pains to remind us that "being good in the air is not always linked with size and he has shown that".

In truth, the only real surprise has been how much of an impact he's made. He came straight into the side and took no time to cement his place there. It's not that he's single-handedly solved all of Arsenal's defensive concerns - Arsenal have leaked a fair few league goals already, and it would be disingenuous to suggest that he's entirely guiltless - but he's injected some real drive, vigour and steel into our defence. Better still, he seems to have reinvigorated the complicated but accomplished William Gallas.

Many of the plaudits, though, have come as a result of his striker's eye for goal, and that aspect of his game really does deserve the final word here. Bullet headers, crisp volleys from outside the box and left-foot thunderbolts - he's a menace going forward and yet another arrow in Wenger's goalscoring quiver. Vermaelen seems as comfortable outside the box as he is in it.

*So far, it's safe to say Vermaelen has been money well spent.*

---

# 1971 And All That

---

*Younger fans will remember The Invincibles clinching the league at White Hart Lane, but they weren't the first. Goonerholic of Goonerholic.com elaborates on his favourite derby...*

---

There are not many advantages to reaching, or even passing, the age of fifty, but Arsenal supporters of that vintage were blessed to witness several unforgettable events. Those of us who had grown up in the shadow of the neighbours in the sixties experienced an unbelievable night in May 1970, when the European Fairs Cup was clinched on an emotional and dramatic evening at Highbury, and celebrated with a good-natured pitch invasion. Little did we know that just a year later we would witness even more euphoria at the other end of the Seven Sisters Road.

As the 1970-71 season unfolded it was clear that Arsenal were the only real challengers to Leeds United. Fate decreed that the final match saw the title contenders and FA Cup Finalists away to the neighbours who had claimed the first double of modern times just ten years earlier.

Young fans don't believe me that whilst reserved seats were sold in advance, unreserved seats and terrace spaces were available first come, first served. It was pretty obvious there would be a lockout so it was no surprise when we arrived between three and four in the afternoon (for a 7.30pm kick-off) that we were already at the back of a very long queue. Behind us thousands were still arriving, and continued to do so. The High Road came to a virtual standstill.

Around seven, or thereabouts, my world caved in. Following the opening of the gates we had shuffled along, getting ever closer to the clicking turnstiles and the biggest North London derby ever. Three people from our target the doors were shut

in our face. White Hart Lane was full. Estimates of the number locked out that night vary wildly from fifty thousand to a quarter of a million. It's a fair bet that there were more outside than in.

The old man tried to console me: "Come on son, we'll go around the other side and find a pub with a radio." That's the other thing alien to the younger Gooners today. There was no television coverage of the title decider, just news cameras. Then came a moment so unreal, yet so vivid, I will never forget it. As we walked around the back of the shelf there was one turnstile open, and nobody, but nobody was trying to use it. A note of some persuasion, rather large I suspect, was pulled from the old chap's pocket and thrust at the bloke on the gate. Seconds later we were in, and climbing the stairs to squeeze into a space that didn't really exist at the back of the shelf.

Although surrounded by Tottenham supporters we were not far from friendly voices. It was evident that the majority of the 51,192 lucky souls inside were of a red persuasion, having come to witness the landing of the title on enemy territory. That would be easier said than done.

The game was played at a frantic pace. Spurs were determined not to lie down without a fight, literally at times. A favourite tactic of theirs was to launch a high ball into the box and get Alan Gilzean to clatter into Bob Wilson in the Arsenal goal. In fairness Arsenal had a side that was well versed in the sort of physical battle that was developing, and the visitors gave as good as they got.

The complexities of goal difference, the method used to decide which of two sides level on points would come out on top, meant that a goalless draw would hand the title to Arsenal, but a score draw would gift it to Leeds. We prayed for a win to solve that particular problem.

Three minutes remained when Ray Kennedy climbed above the Tottenham defence to head home George Armstrong's cross. It happened virtually in front of us, and I can still see it with far greater clarity than the faded newsreel of the time. Cue pandemonium, and then a horrible realisation: if Tottenham scored in the last three minutes, the title was gone.

The longest three minutes of my life saw a rearguard action the like of which I don't believe I have ever seen repeated. Tottenham threw the proverbial kitchen sink, and then more, at the Arsenal goal. Bob Wilson was again the target for the most brutal assaults.

Those three minutes seemed much longer than the eighty-seven that had gone before. Then, it was over. I don't remember the Tottenham fans leaving, but they weren't there any more. Everybody was hugging everybody else. There were lots of tears of joy, and then I looked down and there was just a sea of Arsenal supporters celebrating just as they had a year earlier, on the pitch.

Once we reached the car I just wanted to get to school the following day. The Tottenham fans there had the bragging rights for a long time. It was my turn now. Five days later I was at Wembley as we ended their claim to be the only club to land the double in the twentieth century.

I feel extremely privileged to have witnessed that evening. The limited allocation for visiting supporters at both grounds nowadays may not have diminished the rivalry any, but the atmosphere is certainly different. There will never again be a night quite like it!

---

# Arsenal's Comeback Kings

---

*Goodplaya, of goodplaya.com on why Spurs will be hoping to party like it's 1999.*

---

Foreign players and a foreign manager. Paid more in a week than the punters earn in a year. What do they care for the North London Derby?

Well in the Arsenal case, recent history would suggest that players and manager alike understand perfectly well what the fixture means. Avoid defeat today and the noughties will have flown by without Spurs winning a single league encounter. Surely few such close rivals who have spent so long in the same division could have such a lopsided set of results? Certainly City have enjoyed far greater success over United than Spurs against Arsenal. And throughout it all, three players born a long way from N5 have been Spurs' tormentors in chief.

That Thierry Henry was one of them is no surprise: he tormented everyone. In his second derby, played on the day David Rocastle died in March 2001, Robert Pires wore the number 7 shirt, cut in from out wide and scored a classic Rocastle goal. He never stopped scoring against Spurs, netting a remarkable eight in five seasons compared to Henry's five in eight. And finally, Emmanuel Adebayor could be accused of many things, but not turning it on against Spurs was not one of them. His eight goals came in just three and a half years.

But even more telling than the goalscoring records is how in nine of the last 19 games Spurs have taken the lead but never once held it. And on almost every occasion Gooners had Henry, Pires or Adebayor to thank. In 2002 it was Pires equalising a Ziege

free-kick. And then in November 2003, Spurs held a lead deeper into a game against the Invincibles than any other side would during that historic 49 game run. Their 5th minute lead deservedly lasted over an hour until in the 69th minute Pires again ghosted in at the far-post to set up an unlikely 2-1 win. The following May it was actually Spurs who equalised in the 90th minute, but seconds later it was Arsenal who were Champions. We were so perfect in those days that Robbie Keane's late penalty actually took a tiny bit of the shine off the celebration.

Often, Arsenal have played poorly but emerged unscathed. In November 2004 the Invincibles were crumbling and the defending shambolic. A joke of an encounter could have gone either way until 13 minutes after coming on, Pires put Arsenal 5-3 up. We were again terrible at Spurs in October 2005 - Pires saved us again. And how important was Thierry Henry's incredible flick to equalize with just minutes left in the penultimate game at Highbury? Without it, Arsenal would have arrived at the Emirates without Champions League football, which instead would have been being played at the other end of the Seven Sisters Road. Arsenal's record goalscorer's slalom run and finish in the November 2002 game was his most stylish contribution to the fixture, but that 2006 equaliser was both his most crucial and his last. And how fitting that in that move it was Adebayor, in his first derby, who set-up the goal. From then on, Adebayor inherited Henry's mantle in the fixture, responding in consecutive years at the Lane after Spurs had taken the lead.

The 4-4 draw of a year and two days ago will long be remembered for David Bentley's wonder goal and Spurs incredibly snatching a point after trailing 4-2 with a minute to go. But it was also the day when by common consent Arsenal's dressing room imploded, with spats taken onto the pitch and a captain subsequently stripped of his armband after opening his mouth too wide.

Whether the turmoil contributed to the late collapse is hard to say. This Gooner puts it down more to chance: a Gael Clichy slip, a Jermaine Jenas wonder strike and a Luka Modric shot that was either being easily saved or drifting wide until it deflected, spun up off the post and fell perfectly for Aaron Lennon to equalise.

The irony of it all is that despite all the fighting and acrimony, for 75 minutes Arsenal (and Clichy in particular) really were excellent, responding fiercely to Bentley's opener and winning the period between 14 and 89 minutes 4-1, thanks to Silvestre, Gallas, RVP and, of course, Adebayor.

Then again perhaps we should not be so surprised. The history of the past nine years and 51 weeks has taught us that irrespective of other distractions, Arsene Wenger's men have always had a ready response to a Spurs goal. Now though, if Arsenal are to complete a remarkable decade undefeated, for the first time they will have to do it without any of their three saviours in chief.

---

## Greatest Derby Moments

gdwessel: "Winning the league in the Invincibles year, with 5 games to go, and Patrick Vieira stripping down to his Speedos at WHL." | TomMcNally1: "Tony Adams header in Cup Semi Final of 93, awful game but great to beat the filth" | SoulbrotherTwit: "Thierry Henry's solo goal - ran with ball from halfway line, sent defenders to the shops with shimmy, before scoring with left foot." | TwelfthCylon: "Wrighty twisting & turning on the wing. Andy Gray 'He won't get a cross in from there'. Cross goes to DB10, left foot to control, BOOM!" | manziket: "Seeing GG waving the team forwards after we scored to lead 2-1, shouting 'Three! Three!'" | Cloxdale: "Jens Lehmann shoving over Stephen Carr in 2003 without any punishment from the referee." | AhmedGooner: "Super Rob Pires's first goal for us... In front of the North bank." Cut in from the left, then curled it in with his right." | MaJoz: "when a gooner climbed the stand at WHL to tie a scarf around the cockerel's neck." | GeezyPeas: "Celebrating winning the league at the lane 'unbeaten' - Nothing will ever come close to that. Memories."

---



# Thank God He's Ourshavin

*Gilbertosilver of Gunnerblog.com on the Gunner who might have been a Spud.*

August 31st, 2008. Spurs fans sit, eyes glued to Sky Sports News, waiting for the flash of a yellow 'BREAKING NEWS' ticker. Any minute now, they think. Any minute now roaming reporter Bryan Swanson will spot him at an airport, or getting out of a car at White Hart Lane. In the studio, Andy "Four-Phones" Burton will receive a whispered call or a tweeted message from Darren Bent and the news will be confirmed: Zenit St. Petersburg have crumbled. A deal has been agreed. Andrey Arshavin is a Tottenham player.

Of course, as it turned out, he's not. Nor was he and nor will he ever be. Spurs fans with Sky on their telly, laptops on their knees, mobile phones in their pockets and a fleet of carrier pigeons out seeking transfer tidings ought to have spared a moment to remember just how momentarily catastrophic their clubs attempt to lure Europe's most fêted players have proved in the past.

Over the last ten years, Spurs have "almost signed" more players than Harry Redknapp has jowls. Indeed, the likes of Rivaldo, David Beckham and the original (and fatter) Ronaldo have all almost joined Tottenham, only for the squad numbers set aside for them to be filled by the likes of Ricardo Rocha, Kevin Prince Boateng and, intermittently, Pascal Chimbonda. Spurs have aimed for the stars and, for the most part, barely struck the weathervane emblematised on their crest.

Following his spell-binding displays at Euro 2008, Arshavin was undoubtedly a star. After missing the first two games of the tournament through suspension, Arshavin catapulted himself into international renown with an electrifying performance against Sweden. A career spent entirely in the Russian Premier League had done more than his pint-sized figure to disguise his talent, but on the grand stage of the European Championships, the spotlight was reserved for Arshavin. That one match demonstrated the number ten's quick feet, quicker brain and limitless guile. Football purists purred; football managers pined. Though Russia would eventually falter to future Champions Spain, Arshavin's fate was sealed: the big leagues waited.

Most sizeable clubs in Europe found themselves being linked with the diminutive playmaker. Arshavin's insidious agent, Dennis Lachter (a man who enhances his pseudo-supervillain credentials

by insisting on referring to himself in the third person), would drop the press the name of a major European club, and the journalists had the simple job of post-rationalising the rumour. Barcelona? Arshavin's boyhood club. Chelsea? Abramovich seeking to sign Putin's professed favourite player. Tottenham? Now that was trickier.

Why would Arshavin, whose stock was higher than ever, move to a club who offered neither Champions League football nor a realistic chance of competing for the top domestic honours? Spurs, in spite of past travails when courting football's elite, were undaunted.

With Berbatov and Keane set to switch to United and Liverpool as part of some kind of evil exchange programme, Tottenham needed a signing to pacify their fans and galvanize the team. Sporting Director Damien Comolli identified Arshavin as the man, and negotiations were opened.

As Arsenal would find out several months later, negotiating with Zenit and Lachter is no easy task, and so it was no surprise when, at the last minute, Spurs' pursuit of Arshavin collapsed. When January came around, Arsenal needed an injection of quality and Arshavin duly obliged. Whilst he verbally indicated his interest in joining Tottenham, he didn't offer to cut his pay by half, as he did when Arsenal came calling. He didn't commandeer a private jet to fly himself from a Middle Eastern training camp to Hertfordshire to force through a deal, as he did when Arsenal came calling. Arshavin might have consented to join Tottenham, but he was patently determined to be a Gunner.

August 31st, 2008 was a dark day for Tottenham Hotspur. I doubt there's much that can top the disappointment of missing out on signing a player of Arshavin's exceptional quality, but Spurs managed it: they sold their best player, Dimitar Berbatov, and got Frazier Campbell instead. For Arsenal, it was a day that gave us an opportunity to swoop for one of the world's brightest talents. As ever, we succeeded where Tottenham failed, and the Emirates is now graced by the Russian magician on a weekly basis. Since arriving in England, Arshavin has shown an aptitude for big occasions, scoring spectacular goals against the likes of Liverpool, United and Celtic. If he replicates that feat in his first North London Derby, it'll be all the more painful for the club who "almost" signed him.

## "If you're not critical of your club then you're either a wafting fair- weather foo-foo or a complete mashugana"



*Paul Kaye, lifelong Arsenal fan and the man behind celebrated comic creations like Dennis Pennis, presents new Arsenal film The Gooner Review 08-09.*

The film documents a fan's journey through the occasional highs and many lows of last year's campaign, featuring interviews with Nick Hornby, Bob Wilson, Perry Groves, Joe and Clive Swift, Peter Marinello, Tom Watt, Judge Jules and many others. 100% of the proceeds from the film go to Bob Wilson's Willow Foundation.

Two Halves spoke to Paul about the film, his club, and Thomas "The Verminator" Vermaelen.

**So you're presenting a new film about Arsenal?**

Yeah, it's a bit of a warts and all end of season DVD which dwells extensively on all the things that the Official Club DVD pretends didn't happen. It's a healthy dose of honesty; I'm a great believer in moaning generally and all the proceeds go to the Willow Foundation.

**How did you get involved?**

Do you want the real answer or a made up one? The real one? They rang me up and I said, "yes". You went for the dull option there.

**Can you be critical of a club you love?**

Without doubt, if you're not critical of your club then you're either a wafting fair-weather foo-foo or a complete mashugana.

**What went wrong for Arsenal last year?**

The main problem was that we couldn't hit a bloody Adabamdoor. Adabayor always had a bad attitude in my opinion and he was never treated as badly by the Arsenal fans as he likes to make out. His Ashley Cole-style protestations are a poor defence for his actions the other week. I mean if you can't be arsed to get onside during a Champions League semi-final then when can you be? We're infinitely better equipped to win the league without him.

**Things seem to be going well for Arsenal this year. How do you rate their prospects?**

It's all about Thomas Vermaelen. The Verminator. He's the Vidic 3000 Upgrade (as dubbed by my son). I've got a little feeling that things are finally 'purring' the way Wenger imagined they would one day. The other good thing is that traditionally when we've been the victims of a witch-hunt (like the one we were recently with Eduardo), we go on to win the League.

**What would Mike Strutter say about Premiership footballers' clean-living lifestyles?**

Mike wouldn't say nothin'. He's not gonna go round bad mouthing the very people he supplies most of his hookers and coke to on any given weekend.

**Would you ever reincarnate Dennis Pennis?**

Maybe tonight - for Halloween.

To purchase The Gooner Review 08-09 or for more information visit [www.thegoonerreview.com](http://www.thegoonerreview.com)

# Arsenal's Spinal Frailties

*Symptoms: Disgruntled fans; lack of trophies. E. Fyle provides the team with a diagnosis.*

Vast amounts have been written on the present state of the Arsenal, principally in august publications like the Sun, the Daily Star, the News of The World and Daily Fail. Whatever you're reading, the chances are that you have become bored of reading the repetitive obituaries about the impending death of this football club.

*It's drivell:* the current Arsenal side is an excellent team, it really is. The endless predictions about Arsenal dropping out of the top four have been made before and whilst the club should never make the mistake of being complacent enough to think that Champions League qualification is a certainty (especially with Al-City around), the class of this Arsenal team should not be so rashly dismissed. In players like Arshavin, Fabregas, Vermaelen and Van Persie Arsenal have the requisite quality to triumph.

The critics point to Arsenal's tangible lack of on-field success since 2004. The 2005 FA Cup is of course not forgotten, but is seen as fortuitous by most neutrals – and many Arsenal fans. So just where are the problems in this current Arsenal team beyond the rehashed, hackneyed media clichés? Whilst the modern football arena demands squad depth (see Chelsea's success under Mourinho) to cater for injuries and fatigue, the fulcrum of every successful team is the spine. When Arsenal last won the league, the team had a core consisting of Lehmann, Campbell, Vieira and Henry – how do the current lot compare?

## GOALKEEPER

Ever since Jens Lehmann lost the keys to the asylum, Arsenal have been in need of a top-class shot-stopper. Every successful Arsenal team has had one: Seaman, Lehmann and going even further back Pat Jennings. I have never been fully convinced by Manuel Almunia, and my doubts only deepen when looking at the Spaniard's sparse trophy cabinet. Almunia tends to veer between doing decently in matches where Arsenal are coasting and becoming totally erratic whenever the big occasion comes along. The one impressive performance in a big game that one would recall would be the Champions League semi-final at Old Trafford – and yet Arsenal lost that match.

Young Vito Mannone has come in for a spell this season and looks excellent, seeming to learn from his mistakes far quicker

than the more senior Almunia. However, it would be both unfair and unwise to put the burden of the Number 1 shirt on the shoulders of a young man who was not so long ago being asked to keep out reserve-team level footballers (ie. David Bentley).

*Remember:* no team since the Premier League's inception has won the title with a non-international goalie - even Tim Flowers of Blackburn was capped by England.

## DEFENSIVE MIDFIELD

Arsenal's new 4-3-3 formation is absolutely dependent on a destructive and efficient defensive midfielder. The current incumbent of that role, Alexandre Song, has improved immensely from his shaky beginnings. However, Song is missing a vital ingredient of any reputable holding midfielder: discipline. He appears far too willing to swarm forward and on occasion lacks recovery pace. His failure to assert aerial dominance also prevents him winning second balls in the manner of a Vieira.

Furthermore, Song will be absent in January as part of Cameroon's African Cup of Nations campaign, and as yet there is no adequate replacement. Perhaps fans can derive reassurance from the fact that Song's departure coincides with the opening of the transfer window.

## STRIKER

The continued selection of Robin Van Persie himself is not in dispute: he is a magnificently talented player and one of the few team members always prepared to fight for the cause. What is debated among Arsenal fans is whether or not he ought to be playing up-front alone as a traditional number nine. Wenger claims that he plays Van Persie there because of his excellent first touch – one of the Dutchman's undeniable qualities. However, playing the system that Arsenal play, I believe a number nine who has the pace to spring an off-side trap and make diagonal runs right across the line would greatly improve the attacking threat of this Arsenal team.

Arsenal's previous title-winning sides featured Ian Wright and Thierry Henry as the two main attackers. Strikers such as those gave the attacking team an instant advantage: opposing defences were too scared to play a high line because they knew Henry or Wright would sooner or later be in behind them. However, if they defended deep then they left themselves open to being pinned back inside their area and being killed by a predatory finish.

With Arsenal already in possession of a world-class creative talent in Cesc Fabregas, the addition of a striker who could get in behind a defence would give this Arsenal side an added dimension.

Whilst it may sound as if Arsenal have a mountain of issues unresolved, I maintain that the current Arsenal team is wonderfully talented and, perhaps with a couple of additions, is definitely capable of making the steps required to win that elusive league title in May. Much will be dependent on injuries. The last time Arsenal had an injury-free season was in 2004. The result? The Invincibles.

The tragedy of The Invincibles is that they never went on to establish a dynasty. Additions in the core areas outlined above, combined with the undoubted potential of the rest of the squad, would provide a spine for sustained future success.

# Traitor?

*Arseblog columnist Barking is hoping Tottenham's Diamond Lights sparkle again.*

Back in the eighties, it wasn't just the fact we were neighbours that lent such emotional weight to our meetings with Spurs - it was the simple fact that they were a very good team. We, however, well... let's put it like this: we're talking about the Graham Taylor years. We're talking about football through the air. If you played along the ground you were violating some unwritten law. Tottenham, West Ham, QPR (yes, QPR), Liverpool – they played along the ground, mostly. But we really didn't. While I could never bring myself to appreciate Liverpool, I couldn't help but grudgingly admire QPR, the Hammers and, most remarkably of all, Spurs. I know, I know: a traitor. But, really, they played good football. I thought the Spurs team that soon came together under Pleat was one of the best club sides I'd ever seen play. Hoddle, the Allens, Waddle. Amazing talent. Underachievers? Maybe. But they sure were impressive on the field of play. I'd never have admitted so at the time. Only years later when I watched Hoddle at Monaco and (the seemingly unfit and tubby) Waddle at Marseille could I admit my admiration of them. The continental game suited them both. Would've probably suited our own Charlie Nicholas, too. But he didn't join forces with a teammate to croon an appalling duet so he was just packed off to the Highlands.

I can only imagine that Diamond Lights is the reason Glen and Chris were deported. I feel bad bringing it up. I've no doubt a gaggle of Spurs fans might dredge up some equally embarrassing exploit by an Arsenal player – but for the life of me I can't think of anything to compare. The thing is, I've noticed that whenever I now hear a song from the good ol', bad ol' 80's, I find myself enjoying even the most repugnant tunes - songs the like of which would have left me in a real quandary if offered as the only alternative to disembowelment. The god awful Culture Club, the ridiculous A-Ha, the not-really-as-attractive-as-we-wanted-to-think-they-were Bananarama. I hear their songs now and I smile. Is it just nostalgia? Probably, but then there's Diamond Lights. And that still just makes me retch. So Waddle and Hoddle were packed off to sunnier shores. They were better off away from England. All really talented footballers were then. How times change.

I don't know if Happy Harry is the man to make Tottenham a great footballing team again. I can't say I hope they'll scale those heights, but only because I'm selfish and the fewer teams out there who can cause us problems, the better time of it we'll have. But that's the fan of a team talking. The fan of the game wants to see good football, not just wins. The fan of the game wants to see another great Tottenham team arise; wants to see a team of slick passing and clever running. A team like that which I should've hated but couldn't help but admire. Today will be a good indicator as to how likely that is.

# Halloween Headlines

by *Barking.*

You can already hear the cogs clicking from the bars and dives of Fleet Street as assembled hacks devise ever more ingenious, poetic and downright post-modern headlines ahead of schedule thanks to the inspiration of a pint or two of bitter (*Times*), lager (*Sun, et al*), stout (*Guardian*), and Stoli (*Independent*):

*“Horrorshow!”*; perhaps with a photo of Fabregas mocked up with eyeliner, a bowler, and wielding a football boot as if a stiletto.

*“Harry's Rotters are a Chamber of Horrors!”*; the Spurs team photo doctored (lightly as it turns out) to make them all look like waxworks.

*“Foreign Frighteners!”*; with a pair of horns superimposed onto Arsene's forehead and a byline lamenting cultural diversity.

*“The Day Before: Beatific Visions in Red and White”*, with halos in the style of Russian icons singling out our numerous scorers. Or even, God forbid:

*“Mask of the Red Death!”*, with Arsene's pained expression, captured at the instant we concede a last minute equaliser, occupying pride of place across the back pages.



---

# “I want to find a player that can go to London and make a difference in the first team”

---



*It would be easy for Danny Karbassiyoony to be bitter, having been robbed of a promising playing career by a succession of knee problems at the age of just 22. Two years on, **Two Halves** finds that Danny has not only found a philosophical perspective on his premature retirement from playing, but is forging a new career as the club's North American scout.*

---

*When Danny Karbassiyoony signed for Arsenal in July 2003, he was billed as a highly rated American forward of Iranian/Italian parentage. During his time at the club, his versatility was put to good use as he converted to left-back, making several appearances in the Carling Cup, including scoring an absolute pearl against Man City on his debut.*

#### **How exactly did your move to Arsenal come about?**

I was initially spotted at a college recruiting camp in the States in the summer of 2002. My main goal was to get a scholarship to a top university in the country but I ended up playing quite well and winning the Golden Boot at the end of the week. A day after the camp ended, I received a call from Chief Scout Steve Rowley inviting me on a two-week trial, after which I went back in December for another week. The Club let me finish my final year in high school and I came back over for preseason in July of 2003.

#### **Who did you mix with in those early days?**

Seb Larsson, Mortiz Volz, Ingi Hojsted and I were always together at the beginning. We probably spent more time in the Enfield Nando's than we did at our apartments. During my second stint on trial, I'd stayed with Noreen Davies, one of the landladies that provides digs for players. Cesc and Philippe lived with her at the beginning of their Arsenal days, so I naturally became good friends with them as my first year got underway.

#### **Why the switch from striker to left-back?**

It came right out of the blue. That said, I was so far back in the pecking order as a striker that I didn't really even consider myself in the pecking order at all. Thierry and Dennis were starting most if not all the matches, and with the arrivals of Jose Reyes and Robin van Persie, I knew I wouldn't get to see much action as a striker. Several months before the end of my first season, Nicky Nicolau went on loan, which opened up a spot at left back in the reserves. I trained for about three days there before our match against Watford. I'd never really played a defensive position in my life, and I was all over the place. I played 90 minutes that Monday though and from there I went on to secure the starting role the following season.

#### **Like a lot of youngsters, your first team experiences came in the Carling Cup. Looking back, how valuable were those games?**

It was fantastic for me. When I first came to London, I had the motivation and desire to knock Thierry off his pedestal - that's the kind of belief you need to make it a club like Arsenal. After a season there, I realised it was going to be much tougher than I had ever expected. My goals shifted a bit and I knew I'd be lucky even to represent the first team at any level. I played in three matches for the team, first against City where I scored, then at home against Everton where I started and played a full 90, and finally against United at Old Trafford where I came on for 15 minutes at the end. They were all wonderful experiences for unique reasons.

#### **Presumably your goal against City was a real highlight?**

That goal was obviously the greatest moment of my time in England. I was happy just to have a jersey that said my name on it when I walked into the dressing room. When Pat Rice called my name in the second half while I was warming up, I was happy to know that I was actually going to make my debut and not just sit on the bench. When I scored the goal, it was like the sweetest of icings on the cake. Knowing I had the Boss's confidence, however, was almost just as sweet.

*Whilst the switch to left-back had granted Danny the chance to impress on big stages like Old Trafford, with Ashley Cole and Gael Clichy ahead of him his opportunities were always limited. He went out on loan to Ipswich where he proved a significant success, before eventually signing for Burnley in June 2005.*

*The switch from Champions League to Championship proved difficult, both on and off the pitch. Whilst the team's direct style was less suited to Danny's technical game, he also found himself outside of the cultural hub that London had provided "A lot of people asked me whether it was harder moving from Roanoke to London or from London to Burnley", says Danny, only half-joking.*

*It was while at Burnley that a spate of knee problems struck, and Danny returned to the US to attempt to recover. However, the knee injury simply worsened, and subsequently, at the age of just 22, Danny found himself forced to retire.*

#### **Do you mind explaining the nature of your knee injury?**

I'd experienced knee problems in my teens but had them sorted by the time I signed for Arsenal. In my last game for the Reserves, I was tackled awkwardly and tore my cartilage again. I had surgery and rehabbed all summer before eventually signing with Burnley. I was kind of rushed back into preseason and knew for a fact I wasn't ready. In my second preseason there, my knee reacted to a long run we had to do through the woods and on the road. I knew my knees weren't the best and wasn't really pleased with having to run on anything but grass. The doctor told me to take six weeks off, and I decided I'd rather do that at home with my family than on my own in Lancashire. I negotiated out of my deal went home with the goal to get fit again and rekindle my career in the MLS.

*After rehabbing for almost five months, seeing three specialists in Miami, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., I decided that I was better off hanging up my boots. My bones were rubbing in my right knee where my cartilage had once been, and if I had decided to keep playing it could have put me through a lot more pain than I was already experiencing.*

#### **It must have been such a blow to retire – how did you keep your spirits up?**

My close friends and family will probably be the only people to really know just how upset I was and how upset I still am at times not to be able to play soccer anymore. When I came home and decided that it was over, I really had no idea what I was going to do: I'd spent my entire life playing soccer. I basically stopped watching the game altogether because it upset me too much. My friends laugh because in order to keep my spirits up I basically went to visit all of them at their colleges for six months. It was

nice getting to see my friends and family more often, and I relied on them a lot to keep my mind off everything.

I was surprised by the reaction I received when people found out I had stopped playing. The staff and fans from Arsenal, Ipswich Town, and Burnley all sent me messages in the mail and Facebook as well. It was incredible receiving messages from people who remembered certain games I played in better than I did. They'll probably never know how much those letters meant to me at that time.

*After returning to the States, Danny kept in contact with Steve Rowley – the man who had originally brought him to Arsenal. When Rowley heard that he'd had been forced to retire, he looked into the possibility of assigning Danny to a coaching role in America. When that fell through, Danny started the process of applying to university – until Rowley called again offering him a job as Arsenal's North American Scout.*

#### **How does scouting match up to your playing days?**

I can't help but think I have one of the greatest jobs in the world when I'm sitting in a packed stadium watching football for a living. It's also an honour to represent the greatest football club in the world in the world's fastest growing football market. I'd obviously rather still be playing, but I'm happy to be helping Arsenal in other ways now.

#### **How do you feel about young players now? Envious? Do you think they appreciate how lucky they are?**

You know at times I get a bit envious of the young players now but only because I know how great it was being a young professional especially at a club like Arsenal. It's such an exciting time for a young player when they start to play in the reserves and flirt with first team appearances. The work is just beginning at that age, and the reason so few survive is because only a handful understand that. I wish I could say they do appreciate how lucky they are, but I don't think you can really appreciate anything fully until you are completely removed from it.

#### **What are your ambitions for the future?**

When asked this question these days, I have to answer in two parts. First of all, I'd like to find a player that can get over to London and make a difference in the first team at some point. I'm also interested in improving the standard here and educating the general soccer population about what it takes to make it in England and what it means to be a professional footballer. I'm currently writing a book that I hope helps explain all that a little.

From the point of my knee, I'd like to eventually start to run and be able to kick a ball again without having to worry about swelling, pain, and scalpels. I haven't been able to run properly or kick a ball about for three years now. I'm in a constant battle with my knee but I'm hoping my most recent surgery that I had a year and a half ago will set me up nicely for the future. *Now away from the pitch, Danny is still making goals. Considering the strength he's shown in bouncing back from the end of his playing career, you wouldn't count against him achieving them.*

# Little Liam

By *Arseblogger of arseblog.com*

Little Liam was unsure what he should make of the new arrival at first. He was used to being the one and only, the centre of attention. Now this new thing was in the house. Small, pink, loud and boy did it smell weird.

His four year old mind made sense of the words his parents spoke to him.

“This is your little brother”, said his Dad.

“Say hello”, said his Mum.

Little Liam eyed the small, swaddled creature with suspicion but muttered something of a greeting.

“Where is he going live?”, he asked.

“He’s going to live with us here. And you two are going to be friends. Best friends”, said Dad.

“How do you know?”

“You know the way I knew what Santa wanted to eat when he came to visit last Christmas?”

“Yeah”, said Little Liam.

“And you know the way I knew when you asked me about the telly?”

Little Liam remembered the explanation. That all the people lived inside a special world inside the TV and when he switched it on they came to life just to entertain him. Especially him. Except cartoons. They weren’t alive but they stole the voices from people who were sent to prison as punishment.

“Yeah”, he said.

“There are some things that Dads just know and this is one of those things. I promise. He’s going to be your best friend”.

Little Liam looked at his mother for reassurance. She smiled and when his Mum smiled at him he knew that everything was ok and everything his Dad said would be true. And it was. Little Liam and the small creature grew up together, played together, walked to school together, looked out for each other. Once, while in the playground, Little Liam was at the top of a slide waiting patiently for another child to get out of the way before he made his descent. Behind him, a less patient bully. The bully pushed Little Liam who slid down, crashed into the other child still playing at bottom. There was pain. There were scuffed palms and knees and tears.

Triumphant the bully sat atop the slide resplendent beaming in

So he did. He tried not to fight him if he could. Tried to be understanding. Looked after him at school. And when they played football in the back garden he gave him a 49 goal head-start in their games up to 50. Little Liam liked to commentate to himself when he played.

“Arsenal kick off. And it’s Brady, look at him, he’s so tired, his socks are around his ankles, even though he’s got the coolest name ever and anyone called Liam is going to play for Arsenal one day. He gives it to Rix on the left hand side. The United players are trying to get across to him. He keeps going. Crosses it. Is it too high? It looks like it might be. But wait. No! It’s not. It’s Sunderland. Sunderland at the back post and he scoooooores. It’s a gooooooooooooooooooalllllll! Arsenal win the cup in the very last minute. Can you believe it?

Right, that’s 49-1. You kick off”.

Every game finished 50-49 but they both loved them. Mum’s plants didn’t but what price to her a Clematis or a rhododendron when both her boys played together with such fondness, such love?

Little Liam joined a team, all his goalscoring in the back garden translated itself to the park where he and 19 other outfield players would all charge around after the ball. Positional discipline would come later. Dad always took him to the games, shouting encouragement from the side of the pitch. Sometimes they’d stop off on the way home and get a burger or an ice-cream.

One Saturday when he was scoring a hat-trick, because the coach had told him he’d give him 20p if he did, Mum took the small creature out to buy his first football shirt. After the game Dad took Little Liam to visit his uncle who gave him a pound when he heard of his goalscoring exploits. Little Liam had it worked out already. £1.20 would buy him Roy of the Rovers and at least four packs of Panini stickers with enough left over for a Texan and packet of Smiths crisps with the packet of salt in them. The only club badge he had left to get was QPR. He wasn’t bothered at all about QPR but the club badges were on lovely silver stickers.

After pleading to visit the ‘comic shop’ he opened the packets in the car.

“Yes!”, he exclaimed as the blue and white badge appeared in the third packet. The album would be complete and a completed album in the playground was an awesome thing. He could then do swaps to make sure he had extra Arsenal players. His Raphael Meade was bit scruffy, he could stick a new one over it. This was a good day. He scored goals for his team, got money, got his stickers, he couldn’t wait to tell Mum.

He ran into the house, barely able to contain his glee.

Of course it couldn’t.

Lying awake, wondering what life would be like if the crest on your shirt held a cannon and not a cockerel, ask yourselves this: Could I convince myself that there’s no way he dived? That it really wasn’t a stamp? That of course it wasn’t offside? Could I really be so deluded as to buy into all those lies? Could I really stand proud playing in the park, walking down the street or more importantly looking at myself in the mirror draped in the same strip shared by such honest ‘ambassadors’ of the game as the likes of Pires, Eduardo and Bergkamp? Could my heart really ever be anything but lilypwhite?

What about all of the great moments over the years? Who could forget Gazza’s semi-final free-kick, the late equalisers from Jenas, Poyet and Keane, or the superb 5-1 League Cup thrashing? Would the quality of those joyous moments not be diminished by quantity?



# The Choice

Rob Parker of Spurscommunity.co.uk is attempting to avert an identity crisis.

Red or white? It's a simple choice but one that's caused many a grown man to wake up in a cold sweat, wondering: What if? What if I'd got it wrong? What if I'd chosen them instead?

On the face of it, surely life would just be, well, easier. Let's not lie, the Spurs road isn't exactly the easiest one to travel, and sometimes you find yourself wondering whether it's all really worth it. Whilst the highs often feel higher on this side of the Seven Sisters Road, it's only because of the frequency of the lows. The last decade or so has seen us jumping out of frying pans and into fires with disturbing regularity. Supporting Spurs is laden with so many pitfalls that it does beg the question: could you really change your white blood for red?

It's a complicated rivalry. Some compare it to siblings who compete against each other for success - and both sides have certainly had their share of that over the years. Others would suggest it's down to envy on our part due to being over-shadowed in recent years by our red-shirted neighbours. However, at its very core, it's a rivalry based on them being dirty, lying, arrogant cheats.

Ever since they upped sticks from their south-east London home, travelled north and eventually bribed their way into the First Division at our expense, those ex-Woolwich Wanderers have held a special place in the minds of Spurs fans as 'The Enemy'. Looking at the history of their deceit in the game, surely I could never feel the same passion for a club lacking in such class and integrity?

Many families know the divide that can be created when the wrong choice is made: it can be father against son - or indeed brother against brother. And just as in arguments with your brother, you search for something, anything that gives you the upper-hand. Adams in rehab? Awesome. Merson bankrupt? Terrific. Thierry Henry shows himself to be a flat-track bully? Fantastic. Nayim from the half-way line.. Ah, Nayim from the half-way line. It doesn't get much better than that. Sadly.

All of the above are incidents where Arsenal have come a cropper, rather than Spurs standing independently triumphant. Of late, success hasn't been easy to come by for Tottenham. Could you ever jump ship just to experience a little of the Champions League high life?

It is a dirty thought but inescapable. And when you look at the recent history of our clubs, surely it's a no-brainer: it would have been easier if you'd been born on that side of the fence. All the heartache, stress and false-dawns would just disappear in the blink of an eye.

*Get a hold of yourself. Keep reading.*

What about all of the great moments over the years? Who could



*"Because I'm supposed to".*

Little Liam thought about his answer for a moment, then spoke.

*"You... you ...",* he said to his brother. *"I ... I ... hate you".*

Crestfallen the small creature could only ask *"Why?"* as the tears began to run down his cheeks. His life shattered by the cruel words of his hero.

He didn't answer. He stood, mouth still open at what he was looking at. Life had betrayed him. It felt merciless. This was the worst day of his short life.

*"You... you ...",* he said to his brother. *"I ... I ... hate you".*

Crestfallen the small creature could only ask *"Why?"* as the tears began to run down his cheeks. His life shattered by the cruel words of his hero.

He didn't answer. He stood, mouth still open at what he was looking at. Life had betrayed him. It felt merciless. This was the worst day of his short life.

*"You... you ...",* he said to his brother. *"I ... I ... hate you".*

Crestfallen the small creature could only ask *"Why?"* as the tears began to run down his cheeks. His life shattered by the cruel words of his hero.

*"Yes. His hero. You should behave like one".*

*"His hero?",* said Little Liam, now placated & not half impressed.

*"You have to remember something",* she said. *"He is your little brother. That means he looks up to you. You can do no wrong. You're his hero".*

*"Why not?",* said Little Liam, indignant. *"He started it".*

*"You shouldn't do that to your little brother",* said Mum.

After a typical young boys' scrap in the back garden Little Liam had won the day, his strength, an eight year old far too powerful for the four year old who had tried valiantly all the same.

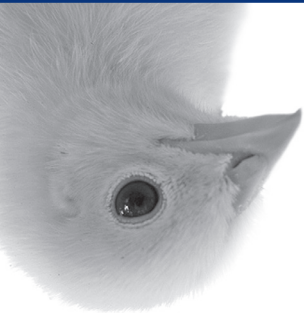
A teacher would never let anyone hurt his best friend.

Triumphant, the bully sat at the top of the slide, resplendent, basking in his power. He had won. He had pushed himself off, hurtling downwards, hurtling at speed, hurtling with his hair back, hurtling directly into the fist of the small creature, now three, who stood with his arm extended to repay the boy who had hurt his brother.

So as we go forth, as we cross the divide, Let us recapture our North London Pride. | From 'North London Pride' by BringBackLe\_Gin

# Derby Stars of the Future

Chris Miller of WindyCOYS.blogspot.com identifies four youngsters eager to earn their Spurs.



**Ryan Mason**  
*Age: 18*  
*Position: Attacking Midfielder / Second Striker*

Spurs fans have already seen a glimpse of Ryan, currently on loan at Yeovil, against NEC Nijmegen last year. That appearance was his reward for having scored 29 goals in 31 appearances for the U18s, playing mainly in a free role just behind Jon Obika in Alex Inglethorpe's side. He also made five appearances for the reserves, scoring three times.

An elegant, technically-gifted player, Mason has impressed in his eight games for Yeovil despite playing deeper than usual in the middle of midfield. He takes all of their set pieces, and has already netted two special goals. He's learnt a lot about the hustle and bustle of league football and the move will no doubt stand him in good stead for the rigours of the Premier League.

**Steven Caulker**

*Age: 17*  
*Position: Central Defender*

Steven Caulker, also on loan at Yeovil, is a central defender with all the raw materials that he needs to move up to top flight football. Tall, strong, and quick (Steven was borough champion at 400m for four years in a row), he also has impressive footballing ability for a centre-back.

On his league debut for Yeovil he won the Man of the Match award but, at just 17, he wasn't allowed to collect the bottle of bubbly! He has since become a mainstay of the Glouvers' defence, and their fans generally seem hugely impressed by his contribution.

**Paul-José M'Poku**

*Age: 17*  
*Position: Attacking Midfielder*

After impressing Juande Ramos on trial, Spurs signed Belgian

U17 international Paul from Standard Liege, fighting off reported interest from Man Utd and Chelsea.

Having mainly played on the right of midfield in his first full season with the Academy, M'Poku has excelled since moving into the centre this year. He managed five goals in his first six games of the season from midfield, including a stunning hat-trick against West Ham U18s.

An unorthodox player, he mixes powerful running with a good range of passing, aerial ability, a bag of tricks that David Ginola would have been proud of and, arguably most impressively, he's added defensive awareness to his game this season. A loan spell awaits.

**Harry Kane**

*Age: 16*  
*Position: Attacking midfielder / Second Striker*

Captain of the U18s despite being one of the youngest players in the squad, Kane is an adaptable footballer who now tends to play an attacking midfield role, having initially begun as a forward. He first came to prominence as an U16 player, travelling to Mexico for the Copa Chivas tournament, and scoring three times.

A good passer of the ball and keen to shoot from range, Harry is an effective player just outside the box, but is useful in the air too. He has a goalscoring knack that will be priceless this season - Kudus Oyenuga tends to play up front alone and therefore goals from midfield are absolutely vital.

Alex Inglethorpe's U18 team play some fantastic football, and are well worth watching. They play their home games at Spurs Lodge in Chigwell on Saturday mornings (generally an 11am kick off time).

Robert 'Sammy' Samuelson on why Spurs must be more than just a finishing school.

# Tottenham Hotspur's Schoolboys: Cause For Concern?

Given the injuries he's suffered in his career, every time Ledley King graces the pitch for Spurs it is a minor miracle. This wonder is well documented. Less so is the fact that Ledley King represents a rare success story in an otherwise torrid few decades for Tottenham's youth development team. His appearances in a lily-white shirt should be applauded not just for their feats of defiance in the face of consistently opposing medical opinion, but because the man in the number 26 shirt is that rarest of Tottenham commodities: a Spurs schoolboy now gracing the First Team.

How many current players came through our youth system from schoolboys to professionals and then made a name for themselves? The only one is Ledley King. Even Jamie O'Hara, oddly on loan in Portsmouth, was snatched from Arsenal after they had done the hard work and trained him all the way from school to the age of 18. Look back over previous seasons, and our youngsters have either proved to be way below Premiership standard (Rohan Ricketts, Alton Thelwell, Johnnie Jackson – all introduced under Glenn Hoddle), or were bought in their late teens for a transfer fee (Jonathan Blondel or, more recently, John Bostock).

It is all too apparent that successive Chairmen at White Hart Lane have prioritised exorbitant transfer policy above investing in the academy. In many ways this is understandable: we've had so many managers in the past 15 years, and each one has wanted to make his mark with new signings. Contrary to popular belief, not all of these signings have been disasters. Many advocate Martin Jol's strategy, whereby Spurs bought young English players from other clubs and put them into the first team, as being a sound model for future success. Michael Dawson and Aaron Lennon, from Nottingham Forest and Leeds Utd respectively, are cases in point. While this should be applauded (note how many key Jol players are now key Redknapp players), it should not be allowed to detract from the fact that there is no new Ledley King for each new Adel Tarabt or Danny Rose (both

This season, with in-form players like King, Palacios, Lennon, Modric, and Defoe, Tottenham Hotspur have a genuinely good chance to match London rivals Arsenal and Chelsea, and perhaps even enjoy a successful League or FA Cup campaign. There is real talent in our First Team Squad, and a new desire in the players, buoyed by charismatic figureheads like King, Woodgate and Keane. Where we fall consistently short, year on year, is in the amount of young players coming through the ranks. Look at the players Manchester United have produced, from Ryan Giggs to the emerging Danny Welbeck, or the wonderful prospect emanating from Arsenal's academy, and you realise that Spurs have serious problems. Not only does our poor youth system mean we are always spending more capital on players (and real estate) than other clubs of a similar stature and ambition, we are perhaps also lacking a comparable sense of home, of unity and soul, which can only come from players that have grown up with the club. It has surely been, and indeed remains, a vital ingredient in Sir Alex Ferguson's melting pot of achievement. Compare Neville, Scholes, Beckham and Giggs with King and, well, Stephen Carr?

our schoolboy set-up and he needs to do it now.

young players purchased from other clubs for transfers fees, rather than schoolboys brought through the ranks). Signing new players can happen simultaneously with youth development. All the top clubs have grasped this. Why have Spurs had so few success stories?

Our new training centre and stadium will help attract schoolboy footballers to Spurs, but this only goes so far. In the same way that Mr. Levy has trusted Harry Redknapp with player purchases, our Chairman must seek Harry's advice on who to bring in to front our youth team set-up. We need a Trevor Brooking-esque individual with a sound knowledge of the English game, a passion to develop raw talent, and the loyalty to stick around finish a job that may take many years. The last thing Spurs need is an incompetent hanger-on (exhibit A: Damien Comolli), or a money-grabbing deserter (exhibit B: Frank Arnesen).

It is clear, then, that getting the personnel right is even more important than giving our young players a great place to learn their trade. Only then can our youngsters, many of whom, like Jake Livermore and Dean Parrett, have already tasted first team action and look to be decent prospects, enjoy our new facilities and one day achieve the same status as our last great local hero: Ledley King from Edmonton, North London.

Sammy talks Tottenham at [www.twitter.com/ThisIsSammy](http://www.twitter.com/ThisIsSammy)



that can only be described as “girly”. “*FOUR FOUR!!*” he yelled, “FOUR FOUR!!”. And 4-4 it was. Lennon finished clinically with his left foot and a point was ours. I’ll never forget the look on Charlie Nicholson’s face.

The Arsenal game truly was our turning point in what looked like being a disastrous season – and one that might even have ended in the dreaded “r” word. After that midweek Arsenal game, we played Liverpool at home and came from a goal behind to steal all three points with a last minute Pavlyuchenko goal and, despite a little blip in the New Year, we were well and truly on our way to recovery.

Fast forward to the tail-end of last season and who would have thought given our start that we would be challenging for a ‘covered’ Europa League spot. Although ultimately finishing just short of European qualification, our Redknapp roller-coaster had taken us to Wembley again and introduced the hard-hitting Wilson Palacios to complement the delicious wizardry of a confident, settled Modric.

We had regained a Defoe, a Keane and a Chimbonda – and it was most definitely the latter that the crowd were happiest with. We had missed Pascal’s lack of marking at corners, his marauding runs ending in nothing and who could forget all the swearing at the Press? He would fill a necessary void for many years to come, surely.

What a difference a year makes indeed. We preside over 14 more points after eight games than this time last year, and have spent most of the season thus far in the Champions League places. We’re playing a brand of football synonymous with all the great Tottenham teams of yesteryear. Arsenal fans reading this piece may scorn at another “*benused*” Spurs fan preaching ‘the Tottenham Way’, but it’s something we pride ourselves on and it goes some way to explaining why you’ll see plenty of quotes from both Bill Nicholson and Danny Blanchflower plastered over any Spurs publication. We truly do believe those immortal words muttered by the latter:

“*The great fallacy is that the game is first and last about winning. It is nothing of the kind. The game is about glory, it is about doing things in style and with a flourish, about going out and beating the other lot, not waiting for them to die of boredom.*”

If it’s good enough for you Danny, it’s good enough for us.

*Come On You Spurs.*

place since the Glory Hours of Santini’s reign. Instead, he brought in the Quintessential Old School English Manager. And his mates.

So against Bolton, albeit unofficially, Harry Redknapp inherited a Blue and White Army. Thank God for that. We’d been struggling with singing “*Juande Ramos’s’s’s Blue and White Army*” for a year and I know the guys in front of me were getting annoyed with the saliva spray that followed my own attempts. After 90 minutes of Ol’ Twitch’s reign we had already surpassed Ramos’ tally for the season and secured three valuable points, beginning what would turn out to be a tremendous turnaround in our fortunes.

On a barmy North London evening in October 2008, 11 men in white took on 11 men in red somewhere just south of Archway.

The rest of the game need not be mentioned and with true journalistic license I can fast forward to the point at which 4-2 was displayed on the scoreboard and Mr. Gael Clitichy had the ball at his feet. In fact, it turned out that he was so happy that he had the ball at his feet that he immediately dropped to the floor. Many will say this is due to Jenas’s God-like presence. I’m sticking with my version.

So as ‘J’ raced towards the goal, with a figure greater than

90 on the clock, I don’t think anyone in the stadium or watching around the world would have been able to predict what was to follow – J’s hardly the most consistent, after all. As you all now know, Jenas bent the ball brilliantly into the far top corner. At 4-3, that goal looked little more than a consolation. But those 11 players in white shirts had other ideas. Via a combination of Woodgate and Huddlestone, a bouncing ball arrived at Modric’s feet. He smacked the ball goalwards, a slight deflection had it looping in. But, oh no: he’s hit the post! What a goal that would have been! Oh, but there’s Lennon ...

On Sky Sports News, Ed Chamberlain was trying to sum-up the evening’s play when Phil Thompson screamed a scream

*Stoof of spurscommunity.co.uk looks back on a tumultuous twelve months for Tottenham.*

*Let’s go back to a darker time.*

*A time that Juan-de I hope to forget...*

Summer 2008. Whilst Tottenham Hotspur plc were delighted to announce the signings of Luka Modric, David Bentley, Heurelho Gomes, Roman Pavlyuchenko and Vedran Corlika, Tottenham Hotspur fans were devastated by the sales of Robbie Keane and Dimitar Berbatov among others. Another summer of promised continuity gave way to comings and goings galore, and despite strengthening our midfield, the forward line looked considerably weaker.

Early on, we gained a promising point at Chelsea and showed signs of grit and fight, though Spurs fans were well aware of the underlying problems. The next five games yielded just one point, and as we would be reminded throughout the course of the season, we had the grand total of two points from our opening eight Premier League matches.

So Levy reacted. He ditched the player-specific meals (much to Huddlestone’s delight), he got rid of Arsene Wenger’s bespectacled spy, sent Ramos and Poyet packing and with it uprooted the Continental European management structure in

Henry Percy (otherwise known as ‘Harry Hotspur’) acquired a reputation as a warrior supreme. The greatest Hotspur warrior of the modern age, Ledley King, is proving rather more difficult to best - no fatal arrow to the face, just plenty of kicks to the knee. Ledley remains a colossus in defence, always unnerved and influential. He is strong, fast and wonderfully talented. More than all these things, he is loyal - to the bone. Thankfully, there’s no chance of him befalling the same fate as the esteemed Percy. On the field of play the only thing he might get struck by is an opposition elbow or a water bottle. In spite of the relative safety of the football pitch, a disconcerting nod from the club doctor has become an unavoidable hazard in recent years.

He might now be a one game per week player, but such is the quality he possesses it remains worth retaining his services on a full time basis. Round-for-pound, he is arguably one of the very best England has to offer. Some of the more cynical amongst you might even argue that if he didn’t have his knee troubles he’d probably be a Man Utd player. But injury is not the only reason why we have yet to be graced by a Daniel Levy announcement justifying a £30m transfer of King to Old Trafford (along with a generous donation to the Tottenham Foundation). Ledley has remained unquestionably loyal to the core throughout his time at the Lane.

Ledley is a loyal committed servant who gets wrapped up in cotton wool more often than not. A servant who (out of necessity) doesn’t spend much time training, and yet displays effortless class on the pitch with athleticism befitting someone who does train all week long. He’s a millionaire and yet persists in having injections in his knee so he can continue to play the game he so obviously loves. For all we know he could be exacerbating the damage and running the risk of serious problems in later life. And yet his commitment remains unparalleled.

He wears his heart on his sleeve and he positively runs it out for us every time he starts, home or away. He brings stability at the back and although he’s not a shouter, his mere presence inspires his team mates to excel, mainly by virtue of the air of confidence he oozes rubbing off on others around him.

King is deserving of Champions League football and yet has never turned his back on us and much quality that if he had asked his agent to go looking he would not have been short of suitors. Ledley is deservng of a football fan can genuinely respect and admire. And Ledley is someone who is respected and admired by all, regardless of the colour of the scarf. He’s a class act. Plain and simple. Every fan would want a player like King in their team.

Ledley King is not just a warrior. He’s not just a loyal Spurs fan that remains committed to the club and its fans as player and captain. He’s one of us. Tottenham through-and-through. Lilywhite blood. The tenacity of a Mackay or Roberts without the need for bullish growling. Ledley the gentle giant quietly sticks forwards into his back pocket and goes about his business patrolling the backline making sure nobody knocks over the ‘You shall not pass’ sign.

We are stronger when he pulls on the shirt. His composure brings calm to the backbone of the side. He’s no pretender. He’s the real deal. All this with one knee.

Ledley King IS Mr Tottenham Hotspur. The spirit of Harry Hotspur lives on. And long may he dodge that final concluding arrow.

*It is a bizarre situation: going into today’s game, no-one can be sure whether or not Tottenham’s best player will start, let alone make it through the game. Spooky of DearMrLevy.com, however, doesn’t underestimate Ledley King’s importance.*

# Ledley Will Always Be Our King

# Lennon Winning The Race To South Africa

Two Halves's Adam Nathan examines the dilemma Fabio Capello faces in choosing his right winger for next summer.

Theo Walcott's hatrick against Croatia is perhaps the defining moment of Fabio Capello's England tenure. It established the Italian's credentials, bred confidence in the team, and created a young star who ended David Beckham's time as an England starter. One year later, the despondent Croats came to London for the return game, looking to revive the qualifying campaign that Walcott's hammer blow had sent off the rails.

Post-game, 90,000 England fans swarmed out of the stadium and on to Wembley Way. Croatia had been efficiently dispatched, and the supporters' conversation was buzzing with excitement at the performance of the lightning quick young tyro on the right wing.

*And yet Walcott was nowhere to be seen.*

In his place, Aaron Lennon had produced a memorable display of classic, old-fashioned wing play against Croatia's hapless left-back, Daniel Pranjic. Having seemingly blown his England chances after a lackluster, naïve performance against Ukraine in April, our fleet-footed flyer had suddenly shot back into contention for a starting berth in South Africa.

With the World Cup just a matter of months away, Capello now faces a choice between North London's two speediest stars. Lennon and Walcott possess truly blistering pace and are at times simply unstoppable, as the two Croatia games demonstrated.



However, whilst Lennon has managed to combine his speed with control of the ball, it is yet to be seen whether Walcott can do the same. Occasionally he seems to be so fixated with speed that he might just leave the ball behind. Obviously there are exceptions – his celebrated run against Liverpool springs to mind – but if Capello is looking for someone to keep the ball close to their feet draw a defender in and then burst away showing him a clean pair of heels, then Lennon must surely be at the top of the pecking order.

## FINISHING

Whilst many may bemoan Lennon's erratic crossing, one thing that often goes unnoticed about the little man's game is his increasing coolness in front of goal: Aaron is now one of our most reliable players in a one-on-one situation. A classic example of this was his superb brace against Middlesbrough last season; a game in which he provided a magnificent showcase of his pace, touch and ability to remain calm under pressure. Any thought of Walcott in front of goal leads you to immediately cast your mind back to that famous night in Zagreb. Whilst he can occasionally be wasteful in good positions, Walcott's goal against Blackburn this season was another example of his finishing finesse. If either Lennon or Walcott find themselves in a good position in front of goal, you'd expect to see the net bulge – maybe they could do some extra work with Heskey for us!

## FINAL BALL

Whisper this very quietly Spurs fans, but it actually seems like young Aaron has found his final ball after all these years – and what a difference it makes to his game too. With the ability to attack both inside and outside the full-back, he has always been a tricky customer for defenders, but all too often his threat was easily halted as the defender willed him to put crosses in to, invariably, nobody. Well, that seems to have changed for the better: he finally seems to have found his crossing boots, with his dream of a ball to Gerrard for England's second goal against Croatia earning him praise from fans and pundits alike. On the other side of North London, Walcott still seems to be struggling in this area, and too often appears to either put the ball in to a potentially dangerous but all-too-often deserted area. Unfortunately for him, this is the one area where he clearly lacks the two or three extra years of experience that Lennon has. We shouldn't be surprised that Walcott has yet to perfect his delivery: a couple of years ago there were Spurs fans calling for Lennon to be moved on because of his final ball (or lack thereof). At this moment in time, however, Lennon undoubtedly has the edge in this department.

# Big Game Jermaine

Jermaine Jenas divides the opinion of Spurs fans like no other player. Alan Frost of [SpursCommunity.co.uk](http://SpursCommunity.co.uk), explores why 'JJ' is so consistently inconsistent...

Some people cite an attitude problem. They claim Jenas seems happy with his anonymous displays. Personally, I put his tendency to shy away from the limelight down to a lack of belief, rather than desire. Jenas's confidence seems directly linked to the fortunes of the rest of the side. He needs the team to start well before he will start making those runs into the box. He needs the team to be collectively chasing that goal before he steps up and grabs the equaliser.

He struggles with responsibility, certainly. His aborted reign as captain showed that despite being one of our longest serving and most experienced players he lacks leadership – an ability that is admittedly important in the battleground of the midfield. Awareness can be an issue, too. Against good passing teams the ball can ping around him like a game of piggy in the middle, leaving the midfield dissected and our backline exposed. Is Jenas sufficiently switched on for every game?

Love him or hate him (there is no middle ground) it cannot be denied that Jenas does pull his finger out when it comes to the playing the boys from Woolwich. With four goals and some stellar displays, it seems that when the going gets tough Jermaine gets going and produces a performance. His strike in the 4-4 opponent, forcing them into a mistake, taking the ball thirty yards before moving switching to his weaker foot to bend one into the top, you have to wonder why we do not see that more often. However, if you're going to save your performances for any game, the Derby is the day to let loose. No stats can quantify the value of a match-winning contribution on a day like today. If Jermaine produces the goods this afternoon we will love him again – for at least a week.

## SPEED & DRIBBLING

Now we'll go one better and get two points more,



# Fred Fickle & the 4 – 4

Last season's remarkable 4 – 4 draw was a topsy-turvy night for all Spurs fans – none more so than Fred Fickle...

So, my nephew Fergus and I make it to The Emirates on a cold October night. It is his first live game but I'm not expecting much.

"We're crap," I tell him as we queue up for a hot dog at the soulless bowl that the Gooners call home. "We're crap and going to get relegated. Why we hired that berk Redknapp I'll never know. Red-crap, I call him. We never beat this lot, either. Oh, and this hot dog is cold. Don't bother eating any more of it, you'll probably die of boredom." Having thrown the boy's snack in a bin we take our seats. It's the first time I've been to their new home and the atmosphere is incredible. I find our seats and it is obvious that this is clearly one of the best stadia in the world.

"Uncle Fred, if Spurs are so rubbish, why do you support them?" asks young Fergus. Being busy going through my pre-match routine of swearing at the players as they warm up, I ignore him. Clearly he's too young to understand these things.

"...and how can Spurs be crap when they have twelve full international in the squad tonight? These players are highly-paid professionals at the peak of their game. Many are celebrated talents that cost millions of pounds and who have excelled at other clubs. Loads have also helped Spurs finish in the top five in consecutive recent seasons. So, how are they crap?" Poor Fergus. I've got a lot to teach him if he wants to grow up to be a proper member of the Fickle family.

The game kicks off and almost immediately fatty Huddlestone slides in the dopey Gareth Bale who scuffs his shot into the side-netting. Useless tosser. David Benley is noticeable by his absence in that move – again! Why the hell did we spend £17m on that total waste of space?

13 minutes in and Modric and Jenas are messing around in the centre circle. "For God's sake, get it on the deck! Pick a pass!" I shout. "You don't win games with big hoofs up in the air!" The ball falls to Benley who sends a pathetic punt off to nowhere. What was I just saying, David? You total cu... Gooooooooooooooooo!

"Oh, yeah, Davey B, you bloody beauty! That's what I'm talking about! There it is. What a strike! Have you ever in your life seen anything more beautiful than that?" I ask Fergus, who is jumping up and down with a big grin on his face. Maybe there's hope for him yet.

"As I was saying, Fergus, it's always worth going for the odd punt from distance. Catch the keeper off his line, know what I mean?" Half-time approaches and we've been brilliantly organised and kept the score at 0-1. Redknapp's revolutionised the way we play the game. I always rated him. Top tactician. All we've got to do is defend this corner and we'll make a change or two at half-time to batter down the hatches and secure the three points that are rightfully ours.

"...Oh, 'Damn it! Who was marking Silvestre? Where was Cortiuka? And it was all Gomez's fault. And bloody Redknapp making us piss off back to Pompey."

"The thing to remember is that 1-1 is a different score to 1-0. If we'd gone in at 1-0 you'd have to say that's a better score than 1-1. Conceding a goal makes us much more likely to lose than if we'd kept a clean sheet." He looks suitably impressed. I'm still picking up another hot dog from the vendor when Arsenal take the lead, a minute into the second half. Apparently the scorer is Gallas. Why does he always score every single time he plays us? And why is it only ever centre-halves who score against us?

Adebayor makes it 3-1 with a toe-poke from Nasri's chip over the moronic Gomes. This is embarrassing. I tell Fergus to pick up his coat as we're leaving. He tells me he doesn't care if we lose 8-1, he wants to stay. Silly boy. But as the alternative is an evening in Islington I take my seat.

Within three minutes it's game on as Tommy Huddlestone hits a wonderful drive that Almunia can't hold and Darren Bent turns it home! Get in! That Huddlestone's some talent. I can't work out why Capello doesn't pick him ahead of Carrick or Barry. At this point, I put down my book and pay full attention.

John Gott, Romnie Biggs, Mad Frankie Fraser and Osama Bin Laden whilst Spurs can number Darren Day and Sid Owen amongst their criminal fans. What do you mean they aren't criminals? Have you seen them act? That's a 2-0 lead to the Goons...

As for the movies, well here Spurs are pretty well served: I've personally seen Jude Law at quite a few games, whilst Kenneth Branagh, Anthony Andrews, Leslie Phillips (ding-dong) and 'Goodfella' Ray Liotta are also Spurs. The Arse can call on Colin Firth, Joan Collins, Kevin Costner, David Soul and even Gillian Taylor! Firth has been known to put in the odd appearance at the Emirates when she can get out of the Car Park. Spurs pull one back purely for having a 'goodfella' on the books. 2-1 it is.

Musically, both clubs can call on some talent. Spurs are able to muster a chorus featuring acts such as Dave Clark, Shania Twain, Emma 'Baby Spice' Bunton, Paul Young and professional

## Greatest Derby Moments

Stoof. "Ledley King's header in the 1-1. My first derby game. I was on the 18 yard line and saw him, in front of me - dead level - leap like a glorious salmon and nod the ball home." | A&C: "Robbo putting Champagne Charlie into the stand and in his place in 1986." | Harry Hotspur: "My favourite moment of recent time would have to be Benley's long range goal that went over England's number seven in waiting, Aligoonier." | Adam Nathan: "Robbie Keane's goal in the 5-1 hammering-the moment I knew we had done it." | From Bill\_Oddie: "Jermaine Jenas' 95th minute equaliser to make it 2-2 at the Lane in 2007. I was watching on tv in Kuala Lumpur with my four day old daughter next to me. Her first match with her old man and to sneak a point was doubly sweet." | From BringBackLe\_Gin: "Nayber's goal in the 4-5 defeat-I was lucky to be alive on that day and seeing that goal made all of the earlier traumas worthwhile."

Last season's version, a high scoring draw,

Blanchflower | 4

# A New Dawn

*It's been a long journey back to top four contention, but Ally Gold of Spurscommunity.co.uk thinks Tottenham finally seem to be on the right track.*

Martin was Spurs through and through. He knew the club inside out, from its history to every single person who worked at the training ground and the famous old stadium. He'd grown up idolising the double-winning side of the sixties - his first Spurs memory was watching the Cup Winners' Cup final against Atletico Madrid on his black and white television as a child, sitting alongside Cornelis. Tottenham Hotspur represented the Dutch philosophy of football – it wasn't just the sweeping play that defined them, but the way they carried themselves on the pitch.

Having seen firsthand the passion Martin had for the club and listened to the struggles he frequently faced behind the scenes, it felt like I'd caught my wife cheating when I first heard about the sleazy Ramos hotel meeting and then finally the revelation that the Dutchman had been sacked amid the chants of 36,000 Spurs fans.

Martin told me in the days after his departure: *"It was and still is disappointing, because I still feel that if I could have done it in a different way, like Alex Ferguson, I could have gone on to do something."*

*"If they had sacked me last year it would have been more of a shock, but not now. This year I guess I was waiting for it. It's the same with a marriage. If it's not right, you have to do something else."*

*"In this structure, the manager is the scapegoat. I knew that, so it's not a problem. I was expecting it to happen for months, but it was my mission to make Spurs great again."*

*"I still feel that if I was solely responsible I would still be there. It was about making that next step and I could have done it. I miss people at the Lodge. I miss Chris. I miss the staff. I miss the supporters. I had a bond with them. Sometimes things happen and life goes on, but I will always remember them."*

*"I looked back at the Getafe match in my home in 'The Hague. When I watched the scenes it plays like a movie. I look upset and the fans are all singing my name around the stadium. In Holland, they played it everywhere, all over the television. I didn't know it at the time, but I could not have expected a better farewell."*

So with that in mind I cut a forlorn figure during the ensuing Ramos era, torn between my love for Spurs and my displeasure at the events that had ousted the man who'd reinvigorated my club. It was strange to watch the Spaniard lavished with the type of players Martin had begged for each summer, but never received. I didn't expect Ramos to fail or want him to – at the end of the day no man is bigger than the club, even a jolly Orange giant. So to see that late night text last year made me think Tottenham Hotspur had finally lost the plot. Harry "Triffic Redknapp? How many fans would have been happy with it being Harry wined and dined in a South Coast hotel back in the summer of 2007?

Ironically, Martin had talked up Redknapp to me as one of the few English managers who deserved a crack at managing a big club. Little did he know the affable Cockney would eventually be warming his plush dugout seat.

Personally, I'd always liked Redknapp, but ultimately only over associated him with mid-table mediocrity and wheeling and dealing. Yet his arrival offered me the chance to start afresh with Tottenham Hotspur, to wipe the slate clean with a wife who'd come back home repentant over her summer fling.

And my preconceptions have since bitten the dust. With the Director of Football a thing of the past, the likeable Londoner's vision is now the sole one at the club, which can only be a good thing in the long run.

He does have the ability to say one thing with his hand on his heart one moment yet do the complete opposite the next; cue Carlo Cudicini waving a Spurs scarf behind Harry, who is strenuously denying any interest in the Italian stopper. However, there is no denying that he is blessed with the best group of players Spurs have employed in a long time and he is getting the best out of the majority of them.

In the soon to return Luka Modric, Harry boasts a playmaker who could comfortably slot into any team in the world. I'd still like to see the diminutive schemer run the game from the middle with action man Wilson Palacios alongside him, rather than trying to influence matters from the touchline. He proved against the brute power of Stoke last season that he won't be bullied in the engine room and he's had 10 months of further settling in since then.

With everyone fit, there are at least two quality players coveting every position on the pitch, meaning there are far more debates to be had than the old Keane-Defoe one – although that still appears to have spawned a much-talked about sequel.

The starlets of yesterday are growing up. Aaron Lennon is finally learning that simply speeding along like Road Runner is not enough to sustain his reputation and Tom Huddlestone no longer has the turning circle of an articulated lorry.

We've come up slightly short against Manchester United and Chelsea in recent matches, but the Liverpool victory and the merciless crushing of weaker sides show we're slowly closing the gap that had re-opened between us and Sky's beloved 'Big Four'.

Our ruthlessness and physical strength will be tested in the coming weeks before another chance comes to finally turn over that lot up the road in the league. If we can go one better than last year's thriller at Cashburden Grave, then it could take more than a dodgy lasagne to dent our aspirations. It's a new dawn, a new day and I'm feeling good.

# The Ever-Shifting Dreams of Andrey Arshavin

*Spooky of deararmlevy.com uncovers what every Arsenal fan secretly knows.*

**Andrey Arshavin, 8th July 2008:** *"My dream is Barca, but to say that isn't new. The whole world knows that I have dreamed forever about going to Barca. Messi, Arshavin, Henry? Messi is very, very good and to play with him must be a marvel, and the same goes for Henry. What more can I say? I would love it."*

**Andrey Arshavin, 8th August 2008:** *"I like the way Tottenham play, so I agreed in principle to join. A short while later a representative from Spurs arrived to discuss my personal terms and contract. The discussion didn't take long and we agreed on everything quickly."*

**Andrey Arshavin, 18th November 2008:** *"Playing for Bayern is a dream."*

**Andrey Arshavin, 10th December 2008:** *"I can confirm that officials from Zenit have begun preliminary negotiations with Real Madrid about my transfer."*

**Andrey Arshavin, 3rd February 2009:** *"I am happy to be at Arsenal. It was my dream. I chose Arsenal because I like their style and I like Arsene Wenger as a coach."*



# Please Remember To Wipe Your Feet Before Leaving The Stadium Today

Their battle is one against their illustrious past. Not the Cups and trophies and all the positive stuff, no - we'll gloss over that. No, the average Arse fan lives beneath a different cloud: his club's shoddy history is littered with far more notably infamous activities off the pitch than on it.

There were the allegations of dodgy dealings that saw Gillespie Road tube renamed Arsenal Legend Peter Storey ran a brothel when he wasn't flogging fake gold or smuggling porn; Kenny Sansom had a square head; Tony Adams was the drink driver's driver; Paul Merson lost his teeth in a bet; Arsenal Legend Graham Rix was jailed for having sex with a child; Ray Parlour's player tickets were discovered to have been sold to the public by touts; Osama Bin Laden was revealed to be a Goner. All that without mentioning countless other allegations of rape, drug taking and alcohol-fuelled Arsenesses.

So as the players take to the pitch today, stand and applaud, but not just for those Gladiators in their Lilypwhites, but spare a cheer or two for those poor saps in the Home stands (which should be paid for by 2099) and the task that is before them as supporters.

The muck that went before them has cast a long and often sickly shadow; one they must struggle every week to stand apart from and make their own mark; be tall, be proud, look the world in the eye and failing that say, "Yeah, but you're sh\*t mate";

Good morning and welcome to the Emptycrates Stadium. Aside from the blazing Tottenham shirts on the pitch the only other distraction from its synthetic cheap feel will be the breath-taking array of generally awful Arsenal fans that fill this tin-pot temple to the brim for each and every game, week in and week out.

Arse fans are a nomadic and unintentionally comical breed. Their belief in their cause, despite being silverwareless for a generation, remains emphatic and resolute. Many of their current number can name most of the Arsenal first team largely unasisted. Those that can't simply revert to the proud war cry of, "Yeah, but you're sh\*t mate".

Armed with two songs (that durgey one and the other one), they sit shoulder-to-paranoid-shoulder, ready to embrace whatever scheming, unsporting and generally uncomfortable viewing the Reverend Wenger will pull from beneath his rather soiled cassock or the grey demob suit he prefers on match days.

Yes, the Arse faithful truly are a sight to behold. Some can actually still remember that first flush of exuberance, the little frisson and possible sense of belonging when the flickle finger of fate landed two corporate tickets in their in-tray with a Post-it note bearing the legend, 'Please Use - HR' only two seasons ago.

And of all their qualities, it is their steadfastness that I admire the most. Never has a modern day fan had to face such a battle on a daily basis. Gooners are a breed apart. Not the best, not even the second best, but still they endeavour. If Wilkinson sold people, they'd sell Gooners.

A public service announcement from Harry Hotspur.

## Derby Day Breakfasts

Preparation is everything. With that in mind, Two Halves scouted out some of people behind the best Tottenham breakfasts going.



**ALI**  
**The Hotspur Café**  
757 High Road, London, N17 8AH  
Prediction: "Arsenal are firing on all cylinders but I'm predicting a draw."



**DEVIRIM**  
**Mary's Lunch Box**  
8 White Hart Lane, London, N17 8DP  
Prediction: "It'll be a tough game, but Tottenham will take it 2-1."



**TIA**  
**The Brown Eagle Jerk Centre**  
2 White Hart Lane, London, N17 8HN  
Prediction: "I'm going for 2-0 to Spurs."



**ÖZGÜR**  
**Spurs FC Café**  
74 White Hart Lane, London, N17 8HP  
Prediction: "It's a hard game but I'd like to think we'll win 2-1."

Editor: Adam Nathan | Design: Guy Featherstone  
Alan Frost of Spurscommunity.co.uk | Ally Gold of Spurscommunity.co.uk | Archibald&Crooks of Spurscommunity.co.uk | Bill\_Oddie of Spurscommunity.co.uk | BringBackLe\_Gin of Spurscommunity.co.uk | Chris\_Miller of WindyCOYS.blogspot.com | Harry Hotspur of oleole.com/blogs/harryhotspur | Rob Parker of Spurscommunity.co.uk | Robert 'Sammy' Samuelson Spooky of Dearmirevy.com | Stoot of Spurscommunity.co.uk | With thanks to: Chris Toy, Christisvad, Ben Terrett, Russell Davies.  
A Fannmade Production in association with Rebel Alliance & Parlour Magic Productions.



# 2



2 HALVES | 31 | 10 | 2009 | the-rebel-alliance.com | *A Fan Made Publication*

# REBEL