The "How to Play" Series

HOW TO PLAY SOCCER

How to Play Soccer

by

JOE HULME

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INTRODUCTION

THE risk one takes when opening one's ears to the great players of the past re-living their red-letter days, is that the ex-champions are apt to be the heroes of their own stories. I remember once talking to a famous fast bowler who had figured in a deathless game in which one of his colleagues had taken ten wickets in the first innings. I asked him for his impressions of the historic occasion. He gave them freely: how he had missed the opening batsman's leg stump by a coat of varnish in the first over; how he had had four catches dropped off him in the slips before lunch.

'And X—,' I asked. 'Didn't he bowl rather well?'

'He was on at the other end,' was as much as he would commit himself to say.

Joe Hulme, our author, is not this type at all. He has the *really* great man's fancy for telling stories against himself. You will read in this book of a brilliant early match for Arsenal in which, as centre-half, he scored a goal that blazed its way across the headlines of the Sunday papers' back pages. The result was a stern rebuke from Herbert Chapman - a centre-half was *not* supposed to score goals: that was the forwards' job.

Joe Hulme relates this lapse from duty with relish. He omits, however, to tell you of his red-letter days. When he played in his last Cup Final, for Huddersfield, he made at least three foolproof openings which his inside forwards disregarded. If they had been coached by Herbert Chapman, as Joe was, Huddersfield would have won the Cup instead of being beaten by a penalty goal in the last minute of extra time.

In *How to Play Soccer* Hulme pours out with generous hand all the strategic and technical knowledge harvested from his years as an International, an Arsenal star, a Tottenham Hotspur manager, and a sports writer for *The People*. The youngest boy will learn why, precisely, an outside right should have experience of goalkeeping; how to cope with a water-logged pitch; what to do when it's your throw-in near the

enemy's goal. The expert will follow with interest Hulme's assessment of the 'stopper' centre-half tactic. All of us will want to know what our author has to say about football as a career: about the conditions of work for the young player: about the fairness or unfairness of the transfer system.

As he teaches, Hulme unfolds before us football history. We learn why Steve Bloomer was great - and what is remarkable about Matthews and Mortensen and Eddie Baily. This is Joe Hulme's book, and I am not going to poach his points to enrich my preface. But one point I will take, because it shows that Joe Hulme isn't living in the past, or even totally absorbed in the present - he is a thoughtful prophet who is fascinated by the future of a game which must never be allowed to become static, lest it become stagnant. Hulme's point at issue is the question of the offside rule. All football fans know how it determines the tactics of to-day; how the very game is shaped around it. Well, Joe Hulme foresees a day when there will be *no such thing* as an offside rule in soccer. And what is more, he seems to rub his hands together gleefully at the prospect of such emancipation.

DENZIL BATGHELOR.

FOREWORD

NEARLY thirty years have passed since the first of my boyish dreams came true: since I made a real start on a football career. I was born too soon. These, not those, are the days. For any who would follow my footsteps the door is wide open; not to enjoy the life more, but to make it even more worth while. During my playing days most of the good luck which goes the rounds came my way. Helped by others as I hope to help others, I was considered good enough to play for England against Scotland - the summit of ambition. 1 was also fortunate enough to be in championship-winning sides, as well as playing in five F.A. Cup Finals, a record in which I take pride without asking to be forgiven. Afterwards I had a spell as manager of a first-class club - a job which I eventually decided had more pitfalls than the actual playing pitch. From this I turned to writing about the game: another of the callings which most boys dream about: comparatively easy for me because I had spent so much time in the middle. The sum adds up to this: for thirty years football has been the biggest thing in my life. My outstanding reflection from those years, first as player, then as manager, and afterwards as watcher — the fellow who sees most — is that the game is subject to constant change. I was already in it when the offside law was altered, bringing in its train more sweeping changes than were dreamt of in the philosophy of the law-makers. The foundation stones of football have not been moved or changed, however, and in this book the fundamentals will not be overlooked. Still, ideas on how the game can be best and most successfully played do change: different players, different methods, different tactics, even differing implements. So, from the kick-off to the final whistle, my purpose is not merely to tell how to play football. The emphasis is on how to play it in the up-to-date way.

July 1952

JOE HULME

HOW TO PLAY SOCCER

CHAPTER I

MYSTERIES OF THE TEAM SPIRIT

I WANT the readers of this book to get profit and pleasure from it: laughs as well as lessons. It may be that in the very act of kicking off I shall bring forth a smile or two.

'Surely', somebody will say, 'we know all about team play and the team spirit.'

Do we all really understand it, however? I doubt it. And because I doubt it, I make no apology for my choice of the starting place. At first and at last - plus all the time between -football is a team game.

When people get stuck for an explanation of the success of this or that football team, they very often pick their feet out of the mud by saying that the side plays as a team: that it has the team spirit. But when the question is asked as to what is meant by the team spirit, there is a certain amount of fumbling with the answer.

I know what is so often meant by the use of the words *team spirit*. Every member of the side doing his best for the side from the first kick to the last: never letting up: never holding back one ounce of energy.

It is quite unnecessary, however, to go to a first-class match, played by the most energetic stars, to see the team spirit, if that is all it means. Take a trip with me to any spare piece of ground between Land's End and John o'Groat's, where a lot of lads are playing at football. There the team spirit, in its crude sense, will be most plainly in evidence. Those lads, full of enthusiasm, are racing all over the place; where the ball goes there you will see them - in twos or threes. They are after that ball.

Moreover it is true to a certain extent that they have the right idea. Some years back I happened to be present when the late Herbert Chapman, still referred to by knowing people as the best manager the game has ever known, was having his first talk with a young player whom he had just signed on.

'What is the first thing you do?' the manager asked.

The boy knew what to do all right. He had football in his boots. So, full of confidence, he started on what would have been a long explanation of what he would do: beginning with an explanation of how he would beat his nearest opponent. That would-be long speech, however, was suddenly cut short. 'But you haven't got the ball yet,' said the famous manager. 'That is the first thing to do - get the ball.'

Yes, the footballer has to get the ball before he can do anything with it. It may well be that amid the strain and stress of even a first-class match, the ebb and flow, some players will have to go out of their way to get that ball, just as those lads on that stray piece of ground, or in the back street chasing maybe a bundle of rags, go after it.

When a team has every player trying as hard as he possibly can, we say of that side - it has the team spirit. In passing, may I mention here the thing which always annoyed me most when I read the newspapers - not at all a bad thing to do, by the way - to see what the critics thought about how I had played in any particular game. It was the use by any critic of the words: 'Hulme tried his best.'

Talk about damning with faint praise! I wanted to kick that critic a little bit harder than I had kicked the ball throughout the match. There's no place in any football team for the fellow who doesn't try his best all the time. But if behind the use 01 the words 'he did his best' is the idea that consequently everything is forgiven, then it's all wrong to use them.

The world's biggest duffer can try, but the team spirit - the real team spirit - goes much deeper than that. The team spirit calls for every man doing his job, and is quite likely to call for

him doing it — in the interests of the team - in a way he is not particularly keen about.

When Alex James, one of the greatest of inside forwards of my time, first came to play in England, with Preston North End, he had the quite natural idea that the scoring of goals was part of his job. And, of course, he liked scoring goals. Don't we all? When he went to Highbury to play for Arsenal he was told, in so many words, that in this new team he wouldn't be expected to score goals. His job was to get the ball around the middle of the field: draw and beat one or two opponents, and then get that ball to Cliff Bastin on the left, to myself on the right, or even the centre-forward, if favorably placed. The honor and glory of getting the goals went to other players. In one League season Cliff Bastin scored thirty-three goals.

He was able to do this because he was a wonderful footballer. But that was reason number two why he did it. Reason number one was Alex James, who only scored once in a blue moon, but who was showing the team spirit: doing the job for the team.

I wish to goodness the newspaper men, and other people, wouldn't make so much fuss of the fellows who get the goals: shout as from the house-tops about what are called hat-tricks.

During the time I was playing for Arsenal those handshakes, the back slapping - and the kisses! -for the goal scorer, were banned. That wasn't because we weren't delighted over the success. It was because the fact was recognized that success in that direction isn't a one-man affair. Tell me, if you like, about the centre-forward who is at the head of the goal scorers, but when you tell me that you will also be telling me that on either side of him, behind him as well, are jolly good footballers who help in the making of the goals.

It's elementary to say that it doesn't matter who gets the goals so long as the goals are got. From time to time, however,

it is just as well to be reminded of even elementary and obvious truths.

Last season, when Allenby Chilton was chosen to play for England at centre-half, a friend said to me: 'Why, he's nothing but a stopper.' I didn't argue with him. Rather did I stop any further argument with the reply: 'But what a stopper!'

I know some of these stopper centre-halves very well. I also know how some of them would love to go venturing far up the field, eager to show that they are something more than a mere policeman put there to arrest the opposing centre-forward. I am not — at this stage - discussing the question of whether the use of the centre-half as a stopper is a good or a bad thing. That can be gone into later. The point is that if a decision is made that the centre-half should be a third full-back, then a third full-back he must be. Whether he likes it or not is beside the point: it mustn't matter to him, because the team spirit demands that he should be a stopper.

I remember a match in which that great full-back Eddie Hapgood - who could have been almost as good as a winger -full of enthusiasm, went dribbling up the wing, beating one opponent after another. He would have finished by scoring a goal if the opposing keeper hadn't made a wonderful save. But the ball was cleared, down the right wing, and Hapgood wasn't in position to hold up that right wing.

The lecture he received after the match included the words: 'Don't do it again.' Let it not be imagined for a moment that I am now saying that each man must be tied down to his position on the field. By taking that line I should contradict myself, for I have already laid it down that no player can do anything with the ball until he gets it.

The run of the game may compel the right-winger to go back to worry the other team's outside left, and so on. There is also virtue in a surprise move which even has the effect of taking the player responsible for it out of his position. Right down at bottom, however, the team spirit calls for each man

doing, first and foremost, the job which has been allotted to him, with the proviso that if a mistake has been made, or if there is something which needs to be done, then it must be done regardless of position. This game can't be played on a blackboard, because the blackboard moves don't - can't - take note of what the other fellow will do.

The team spirit, developed to its fullest, produces the most satisfactory results if each man realizes what his pals can do, and plays in a way to help them to do it. Even the players in the top flight aren't just like peas in a pod, exactly alike. The aim must be to make full use of the special direction in which the ability of this or that player lies.

It may be remembered that, after starting my first-class career at York, I joined Blackburn Rovers. While I was at Blackburn somebody called me the York Express, and the pet name stuck. The reference, of course, related to my speed on the wing. Nobody could make of me even a very thin carbon copy of Stanley Matthews. He can dribble round a three-penny-bit. I couldn't dribble round a five-shilling piece.

The most helpful of my team-mates, right through the piece, were those who succeeded in making most use of me in the York Express line. It takes all sorts of players to make the game, just as it takes all sorts of teams to make up a competition. The player who has faults will try to overcome them, just as he will struggle and practice to remedy his shortcomings. Meantime, his team-mates will make the fullest possible use of the things he can do.

Each player will encourage the other too, by play as well as by word, especially if the other is a newcomer to the team. The Cup Final of 1949 supplied us with an example, in one particular connection, of what I am now driving at. At the last minute Terry Springthorpe, who had not been a regular member of the Wolves side, was put into the team at left full-back. For him the ordeal was a specially big one.

Two or three times, quite early in the game, I was rather

surprised to note that Billy Wright, left-half and captain of the Wolverhampton team, instead of working the ball up the field, according to his usual habit, slipped it back for Terry to kick it.

For a few minutes I wondered what sort of game Wright was playing. But thinking it over I tumbled to the idea - a very good one. By passing the ball back to his full-back on occasions when there wasn't the slightest danger to his own side in doing so, Billy Wright was giving his colleague the feel of the ball: letting him have a kick at it without any stress attached. By that method Wright inspired the less experienced player with confidence in himself - a bit of team spirit which had for its object the interests of the side as a whole.

If, in this chapter, I have made the words 'team play' and 'team spirit' mean more than is usually inferred when they are used in a casual way, I shall consider the effort worth while. The subject has by no means been exhausted. Team spirit isn't even confined to the ninety minutes of every match. It has to be there all through the week: in preparation: in one man helping another at practice, and so on.

The 'inquests' after a match can be so helpful, just as they can be so harmful if they are not approached in the right way. Taken in the proper spirit, these inquests, these enquiries into what went wrong, can prevent a repetition of the same sort of thing in the next match. That's what the inquests should do. They are not laid on for the purpose of fixing the blame for defeat, and the player who is apt to regard them as such should think again: ask himself if he has the real team spirit.

The time comes to all of us when our name is missing from the first eleven team-sheet. Another player is selected. That is an occasion on which the team spirit of the 'stood down' player is put to the test. What is the repercussion? A fit of the sulks? No, a thousand times no.

A certain club had a good young centre-forward concerning whose promise everybody was pleased. He didn't quite fit,

however, and the name of another young centre-forward appeared on the team-sheet. On the very next day I saw those two players out on the practice pitch by themselves. The centre-forward who had been dropped was on the wing, sending the ball into the middle to the player who had taken his place in the first team. That's the spirit: the same sort of spirit as that shown by the player who asks his manager to put him into the reserves because he knows he isn't playing very well. It does happen, you know - week in and week out.

Not very mysterious after all, this team spirit. Quite simple, indeed. The team first, the individual second.

CHAPTER 2

FINDING THE BEST POSITION

NOTHING can stop the footballers of other days - those who have grown too long in the tooth - from having their moments of real enjoyment out of the game. They fix their carpet slippers: fill up the old pipe, and as the smoke curls upwards they dream of a wonderful time - somewhere in the past: when football was football, and that sort of thing. From time to time I have enjoyed myself on those lines, thinking aloud, with other former footballers around me, about how much better the game used to be than it is now.

I have finished with that idle chatter about old times, however. When I find myself among a party living in the glories of the past, I now include myself out - pretty quickly. In general I think football is as good as ever it was. In many respects it is considerably better.

That isn't to say that it can't be improved still further. One thing which delays the further improvement is the fact - and it is a fact - that in the first-class game to-day there are too many round pegs in square holes: too many fellows playing in positions other than those to which their play, their ability, is best suited.

In a way this is perhaps inevitable, and maybe nobody's fault - except the fault of those who don't produce the supply of tip-toppers to keep in tune with the demand. When the ideal can't be found the makeshift has to do. But there is a particular position in which each can give of his very best: render the greatest amount of service to his side and to the game.

The managers often give themselves a hearty pat on the back when they make what they are pleased to call a discovery. They move some player from his regular position: play him somewhere else, and he immediately shows himself completely at home. Many of these discoveries, however, have a lot of luck attached to them. Some of them are the sequel to emergency.

Not long ago Jack Froggatt was an outside left good enough to play for England. There came a day when Reg. Flewin, the Portsmouth centre-half, was off the active strength, and when the club did not have a ready-made player for the centre-half position. So Jack Froggatt was asked if he would try the switch.

I believe that Froggatt's reply was something to this effect: 'Centre-half is the place I have been wanting to play in all my football life.' Taking his chance with head and feet, he played for England at centre-half within six months of moving to the position with his club. Purely as a personal opinion I reckon this Portsmouth player to be even better as a centre-half than he was as an outside left - and that, take it from me, is saying a lot.

Yes, there is a best position on the field for at least nine footballers out of every ten. It should be somebody's business perhaps the business of the player first and foremost - to find which is that best position.

Mention of the Jack Froggatt switch serves as a reminder that there was nothing very original in his remark that he had always wanted to play at centre-half. When I was a boy - and there has been no change in this connection since I was a boy there was a natural desire to occupy a position on the field where there is usually something doing.

'I don't want to play at outside right,' said a schoolboy chum of mine, with the tears very near to his eyelashes. 'I never get a kick at the ball there.'

We could pass over that impression with the trite remark

that if he didn't get a kick at the ball when he was playing at outside right that was largely his own fault.

The fact does remain that in junior teams at any rate - for the lads in the learning stage - there is more glamour, there are more kicks at the ball, in playing around the middle of the field than there is about playing on the wing. At some time or other every lad has a yearning for the centre-forward position. Yet many players who have started even first-class careers there have gone on to be really brilliant in the completely opposite position — as goalkeepers. I could mention a dozen tip-top goalkeepers who once upon a time were leaders of the attack. Sam Bartram of Charlton is one of them.

Many of my readers won't remember Sam Hardy. They would have remembered him if they had tried to score goals when he was in position between the posts. This almost best of all goalkeepers also started in a first-class side as a centre-forward. I asked him once why he changed. He made this simple reply:

'I found it easier to stop the other fellows from scoring than it was for me to score.'

Those words really meant that, in due course, Sam had found his best position. It may well be that Con Martin of Aston Villa, so often and for so long a most distinguished player at centre-half and other positions, has now found his best place - in goal. The point is that the effort to find the best position is well worth while. So let me get down to it, with the idea at the back of my mind that if I relate my personal experience about finding my best position, I shall also pass on a tip or two.

When I was at school I played mostly at centre-half, and, of course, I enjoyed myself there. It's lovely to be at the heart of things. Later — perhaps because I hadn't eaten as much porridge as I ought to have done - I moved to the outside-left position. From there I had a spell at full-back. All of this, as may well be concluded, adds up to the fact that the people

who chose the teams for which I played weren't quite sure which position suited me best. Perhaps they had some doubts as to whether there was any position to which I was really suited in the football sense.

Confession being good for the soul, I'll confess why, at one stage, it was decided that I should have a go at centre-half. I was inclined to funk the personal contact with my opponents: draw back when I should have gone in. A footballer can't afford to do that. In the middle he just has to go into it - or be out of the game for most of the useful purposes.

One day, when I still hadn't fully grown up - seventeen years of age and still more than a trifle skinny — I was playing at inside right with York City. A very good judge of football made a friendly approach to the York City boss after the game was over.

'For goodness sake', he said, 'move that boy Hulme on to the wing. If you keep him inside you'll be attending his funeral before very long.'

So I became an outside right, and as an outside right I stayed for practically the rest of my career. Speed was my biggest asset, and at outside right that speed was put to the most valuable use so far as the interests of the side were concerned.

The most important tip from my personal story is that it pays to experiment. It is no more than a rough and ready summary to say that a fellow gives of his best in the position he likes best. When Ronnie Burgess went to the 'Spurs he thought - and his manager thought - that with his clever ball play, and his quickness, he would make good as an inside forward. He didn't, and was on the point of going back to his native Wales, disappointed: a failure in big football.

Then they converted Burgess into a wing half-back, and as everybody knows he became in due course as great a player in that position as any we have had in our time. As he himself says, he didn't believe, until he had really tried it, how much happier he was in a position in which, for the most part, the

ball was in front of him. There are players like that, not so quick on the turn may be the explanation, who are much better when the ball is coming to them from somewhere in front than from somewhere behind.

Here's a worthwhile tip which I pass on. Just recently I happened to be in the dressing-room of a First Division club on the day when the players were due to have a private practice match. The manager addressed them in words on these lines. 'I am not going to pick the teams for to-day's practice. You are going to pick them yourselves, with this one condition. No man must play in the same position as that in which he played in the real match last Saturday.'

There are two ideas to support a practice match on those lines. One is that, changing about, a player might find his best position. Equally important is that each player doing such a switch will discover the problems attached to a new position, and that he may - or should - pick up tips as to the sort of support which a player needs in any particular job.

Many of the leading wing half-backs of these days had a spell at inside forward. Just recently, Johnny Morris, who had played for England as an inside left, was switched to the left-half position in the Derby County team. It may be that as a wing-half he will eventually win equal fame. Whether that happens or not, however, this much can be said with certainty: that because Morris has been a forward himself: looking for the passes from the fellows behind him, he is all the better fitted to supply, from the wing-half position, the sort of passes which the forwards like to get and of which they can make the most effective use.

There is another thing - indeed, lots of other things - about the switching, too. One of them is that it is the very best way to cure a malady from which by far too big a proportion of players suffer. Changing positions, from one side of the field to the other, compels the use of *both* feet.

The footballer with one leg and a swinger doesn't go to the

top of the tree. The ability to use both feet - for kicking purposes, regardless of the position in which a fellow plays - comes very near to the head of the list of essentials. Indeed, let us say it is priority number one.

Nature, or heredity, or habit — I am not quite sure what -has made us all more capable on one side than the other. We can kick a football better with one foot than the other, just as most people who can write well with the right hand, say, can't even make a show of writing with the left. They could write just as well with the left hand as with the right if they tried hard enough and long enough. They don't need to be ambidextrous as writers, but as footballers they do.

Even after all the trying, one leg may remain better than the other, and that may be the deciding factor in relation to the best position for this or that player, but the other leg and foot must be made at least useful.

There are footballers who have been so completely one-footed that the most drastic measures have been taken to get them to turn the other leg into something more than a mere dummy. That right-winger has been sent on to the field, during mid-week, to play at outside left with a football boot on his left foot, and a thin shoe - or perhaps no shoe at all -on his other foot.

My earlier bit about my own experience gives the hint that physique has something to do with the choice of the position in which he can be of most service to the side and to the game.

Tom Finney, a natural left-footer, was given a 'spare' outside right position when he was still a growing lad. The right foot was such a 'dud' for kicking purposes that whether he wanted to do so or not he had to take corner kicks from the right with his left foot. He can still play on the left wing, and has been given England caps on that side of the field. Having developed the football use of the right foot, however, I am convinced that he is a more troublesome opponent because

he retains a 'natural' left. The real point is that, single-footed, Finney wouldn't have got anywhere. With two feet he has gone everywhere.

This doesn't mean - heaven forbid - that I am now even toying with the idea that in this game of football the tape measure or the scales are of prime importance in the assessment of a player. There is scarcely a first-class team playing in these days in which there isn't at least one player who gives the lie to any suggestion on that line.

'Too little!' That has been the first judgment regarding scores of fellows who now adorn the game. Of course they are not too little; if they are good enough they are big enough. Once upon a time I played for England against a Scottish side which was given the title of the little blue devils. Most of them were little fellows, too, and they were certainly devils. We never saw the way they were going as they piled on five goals. As an aside, they played the sort of game which was suited to midget footballers, with the ball on the floor. That is something a little beyond the scope of this chapter, however.

Other things being equal, physique should have a bearing on choice of position. For instance, as the game is played in these days it is certainly true that there is only one fellow better than the good little one in the centre-half position, and that is the good big fellow. Look around and you will see them -starting with Frank Brennan of Newcastle United, and not overlooking the things which he, and so many other centre half-backs built on similar lines, can do which are beyond the capacity of most of the smaller fellows. We *will* play a lot of this modern football in the air. That being so, how nice it must be for the centre-half- the Leslie Gomptons, the Harry Clarkes, and so on - to be able to stand with both feet more or less on the ground and yet be able to nod the ball away from a centre-forward who is jumping as high as he can get.

All the players can't give a good imitation of being jet-propelled. Speed, for example, is not so essential in a full-back

as for players in some other positions. Even at that, however -and this is a note which must run through all this talk about different positions — the full-back who can move as fast as most opposing wingers, and faster than some, has an additional asset. He can play differently, for one thing, because of his powers of recovery.

When Laurie Scott was at his best and most useful for Arsenal and England he was very nearly the fastest runner, over a short distance, among the whole of the Arsenal's big staff. This meant that he could advance up the field and that if beaten he could get back into position or to overtake that wing man who had slipped past him. I am quite sure that, had circumstances been different, Laurie Scott, as well as one of his full-back predecessors, Eddie Hapgood, would have earned caps as a winger. Indeed - who knows? - both of these players might have been even better as forwards.

The main point is that in switching: in trying himself out in different positions, the footballer may find that the one he fancies most is not necessarily his best. Even if this doesn't happen, he will be a more complete footballer - of more use to his side - by having a go in various places on the field.

We don't allow substitutes in our competitive football. This means that for all teams, sooner or later, there arises a state of emergency; when players have to change places. None of us think of Stanley Mortensen as being other than a wonderful forward in his own particular way. Yet I remember an International game with England and Wales in opposition at Villa Park, when, quite early in the contest, it was necessary for 'Morty' to fill a gap in the half-back line left vacant by a player who had to go off the field. And Mortensen played the part well.

It didn't just happen, it wasn't merely fortuitous, that not long ago a Bury half-back played what was called a 'blinder' in goal when the man who started the game in that position

had to go off the field. He had fitted himself for the emergency.

I have a shrewd suspicion that some readers will accuse me of advocating that all footballers should learn to play all over the place. I am not. The Jack of all the football trades runs the risk of being master of none. There *is* a best position. Go around looking for it, and having found it bend nearly every effort to supply all the needs of that position.

To a large extent football is a game for specialists, but the specialist is none the worse for knowing something about positions other than the one in which he specializes. And don't forget that if you can't get a place in your team because another fellow is in possession in the position you fancy, you may get into the side by making yourself proficient elsewhere. Jackie Milburn had no great liking for the centre-forward position at one time. But Newcastle United wanted a centre-forward: so did England. Milburn 'had a go', for which Newcastle United and England have been duly thankful.

Regarding this business of switching positions, there are some changes which are perfectly natural: automatic almost. The qualifications for the various positions will be dealt with in due course. Let us imagine, however, that here is an inside forward who just can't work up to the necessary speed of thought or action, or who is in process of slowing down. A drop back to wing-half might have the effect of adding years of useful service to his football life.

I remember a Sheffield Wednesday team which won the First Division championship twice running. The half-backs played a major part in snatching those honors. Each and all of them had previously seen much service in the forward line.

The suggestion has already been thrown out that the good footballer can play in practically any and every position on the field. The point remains, of course, that the good footballer doesn't want to. But a crack centre-forward can't be any the

worse player in his own particular position by taking an odd turn between the posts. He may not prove himself a world-beating goalkeeper, but he may be a better centre-forward for the experience in goal. As a last word, the player who is losing his zest, going stale, may find new inspiration and a new interest in life by switching to a different position.

CHAPTER 3

GETTING *FOOTBALL-FIT* - AND KEEPING SO

THE name of the manager of the Fulham club is Dodgin, quite an appropriate name when connected with his days as a player. There is a story associated with the name which, even if not true, deserves to be. When Bill Dodgin was manager of Southampton, he sat on the side of the field watching some of his regular players going through their training exercises. Sitting alongside him on the form was a new player who had just joined the club on the recommendation of the scout, and who didn't even know the manager.

After the pair of them had been sitting there for some little time watching the other fellows work, the newcomer turned to Bill Dodgin with the question: 'Who are you?'

To this the reply was made: 'I'm Dodgin, the manager.'

The newcomer broke into a broad smile. 'That's funny,' he said. 'I'm dodging him too. Shall we nip out and have one?'

There's a serious side to the little story. If there are fellows with that sort of outlook towards football, the sooner they look around for some other sort of job, the better. Physical fitness is so obviously included among the footballers' qualifications that I shan't waste energy by preaching a sermon with that as the text.

Just one or two general points should be stressed before I travel on to deal with the question of how to get fit and how to keep fit. Only the player who is *really* fit can get the full enjoyment out of the game. That applies whether he is playing for Newcastle United in a Gup Final or for Oswaldtwistle Strollers in a pick-up match on the local brickfield.

Let me go to another line, being driven there by the current

tendency to put speed of running first. Many years ago a fellow named Downer earned a lot of fame, winning most of the affairs in which he entered, on the running track. He could go like the wind. He was jet-propelled, if you like. Someone connected with Preston North End watched him run, and giving his imagination full play thought that if Downer could run like that at outside right for the club he would leave all the opposing defenders standing still. So record-beater Downer was persuaded to join the Preston North End playing staff. You won't find his name among the list of famous players who have turned out for their first team, however. He just could not make the football grade, for the very simple reason that while he could run like a hare he couldn't do it when there was a football to be controlled as well as a stop-watch to beat.

Of course, speed has its value, and of all people I am not the one to write it down. Once upon a time, when I was a very young footballer, it was suggested to me that I should be taken to some secret place to train for the Powderhall handicap. The vision of winning the valued prize on the running track fascinated me. On mentioning it to a footballer friend of mine he turned it down flat. 'Forget it,' he said. 'Winning the Powderhall handicap and winning medals at football aren't the same thing at all.' In short, you don't have to do record time over one hundred yards at football. The things which really matter are how quickly you can *work up* to top speed, and how fast you can cover the *fast few yards* of the sprint.

I am in danger of going too fast myself, however. So I must turn back to the real beginning, and deal with this question of getting fit and keeping fit in the correct sequence. Let it not be overlooked, by way of a start, that getting fit and keeping fit for football are different from being fit in the general sense. A football season lasts for eight months. And the game itself lasts for ninety minutes, with one very brief break.

Those twin thoughts - the length of a season, and the dura-

tion of a game - must ever be in the mind of the fellow who wants to get fit and to keep fit for football. They should even be kept at the back of the mind during the summer months when there is little or nothing doing in the actual playing line. They should be taken from the back of the mind and brought to the front as the season draws near. In general, I would say that the footballers of to-day - those who take it seriously -look after themselves to a much greater extent than did the players of other days. They don't let themselves run to seed during the summer: they play other games.

Even at that, when they answer the club call to return to the real training, they don't change into football kit the very first morning and dash on to the field to kick the ball about. For at least a week they don't even *see* a football. Young — and not so young players alike — should take a leaf out of their book. The leg muscles are high up among the things which matter to the footballer. Before the ball is really kicked, at the start of the season, the legs should be made ready for the strain. This means that road-work comes first, short walks followed by longer walks, and from there to lapping the ground, and thence to the sprinting.

The football boots haven't come into use as yet. The walks can be taken in ordinary good shoes; with spells of it done on the toes. Because of the part it plays in the strengthening of the leg muscles, a bicycle is most useful. The training equipment at practically all the big club headquarters includes a bicycle which doesn't move, but which can be pedaled in exactly the same way as an ordinary 'bike'.

There is no necessity for me to recommend to the footballer the usual things done by people who want to be fit for the common or garden purposes of life. Physical training in the general sense — medicine-ball throwing, exercising the stomach muscles, and so on - are part of the routine. I am convinced, too, that most of us - whether footballers or not - would be all the better equipped for doing our job well if we gave more

time and attention to breathing exercises. For the footballer the wind is particularly important. Deep breathing - inhaling and exhaling — done to the accompaniment of all the movements of arms, legs, and trunk, should be developed as a habit. When the walking, the laps and the sprints - plus the deep breathing — have got the muscles and wind in proper fettle, the time arrives to take the ball on to the field, or the piece of spare ground.

Even at that - and remembering that it doesn't pay to run risks of straining anything in the early stages — those first efforts with the ball should be taken easily. There is no point - and there may be danger — in hitting the ball as hard as possible when it is at the feet for the first time after a summer rest. It is just as helpful, for instance - and will also prove useful in the course of the season - to take a few shots at the goalkeeper with placing, rather than power, as the objective. In trying to kill the goalkeeper, or trying to break the net lies the risk, in the early training with the ball, of doing more harm than good.

Somebody may suggest that it would be helpful to the coming footballers if I set out a sort of routine for the week: a timetable telling when, and for how long, to do this or that. There is one excellent reason why I refuse to make any sort of attempt to set up a schedule. Training is a *personal* affair.

No trainer of a first-class side would dream of drawing up a training schedule to be followed by every member of the staff. He knows well that in connection with training one man's meat is another man's poison. In order to be fit for those vital ninety minutes, some players need much more training than others. Look at a party of footballers, back from their summer break, and note the different stories which the scales tell. Some of the fellows have put on weight during the period when they have not done much regular training, while others may have lost weight. It isn't very difficult for each player to find out what suits him best in the way of training. The foot-

bailer with nous will certainly be at pains to discover what suits him best.

I could make out a case for *most* of the training, if not all of it, to be done by fellows who are fresh: in the morning, say.

Last season I chatted with the manager of a Yorkshire Third Division side which was in rather a bad way: holding up all the other clubs in the table. I asked him what was the matter with the team. He looked so glum that I shouldn't have been surprised if he had replied: 'Everything.' He did not give that reply, however. 'There's only one thing wrong,' he said, 'and that is the training.' He went on to explain that, partly because of housing difficulties, more than half his first-team players lived a considerable distance from the ground.

'They turn up regularly for training,' the manager said, 'but before they turn out, they've spent two or three hours getting to the ground: in stuffy trains or in a car. I wouldn't say they're tired out, but they're not as fresh as they should be.'

I realize that it is well nigh impossible for those to whom football is no more than a pastime to do their regular training other than late in the day. But if, at the end of the day's work, the footballer is fagged out he would do himself more good by going to bed than by indulging in *any* form of serious training. Time is too precious to be wasted, and no useful purpose is served by flogging jaded limbs.

Assuming that, following the general lines laid down, the player is reasonably fit, there arises the natural question of keeping in as near perfect physical condition as it is possible for anybody to be. When there are regular matches on the program, and the season wears on, the amount of training for the average player can be reduced. And, of course, there is a very good reason for cutting it down: the risk of staleness.

In order to dodge this risk, I strongly recommend forms of training which have what might be called a competitive interest: exercises which can be most helpful and can be done by the individual at times when collective training is out of the

question. I have already stressed that it is speed off the mark and pace in the short sprint which tell in this game. All right! Take a pal with a watch (preferably a stop-watch) to a spare piece of ground. Try the quick sprints from a standing start: get him to time you over a short marked-out distance. You will be interested in noting whether, doing this sort of thing in your spare moments, you are able to cut seconds off the time taken. In short, the sort of training during which even the fellow who is on the job forgets that he is doing it.

By way of further variety to sprinting, and indeed to all forms of running, whether in spiked boots or running pumps, make the double journey as fast as possible. Get to the mark: reach it, then turn, getting as near to making a right angle as you can, and dash back to the starting place. Quite often, on the field of play, it will be necessary to vary a forward run by a quick turn to the right or left, in order to beat an opponent. Thus, in the way I have suggested, the training without a ball can at the same time help the player in possession.

Running backwards also strengthens certain muscles, not to mention that it is also specially helpful to defenders in these back-pedaling days.

There are other methods of training which help the footballer towards proficiency in the all-round sense, and which have the merit of being interesting. The trainers of many first-class clubs put a lot of store on head tennis - which is to all intents and purposes games of lawn tennis with a football instead of a tennis ball. It can be played by two, four or even eight players if a piece of ground about the size of a tennis court, and a net - or even a length of rope - are available. When I was with Arsenal four of us would arrange such a game as a part of the training. We also agreed - to create competitive interest and to make sure that we didn't just 'play about' - that the winners should collect sixpence apiece from the losers. The rules were quite simple. Two players, say, on each side of the net, 'serving' in turn with the football headed,

by way of starting the exchanges, into the service court at the other side of the net. A player on the other side returned the ball over the net in any way he liked - with head, chest, knee or foot with one over-riding rule: that the ball must not be allowed to touch the ground more than once before being returned. So long as the ball was not allowed to touch the ground in the process, the player receiving it could juggle with it if he felt so inclined, even pass it to his partner for him to return it over the net in due course. The winners were the pair who reached a total of twenty-one points first.

This game helps the footballer to develop his football in certain obvious ways: quickness of movement, speed of thought, ball control, the art of anticipation, swerving - all these are improved. In short, it is a 'game' with a competitive interest which helps to make better footballers — well-trained ones, too, supplying the variety which is necessary if training is to be kept alive, and beneficial throughout the season.

That is the ideal to be aimed at in the business of keeping fit. Staleness can be a most awkward enemy of the athlete, and it is just as necessary to master the art of dodging it as it is to master the art of dodging actual players. I am all for ball practice, but too much of it is a short cut to staleness. If the footballer, at the start of a match, doesn't feel very much as he felt as a boy when released from school, something has gone wrong. The cure is to cut down the mid-week ball practice.

A few years back, when Huddersfield Town had reached the Cup Final, the players were taken away to the seaside for what was called special training. One day a Press photographer called on them. He wanted to take pictures of the players doing this or that with a football. 'You will have to go into the town to buy a ball before you can do that,' said the trainer, 'because we haven't brought one with us!' It was true.

It's a fallacious idea that late in the season special training for the members of a football team means intensified practice with the ball. That spell away from the usual haunts, in

different air, is meant to freshen up the players: to bring back their zest for the game. The footballer who doesn't give all his time to the game can't indulge in this so-called special training. But if he is lacking schoolboy enthusiasm and the zest to be on top gear on match days, then the time has come to forget football in mid-week.

This doesn't mean neglecting the rest of his training, which brings me to the point that, regardless of the status of his team, the footballer who wants to give of his best must bear that desire in his mind all through the week. To play the game calls for sacrifices. Dancing is a fine exercise for footballers, but dancing loses its value if it is kept up till the small hours of the morning. Early to bed, George! —certainly each night of the week after Tuesday. And early to bed the other nights, too, for preference.

Don't ask me how much you should smoke, as my reply to that would be that you shouldn't smoke at all. I have already emphasized the part a player's wind plays. Two rules relating to smoking are laid down by trainers of most of the big football clubs. One is no smoking after eleven o'clock in the morning of match days. The other is no smoking *ever* in the dressing-room.

I wouldn't say that the first rule is never broken. Indeed, I have seen an International footballer sneak into a quiet corner, away from the dressing-room, to have a few puffs at his pipe as the players were getting themselves ready for a Gup Final. That player felt that he must have those few puffs at the pipe, and who is to say that they did him any harm? There was no evidence in his play, during the match, that they had done so.

But smoking in the dressing-room is a law which is *never* broken. Even when a director, wanting a word with the lads, overlooks the rule, he gets a reminder in chorus from the players: 'Put that cigar out!'

What you smoke, or how much - if at all - is no business of

mine. Nor am I really concerned with what or how much you drink. That is your personal affair. I don't suppose you would spend two moments on this book if you didn't hope to find in it something which would help to make you a better footballer. This surely means that you would be foolish to do anything which carried with it the risk that it would reduce your efficiency on the field.

CHAPTER 4

THE DAY OF THE MATCH

WHEN training is becoming a bore, the time has arrived to give the method serious thought: to find out what is wrong with it. That is one reason why I have suggested certain ways and means of getting fun - and fitness at the same time - out of training.

Apart from the incidental benefits, all preparations are made with these main objectives in mind: getting the full enjoyment out of the Saturday afternoon game, and playing to win the game if victory can possibly be achieved. The Boy Scouts' motto: Be Prepared, having been duly noted and followed, thought can be given to some of the things, big and little, which help on match day. Before dealing with them perhaps I should make it quite clear that I am fully aware that for thousands of players who turn out every Saturday many of the arrangements, so far as detail are concerned, cannot possibly be more than makeshifts. And if in my notes about what can be done to help on match-days I make reference to what the big shots of the game do, I don't even hope that they will be copied to the letter. They are mentioned so that they may serve as guide-posts.

It is quite natural, for instance, for the mother of the boy who is to take part in a football match on a Saturday afternoon to imagine that he will need something substantial to help him along; something specially good by way of a midday meal. In Lancashire certainly, the favorite dish for the midday meal on Saturday is potato pie: good food of which it can be said that there is only one thing better than a single helping -two helpings. In other parts of the country too, similar midday

meals are provided for the family. While it is true that your young player can't be expected to play a decent game of football on an empty stomach, it may be suggested that he is more likely to give a satisfactory display on an empty stomach than on one which is over-full.

The pre-match food for the player who must be ready to give of his very best must be planned on different lines. The day can certainly, and wisely, be started with a satisfying breakfast. But the midday meal should be regarded as something merely to keep the player going. I have played scores of matches, without having bellows to mend before the finish, on nothing more, after breakfast, than a couple of slices of toast, with only a scraping of butter on them, and a cup of tea.

Even when the players of a professional club have to make a Saturday morning journey by train or coach they only have a light meal, 'a couple of hours at least before the kick-off. This consists of a bit of boiled fish or chicken, without any greens or potatoes - especially not potatoes. These may be nice, but they are no good for the wind.

Arrive at the ground where the match is to be played in good time, if this is possible. There are such a lot of little things to be done, and it is better to do them calmly rather than in a rush. I like to think of every footballer being quite ready to go on to the field a few minutes - two or three - before he actually has to step out. Those last few minutes in the dressing-room can profitably be spent in exercises which loosen the limbs. Then out on to the field - with one ball or more - in sufficient time for a kick-about before the whistle sounds for the off.

The two or three minutes in the middle can be used by individual players doing the things they will be expected to do in the actual play: the forwards shooting at the goalkeeper: the full-backs kicking out. Billy Nicholson and Ronnie Burgess, the wing half-backs of Tottenham Hotspur, will have a ball to themselves, and will spend the short time before the kick-off passing the ball to each other. When the play starts they will

have to pass the ball to the fellows in front of them. That's the idea. *In tune.*

You can also see Stanley Mortensen taking short quick runs, getting himself loosened up for the time when he will be called on to dart between the full-backs. It isn't just done for fun, or to amuse the spectators. The quick goal is often worth two goals at least, and the fellows who are most likely to get it are those who are tuned up before the actual kick-off.

In due course the half-time whistle sounds, with its five minutes respite usually stretched to ten. Those precious minutes can be turned to good account. No matter what the day is like, shirts can be taken-off, and a rub down indulged in. It's refreshing; it puts new life into the player. A drink of tea -certainly not gassy minerals — is also helpful. Or a suck of a lemon - a very good old-fashioned habit. I suppose I should not be recommending my next suggestion; and I am not - as a drink. It is a fact, however, that during the half-time interval many players benefit from a whisky and water solution, not as a drink but as a gargle. A change of stockings can't do any harm either.

So back to the playing pitch for the second half- those last forty-five minutes in which the answer will be found to the question of whether that pre-match preparation, the training, has served its intended purpose. Here - very gingerly and guardedly — a note of warning may be inserted. Don't forget that there is still a lot to be done before the match is finished. The player has to be fit to stay the ninety minutes. That point has been insisted upon. Even so, once again let it be said that there is no purpose in using up energy needlessly. Conserve it.

All too often the merits of a player are assessed by the amount of running about he does. He's all over the place, non-stop from start to finish. What is more, there are players who can do this, and still stick it to the last whistle. There are others who can't, no matter how fit they are. Take little Jimmy Logie, Arsenal's inside forward. He turns out as fit as they make them,

but even at that, he finds it necessary to conserve his energy. After putting in tremendous efforts for a period at inside right, dodging here, taking a bump there, he will switch to outside right, where he can take things comparatively easily for a little while. Having had his 'breather', he is ready to come back to his strenuous best.

Connected in a way with this idea of conserving energy is another plan which can be passed on, and which experience tells me needs to be mentioned. On the field of play there is no point in carrying around even half an ounce of unnecessary weight. Much has been made, in recent times, of the 'advance' of the players of Continental countries. The players of countries we used to beat by something like a cricket score - without putting in everything - are now so good that our best have difficulty in beating them while giving everything they've got. In the main, this is due to their effective learning of the game from their one-time masters. It struck me not so long ago, however, when a team from France came near to beating England on one of our own grounds, that there may be more in it than that. During the course of that game, in the heat of the encounter, the stockings of the centre-half of France came down. Their slipping revealed the fact that he was playing without shin-guards.

Making enquiries afterwards, I discovered that the majority of the French players had left their shin-guards in the dressing-room. Don't get me wrong. I am not now suggesting that the use of shin-guards by footballers should be taboo. The shins are a vulnerable part of the make-up of the footballer, and taking the long view it is wiser to have guards to protect them. In playing without them, however, the Frenchmen showed that they realized the virtues of traveling light, and their play demonstrated the value of quickness.

Looking at the picture presented by the legs of some footballers, the impression is given that, being unable to secure a neat light pair of shin-guards, they have taken a couple of

cushions from the drawing-room sofa and wrapped them round the legs. I confess that I never played in a match without shin-guards of a sort, but the makers of those which were provided would have been shocked if they had seen the mess I made of them before putting them on. Every scrap of superfluous padding was cut away. Think of the moisture picked up — which means added weight to carry around - on a wet day, or a day on which the player perspires a lot. It is for this reason that ankle strappings and knee bandages should not be resorted to unless absolutely necessary.

As to their clothing in general, the players of some of the Continental countries can teach us something. They turn out in the lightest and shortest of shorts, and in the thinnest of shirts. No matter how fit the player may be, he can't be worse off for traveling light, and may be a more effective player because he does this.

So we come to the boots. Not even Tommy Lawton could play his best football in boots which weren't just right, in every detail. That is a statement so obvious that it really ought not to be necessary to make it. But oh, the number of people who overlook the obvious! Not long ago I had an engagement in the sports goods supply department of one of the big London stores. I stopped my walk round to look at a proud mother who was fitting out her bright-eyed, growing boy. A cricket bat was being chosen, and the mother was trying to persuade the lad that the one he had in his hand would suit him. I took it from the lad. Believe me, the bat was so heavy that big and strong Learie Gonstantine wouldn't have been able to make his best strokes with it.

Having dissuaded the fond mother from buying that bat, and in the process possibly conveyed to her that I knew something about the business, she dipped into her capacious shopping bag.

'Perhaps you will have a look at the football boots I've bought for him.'

I had a look at them - even persuaded the boy to put them on. They were at least two sizes too big for him.

'But he's sure to grow to their size quickly,' said the mother.

That may have been true, but there was one thing more certain; that he wouldn't be able to play his best football in them meantime. The right boots fit the feet, everywhere.

There is often talk about star footballers who hate new boots; even a true story of a famous player who went into a Gup Final with a pair of boots so patched and held in their place by various devices that in the course of the match one of the boots actually split into two. The question repeatedly asked when this preference for old boots is mentioned usually runs on these lines; 'Why are the players so silly and superstitious?' Silly superstition isn't at the bottom of this preference for well-used boots. In due course, the feet of the player seem to grow to fit the boots like gloves.

New boots must be bought sooner or later, of course - sooner for the growing footballer. It's wise economy, not waste of money, to buy good boots, and to go to an expert fitter for them. They won't do if the feet are too small for them.

For what it is worth, I'll tell what I deemed it absolutely necessary to do with a new pair of boots. I bought a pair at least half a size smaller than I wore for ordinary civilian life. Then I took the studs out, pulled off my stockings, and went on to the practice field with the new boots on to do some gentle running. The feet had previously been rubbed with soap. What I was really doing was to take the first steps towards making my feet fit the boots.

Another warning about boots. Having bought good ones, take care of them. While they are new soak them in warm water. After a match, clean them, hang them up to dry -don't put them by a fire. A little rubbing now and then keeps them soft. Add good laces to the boots, and lace them in such a way - not to the top, because ankle freedom is necessary -that they remain laced through the match. Just one of the

little things, but what a lot the little things add up to. Other things being equal they make the difference between success and failure. While this or that player has to stop to do up his bootlace, the other side may score a goal.

The footballer's feet are as precious as his legs. Cold shivers run down my spine when I see a footballer walking down a paved street to the ground in his football boots. The studs may make a nice resounding noise on the pavement, but what do his feet think about it before the match is over!

In due course the match *will* be over. That's the time when the players with the big clubs relax - first in the hot and then in the colder bath. Such facilities are not available for junior players. But there should always be some water available, and a stiff towel. Don't hang about getting the shivers. You have had your afternoon of pleasure, of exercise. You can then have that meal which you denied yourself at midday. There may be scars, bruises, minor strains or sprains which need attention, too. Give them that attention, never taking a chance that this or that hurt will right itself. It if is at all serious, get expert treatment at the earliest possible moment. There's another match next week. You want to be fit for that.

It is so easy, in the enthusiasm over the match which is actually being played, to overlook the fact that there are other games to follow: games in which your services will be required. In his own interests, as well as the interests of his side, the player who is so badly hurt that he is incapable of rendering real service is better off the field than on it.

The odds are that the player who has been hurt aggravates the injury by staying on the field. The limb which might have been all right in two or three days if it had been rested and given immediate attention, takes weeks to get better if the trouble is increased by staying on the field.

Arguments can be, and are piled up against the use of substitutes for players injured during a match. There is one argument in favor of permitting substitutes which out-weighs

all those against. If substitutes for injured players were allowed the temptation for any player to stay there, hobbling about on the wing, would be reduced.

If the player feels all right at the end of the ninety minutes into which he has put everything, then he can indeed say that his training has served its purpose. That's the test. After playing a match at Portsmouth last season full-back Ferrier came out of the ground. A friend with a car offered him a lift. 'No thanks,' said Ferrier, 'I don't live very far away and I always walk home after a match on our own ground'. There, as the saying goes, is where we came in.

CHAPTER 5

GOALKEEPERS MUST NOW BE FOOTBALLERS

THE previous chapter brings me to the end of what, for the sake of clarification more than anything else, I call section one of this book. Section two, if I may put it thus, brings us in closer touch with individual players; with the duties and the play connected with the various positions on the field.

Where the people whose task it is to build football teams usually start, or whether there is one recognized and generally accepted starting place, doesn't matter a great deal. I have to start somewhere, and there is one ready-to-hand starting place: between the posts. Rightly or wrongly then, let us take a look at goalkeeping and goalkeepers first of all in relation to positional play.

It would be just as well, to begin with, if the universal temptation to be funny about goalkeeping and goalkeepers were resisted. No amount of deep thinking is required to come to the conclusion that goalkeeping is a very serious job, or that the goalkeeper is not the least important member of the party. I have even heard it said that a football team consists of ten footballers and a goalkeeper. If that sort of remark was ever true, however, it is certainly not true in these modern times. Eleven footballers make up the good up-to-date team, and this means that the goalkeeper is a footballer. More and more he is becoming a *real* footballer. That's all to the good and should be noted by those who have ambitions connected with this place in the team.

On my desk is a picture I am very fond of; a generally popular one. It shows a little chap in cricket attire, wearing a cap at a saucy angle. In the hands of this little chap is a bat

about as big as the boy himself. Under the picture are the words: 'The hope of his side.' Somebody ought to draw a companion picture to that one, with the title slightly changed. It would show the goalkeeper, and the words underneath would be: 'The last hope of his side.' That really describes the goalkeeper. He is in the last ditch, the last hope, with knowledge that he can't afford to make mistakes. There is nobody after him to remedy them. Moreover, a mistake by a goalkeeper is remembered and recalled when lots of other things about the same match are forgotten.

In the first of the five Gup Finals in which I played - about a quarter of a century ago - Arsenal lost to Cardiff City by a single goal, scored with a simple sort of shot which Dan Lewis would have dealt with safely ninety-nine times out of a hundred. On that day of days he allowed the ball to slip out of his hands and over the line. That is the incident I remember about the Cup Final. If I really dwelt on the match long enough, however, I should also think about the mistakes the Arsenal forwards made in that game. I myself ought to have scored a couple of goals.

That difference between the goalkeeper and the other players on the field - the fact that the 'Aunt Sally' can't afford to make a mistake - must be laced with all the thoughts and ideas about goalkeeping. It always has been true. Moreover, it is still true, even if in some respects ideas about the things which go to make up a good goalkeeper have changed in recent times. For the man between the posts it must be safety first.

The temptation to indulge in the spectacular stuff is strong, and there are quite a lot of goalkeepers in first-class sides even to-day who find it too strong to be resisted. We still see fellows trying - and failing to catch a high ball when it would have been quite easy — and much safer — for them to put it over the bar or round the post. The cold shivers run down my spine when I see a goalkeeper, with the ball in his hands, taking two or three steps to dodge an oncoming forward, bouncing the

ball, and then doing the same thing again. Suppose he drops it! The unnecessary dodging might be fatal. Play safe; get rid of it.

Among the statements of policy continually repeated in football circles is that goalkeepers are cheap and plentiful; six a penny. That isn't just a joke. In a sense it is true, for this very clear reason. To a greater extent than any other member of a football team the goalkeeper is 'on his own'. He is less a part of a machine than are the placers in other positions; less dependent on what his colleagues do. Moreover, no matter the class of football, the goalkeeper is presented with the same sort of problems. He gets high shots and low shots, fast ones and slow ones, plus curling centres, and all the rest of it. Only in recent times has it been recognized that there is a difference between the star goalkeepers and the ordinary ones. For quite a long time the highest transfer fee paid for any goalkeeper was considerably below the biggest fee paid for, say, an inside forward. But when Manchester United wanted a goalkeeper not long ago they paid a big fee for Reg Allen. Shortly afterwards the Derby County manager thought it worth while to dig deeply into the club's banking account to get the services of Ray Middleton from Chesterfield

Bearing in mind that good goalkeepers are now considered almost as valuable as good players in any other position, we can go further into details, and in doing so pass on hints about the things which go to make-up the best goalkeepers. I don't even suggest that I am putting things in proper order when I say that a good goalkeeper should be a good kicker of the ball. I do put it in early, however, because it is a point which is so often overlooked. Indeed there is some evidence that modern goalkeepers are not such good kickers as the goalkeepers of old. When I was a lad it was not considered extraordinary for the goalkeeper of a side to take the penalty kicks awarded to his team. There were several goalkeepers who did it regularly -and successfully. 'Tiny' Joyce scored many goals for Millwall

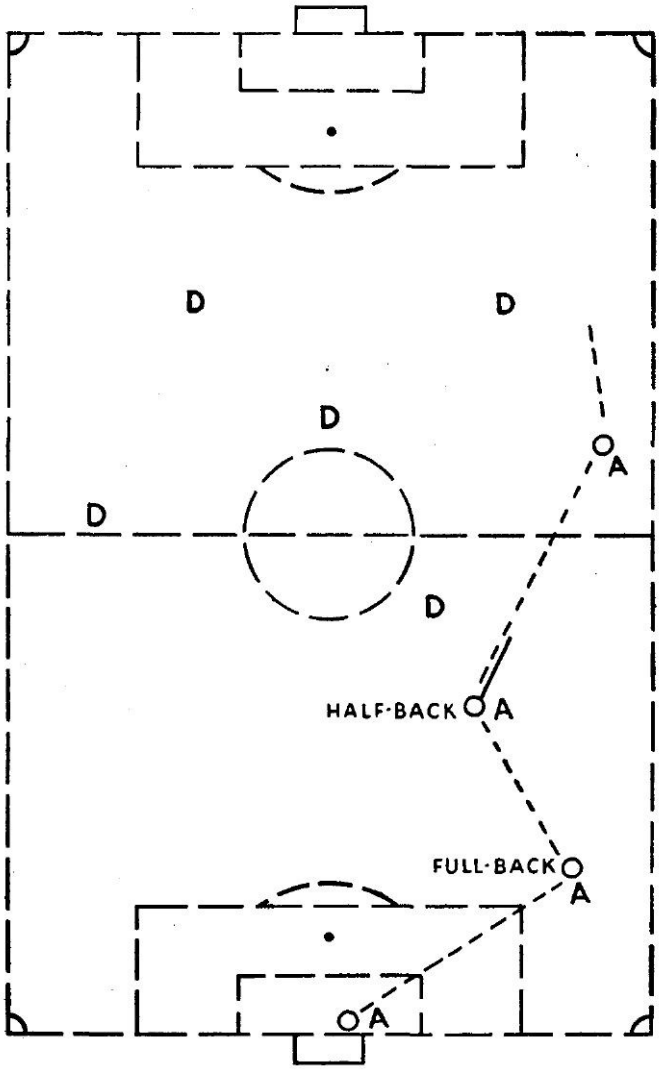
from the twelve yards spot. He, and the other goalkeeper penalty takers, would not have been called up for the job if they had not been good kickers of the ball: accurate as well as strong.

There aren't any goalkeeper penalty takers in these days. That may not be entirely due to the fear that if a goalkeeper's penalty kick was cleared he wouldn't be back in his place in time to stop the other fellows from scoring. Even if they are not penalty takers, however, goalkeepers can still be of extra help to the side if they are able to kick well.

Ted Ditchburn of the Spurs was already on the short list of candidates for a place in England's International side — by reason of the brilliant saves he made - before he had really mastered the art of ball-kicking. During the time I was manager of Tottenham Hotspur I caused Ditchburn to spend hours every week learning how to 'place' a ball on those occasions when he had time to think where he was kicking it. Colleagues of his were sent up the field - to centre-forward or to the wings - and it was Ditchburn's practice time job to land the ball at their feet. To learn to kick *to a target* is among the tips passed on to goalkeepers.

Mighty Frank Swift could kick a ball well into the far half of the field. He didn't always do it, of course, and there is no suggestion that the long kick should never be varied. The point is that whatever the length of the kick, it should be accurate. In the French side which went so near to beating England recently there was a goalkeeper who used the drop-kick quite a lot. With this type of kick he was able to find a man far distant from him without sending the ball up into the clouds. From time to time I get the idea that many players -dead keen on the game - become goalkeepers because they are such poor ball-kickers. But I want my goalkeeper to be a good kicker.

It may be said that the goalkeepers of our time have improved on their fathers because they don't kick the ball so



The goalkeeper, in safe possession, rolls the ball along the ground to his full-back, who has taken up position. The full-back passes the ball to his half-back, who progresses a little and then sends it forward - preferably to the outside wing man. Good constructive move with risks attached, but worth while, as it may catch the defenders scattered and far out from their own goal.

FIG. 1

hard or so often. Instead they make a water-polo throw, or roll the ball along the ground to some near-by defender. That's true. They do. Even while I recognize the risk I am running of being dubbed old-fashioned, I still make the statement that there is a real danger, in these days, of the short-distance clearance being overdone. In the first place there are attendant risks. In the second place it slows down the game. Consider what happens. The goalkeeper struggles to get clear of his opponents. He then rolls the ball along the ground to a near-by full-back, who takes it up before passing it along to the wing half-back.

In turn the wing-half travels a little way, and then on the ball goes to the outside right. While all this has been going on the defenders of the other side have been getting back to their respective covering positions. They would have been much more likely to be found out of position if, instead of that original short pass, the goalkeeper, with one accurate kick, had landed the ball at the feet of the outside right. In other words, one good kick would have achieved the same objective — at a quicker pace — as several kicks.

Again, there would be fewer goalkeepers carried to the dressing-room - or to the nearest hospital - suffering from injuries about the head or arms if they could, and would, on occasion, kick the ball clear instead of throwing themselves full length in the effort to grasp it.

The one fellow on the field who is allowed to use his hands must also learn how to use his feet to the ball. The goalkeeper isn't a unit, 'on his own', to as great an extent as many people imagine, or as many goalkeepers seem to think. If he is doing his job well, he is starting attacks by his own side as well as stopping attacks by the enemy.

While the goalkeeper's place is, generally speaking, under the bar, there is a much greater space which he should regard as his own. That is the space which can roughly be described as marked by the two lines running six yards out from each goal-

post, connected with a cross-line - the goal area, as it is officially known. When the ball comes into that area the goalkeeper should consider that it belongs to him, and he should leave the other defenders in no doubt that he is for the time being the rightful owner of that ball. Especially does this apply to those balls dropping into the goal area from the wings.

In a recent match a goalkeeper and a full-back had to receive attention for injuries received simultaneously. Trying to be in position to head away a ball coming over from the wing, the full-back retreated towards his goal. At the same time the goalkeeper came out to deal with the ball. There was a nasty collision. After the trainer had brought both of them round, the goalkeeper said to the full-back: 'You should have left it to me.'

The retort of the full-back was: 'You didn't shout.'

It's too late when the goalkeeper and the full-back are lying on the ground, both having gone for the same ball, and that ball resting in the net.

Those high centres, coming across from the wing, with opponents dashing in to meet the ball, are among the awkward moments for even the best of goalkeepers. Sometimes the ball can be caught, and if it can be - with safety - then it should be. If there is a risk attached, however, then the thing to do is to use one or both fists. If the fist is used, let it be remembered that it is wiser to deflect the ball towards the sideline than down the middle. If the ball has come over from the right, it is a certainty that the left-wing attackers will have closed in with a view to getting to the ball before the goalkeeper. This means that there is a safety zone over on his own right, into which the goalkeeper can hand the ball.

Then there is the hard shot, the ball too high or driving too fast for the goalkeeper to catch. Here also the 'safety first' motto should be applied. Much better to concede a corner-kick by using the flat of the hands to divert the ball over the bar, or round the post, than run the risk attached to trying to

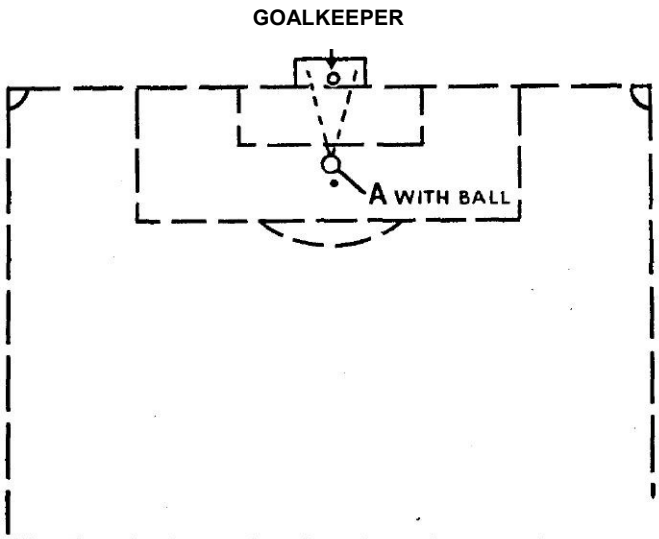
bring it down or hold it. Trying to hold such shots is making a hard job, attended with all sorts of risks, of what is really quite an easy one.

The soft goals often come because goalkeepers treat shots as easy. Whenever possible, get the body, or the legs, in line with the oncoming ball. I saw a Cup-tie lost last season by a goalkeeper who did not take the precaution of thus covering up. The ground was wet: the shot was a fairly long one. The goalkeeper could have had his legs as extra guards. They were wide open, and when the ball slipped out of his hands it also slipped between his legs.

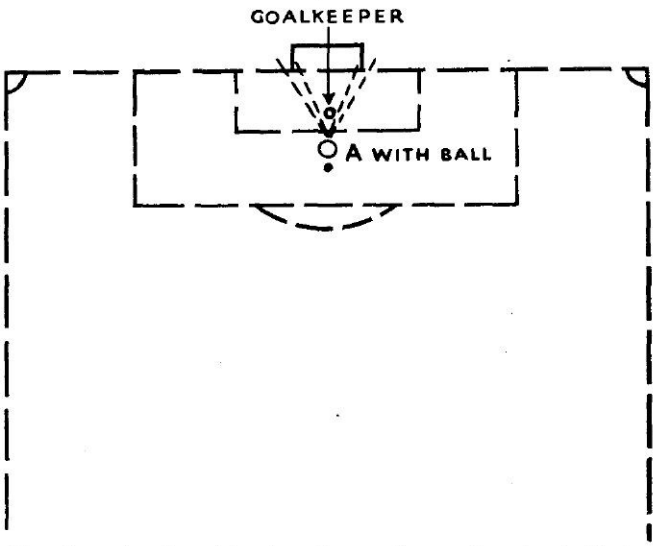
Having made up his mind that the ball in the goal area belongs to him, there is one thing the goalkeeper must not do. He must not change his mind. He who hesitates is lost. Suppose, to give an example, the centre-forward of the other side has slipped through with the ball to somewhere around the edge of the penalty area. He may kick it just a little way forward. If the goalkeeper thinks he can get it by pouncing on it, he must go all out for it. One possible effect of this advance is that the fellow with the ball may be hustled into taking a too hurried shot and thus miss the target. Even more important is the fact that by advancing from his goal the goalkeeper has narrowed the angle.

To the people who say, after a goal has been scored by a forward dashing through as I have suggested, that the goalkeeper should have stayed at home, I say 'Stuff and nonsense!' By coming out to meet the opponent the goalkeeper has done the really important thing; narrowed the angle on either side of him at which the oncoming forward can shoot for the net.

Talking of angles, there are times when the goalkeeper can, by taking up the right position, make it almost impossible for an opponent to beat him. One of the goals which I still remember vividly was scored against that great goalkeeper and master of the art of anticipation, Harry Hibbs. Playing against his side I cut in from the wing to a place near the goal line. There



If an attacker has broken through, as shown, and the goalkeeper stays under the bar, he leaves a lot of space at each side of him into which the player in possession can shoot.



By advancing from his place the goalkeeper is not only likely to fluster the player with the ball, but narrows the angle for the successful shot.

FIG. 2

was no colleague to whom the ball could be passed, so I had to shoot. Hibbs, sensing this, took up position near the goal-post which I was approaching; leaving scarcely any target except himself for me to aim at. But he had just left sufficient space between himself and the post, and I banged the ball into that space. Into the net it went, nearly taking the skin off the goalkeeper's ear on route. Harry called me a lucky fellow, but the simple truth was that in trying to cover any angled shot I could make he had not gone quite close enough to the near post, leaving room for me to 'squeeze' the ball through.

I often wonder whether the art of anticipation is just one of the things which a goalkeeper either has or has not got. What is certain is that this is very definitely a part of the make-up of the tip-top goalkeeper. Why do the best of them make such a large proportion of the saves look easy? The answer is that, anticipating cleverly, they are in the right place at the right time. The aim for the goalkeeper must be to find out what the opponent in possession of the ball will do — almost *must* do — in given circumstances. One way to find out is for the goalkeeper to put in some practice as a forward — at shooting. Many of the keepers in the top class do this: Sam Bartram and Bert Williams, for instance. Incidentally, the Wolverhampton and England goalkeeper is just about the quickest starter on the Wolves staff".

There is no other goalkeeper of our time, so far as I have noticed, who is so capable of switching direction when he is in flight. Anticipating the ball going in one direction, he starts to jump that way. But if, somehow, the fellow with the ball changes direction, then Williams can switch his jump at least sufficiently to enable him to get an outstretched hand to the ball. Then follows a miraculous save!

It is also most helpful if the goalkeeper is on the lookout for the postcard which so many forwards are ready to send, as to the direction in which they intend the final shot to go home. The turn of the foot just before the shot is made may give away

the intention, with the result that the watching goalkeeper will get the credit of anticipating cleverly when in actual fact the man with the ball has really sent him advance notice of his intentions. The credit note to the goalkeeper is that he was on the lookout for the tip.

The point having been stressed that there are such a lot of good - if not complete goalkeepers - I would say that the difference between the top-notchers and the less eminent is that the former give more thought to their job. In short, by their actions they give the lie to the suggestion that in the make-up of all goalkeepers there is a touch of madness.

One goalkeeper of my acquaintance keeps a chart showing the exact way in which every goal is scored against him. At home, after each match in which he has been beaten, he reconstructs on paper every goal. The chart is duly taken to his club headquarters on the next training day: is shown to the other players, who are then expected to copy the movement on the chart. Thus the goalkeeper is able to decide whether, in the circumstances, he could have done anything different; anything which would have helped him to save the final shot.

I am not prepared to give instructions as to how goalkeepers should save penalty kicks, because in the ordinary course of events these should not be stoppable. Yet Jack Fairbrother, goalkeeper of Newcastle United, considered it worth while to keep a notebook in which are jotted down the various ways of the penalty-kick takers. If, as the result of the study of these notes, he can spot which side of him - to left or to right - any particular penalty-kick artist is likely to drive the ball, Fairbrother can be poised to make a quick move in that direction the instant the ball is kicked. By the way, have you noticed that a big proportion of good goalkeepers are better against shots on one side than the other? The fault can be cured by practice. That it isn't cured is due to the fact that not all goalkeepers are conscious of their weakness.

All in all, goalkeeping isn't just a matter of waiting for

opponents to fire in the shots and then doing everything possible to stop them. The job calls for as much thought - possibly more — than is required in any other position. That is one reason why it is necessary to tell young goalkeepers not to get into the very bad habit of talking to the spectators. At matches of minor importance the watchers often stand a couple of yards, or even less, away from the goalkeeper. Treat them as if they weren't there. Follow the play all the time. The moment may come when the full-back or the centre-half will need the goalkeeper to come to his assistance. Be ready, call for the ball if the full-back is in trouble.

As a final word, don't forget that the goalkeeper may go for spells in any match without having much work to do. So dress to keep warm. Also keep the circulation going by moving about, even apart from the time when there are shots to be saved or goal-kicks to be taken.

CHAPTER 6

DIFFERENT - AND BETTER - FULL-BACK PLAY

FOR one of the International matches of the 1951-2 season the England selectors chose Alf Ramsey and Arthur Willis as the full-back pair. Before enlarging on that interesting fact it is only right to say that the experiment was not an outstanding success. These two fellows did not play as effectively as an England pair as they had regularly played as a pair for their own club. Even that may have been at least partly due to the fact there was something rather different in their methods, and that those methods were not so well known to the other members of the England defence as they were to the other defenders of their own club.

Nor was it an entirely novel procedure for the England selectors to pick a club pair of backs for their country. Male and Hapgood of Arsenal, were for a time the recognized England full-backs. All the same, in giving caps to the Tottenham pair the selectors were, in the first place, paying some regard to the principle that full-backs must work together as a pair, and in the second place to the particular way in which these backs played.

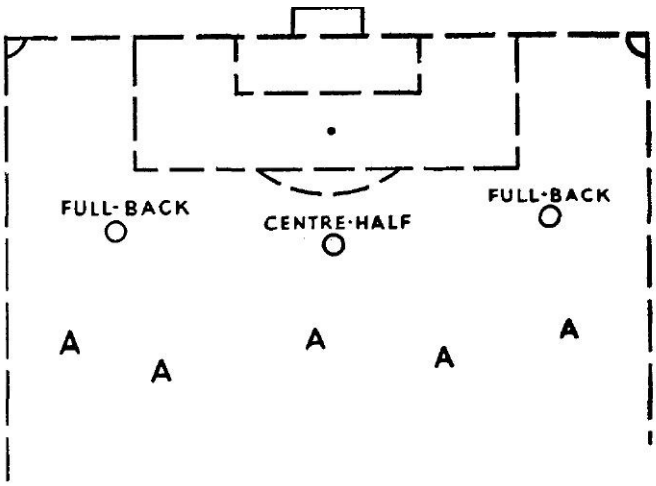
We could argue for a long time as to whether full-back play is better in these days than it used to be. What can be said, with conviction, is that different ideas have been brought to bear on full-back play in recent times. Leaving aside the argument as to whether it is better, let us agree that it is different -and different in ways which, properly developed, can make it better. It is quite likely that if the Manchester United full-back pair -John Carey and John Aston - had both been English, they would have been capped at the same time. As a pair these

men did as much as any other two I can think of to set the ball rolling in what I have called a different direction.

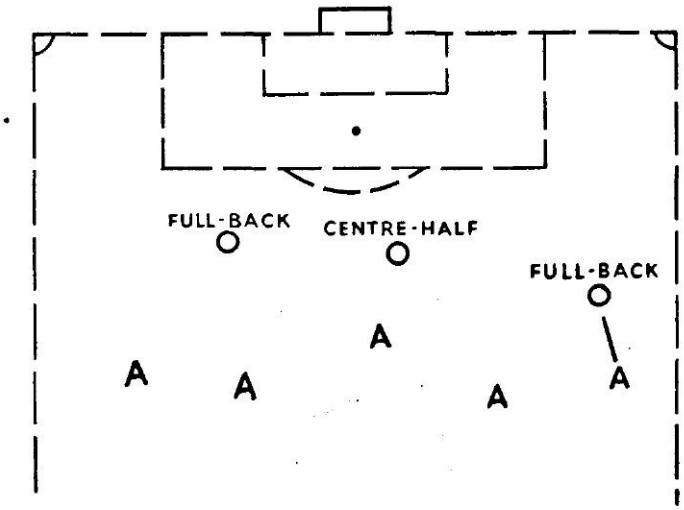
The idea of these differing full-backs, working as **a** pair, is that they should help each other to get the ball away from their own danger zone, and thence forward to members of their own side. Just a few words - as if describing an actual incident from play - will suffice to illustrate their particular methods. Here, then, comes Ramsey, with the ball, but so closely attended by an opponent that he can't kick clear. Willis, his partner, takes up such a position - clear of all opposition - that the ball can be passed to him in safety. The same move could be done the other way round, of course. The player receiving the ball in the open position would then be in a favorable position to make a clearance which would be of service to his side.

I hasten to add that these rather different - these up-to-date ideas of full-back play - do not meet with unanimous approval, There are risks attached to them, especially if they are not carried out well. It could be said, with truth, that the 'dallying' by the Tottenham full-backs, this passing of the ball from one to the other, has even led to goals against the side. On the other hand, the methods have also led to goals being scored by the Tottenham forwards as the result of the constructive play of the full-backs. To get at the truth as to whether these methods are good or bad, a balance must be struck, and certainly so far as the clubs of the full-backs who are playing this 'new' game is concerned, results in general suggest that the tactics pay. More goals are made than are given away.

Maybe the critics are not fully educated to the virtues, and are apt to exaggerate the risks. Again, it is probably true that the people who shout to the defenders to 'get rid of it' were brought up in the old school: in that school where the merits of a full-back were apt to be judged by the celerity with which the ball was kicked clear of the danger area, and the distance ii traveled towards the other end of the field before again coming in contact with the ground. But, merit is not necessarily



The full-backs should swivel. Playing square, as shown in this diagram, they leave too much ground for the centre-half to cover.



As the left full-back moves to interfere with an attack on the right, the right full-back should come inwards to a position in the rear – a necessary cover movement.

FIG. 3

in might. That seems to be one of the lessons the full-backs of to-day are trying to teach.

Having thus given a sort of blessing to the tactics of full-back play, now so noticeable, I must retract a little to get on the side of the *kick-it-hard* school. I certainly must not encourage any and every young full-back to fancy himself as first and foremost an artist because he makes the short pass to a colleague. There are times in every match when the danger to his goal is so acute that the full-back must join the get rid-of-it class: when he must say to himself, on the instant, that ball must go anywhere, rather than stay where it is. The 'anywhere' may be among the spectators — or over their heads — or it may be over the goal-line for a corner-kick. The point remains that the initial duty of the good full-back is to get the ball away from danger.

The tight corners apart, the mere order of the boot, hard-kicking for hard-kicking's sake, comes under the heading of bad play. Just as I have stressed the necessity of the goal-keeper learning the art of 'placing' the ball to a member of his

side, so the full-back must do the same sort of thing - only more so. Even from a purely selfish angle it pays to place the clearances.

In these days no player can consider himself a complete full-back until he has learned to do nearly all the things a halfback does - or is expected to do. And between the half-backs and the full-backs there must be understanding as to method. In the make-up of a football team there are, potentially, five forwards trying their wits against five defenders - excluding the goalkeeper. So in theory each forward should be covered. This covering is not cut and dried, and the point is that it must be flexible. Different teams have differing ideas as to which forward should be considered the special care of each particular defender. For many years the West Bromwich Albion team toyed with the idea that the outside wing forward should be specially watched by their

wing half-back, leaving the full-back on that side of the field to deal with the inside forward opponent. Most of the big clubs however, take the alternative line in relation to this defensive covering. The wing-half makes the inside forward his particular care, and the full-back gives his attention to the outside wing men.

This latter is the wiser course. It should have the effect of nipping an attack in the bud earlier than the other method. Moreover, it almost compels the attack to veer outwards -towards the wing. That is where the full-back comes in, and it is part of his job to cover the winger in such a way that he keeps him more or less tied to the touch-line.

I shall have more to say about tackling when I come to deal with half-back play, but not a lot, because the tackle seems to be among the features of football which are being pushed into the background. There are times, however, when the full-back must go into the tackle, and there is this to be said about it from the full-back's point of view. Go into the tackle if there is a reasonable chance of winning through with the ball, but don't tackle in such a way that, if the effort is unsuccessful, the tackier is out of it so far as that particular attack is concerned. The full-back who is beaten - and the best of them are beaten sometimes - must be able to recover so that he can continue to play his part in repelling the attack.

That replies to an obvious question as to how the full-back, making the opposing wing man his special pigeon, can do the other part of his job: that of covering comparatively close to goal. When the play is on one wing, the full-back on the other side of the field should come in towards goal. The danger is likely to develop around the penalty area when an outside winger is in possession. He won't send the ball right across the field to the opposite winger. This leads to an important feature about full-back play, as far as pairs of players are concerned. Far too many reasonably good full-back pairs play *square:* that is, about an equal distance from their goal. Such a method

leaves too wide a gap, gives too much work for the centre-half to get through effectively. In my opinion this was one of the reasons - nay, the main reason - why Blackpool lost the 1951 Cup Final when they had Newcastle United as their opponents. The Blackpool full-backs played too square.

The idea behind this tactical move wasn't at all obscure. At the back of the minds of the Blackpool full-backs was the notion that, playing thus, they were better able to throw their opponents offside. What is more, they did succeed from time to time. Jackie Milburn was offside a few times, but twice during the match that same Jackie Milburn went through to score goals which carried the Cup to Newcastle. The offside-trap catches, very often, *not* the people it is supposed to trap, but the players who set it. Remember *Punch's* advice to those about to marry — *Don't.* Very strongly I give the same advice to the full-backs who try to play the offside game. It is a boomerang. Among other reasons why it doesn't pay is that full-backs who move up the field in the hope that the referee's whistle for offside will come to their aid, are no longer in position to cover effectively.

Even in relation to this covering, this interference with the attacking schemes of opponents, ideas have changed in recent times. Many first-class clubs now adopt as a tactical scheme what can most fittingly be described as defence in retreat. As an opponent comes forward with the ball, the defenders back-pedal towards their own goal, each closely marking an opponent other than the one who is in possession. When the danger develops, one defender does at least make a show of going in to tackle, putting the man with the ball in a quandary.

Watching the Austrians play at Wembley in the autumn of 1951 it was obvious that they were flummoxed by the *defence in retreat* tactics of England. These obviously provided a new problem to which they hadn't an inkling of the correct answer. Incidentally these tactics worried some of the people who were most anxious that England should win the match. They used

a lot of wind telling those England defenders to 'get at him'. The advice fell on deaf ears, however. Because they were allowed to work the ball almost unmolested, the Austrian forwards played some very pretty football. The ball was passed and re-passed. I counted one Austrian move in which twelve short passes were made without an England player touching the ball. The pretty-pretty moves made little real progress, however, and when the Austrian forwards reached the edge of the penalty area they were faced by something like a solid wall of defenders. Neither of the goals came as the reward for the pretty stuff. Defence in retreat paid.

We are continually reading about, or watching, this or that side having most of the play yet failing to win because they did not manage to score. This failure to finish off attacks is often due to the fact that attackers are continually hammering at a goal too well packed with defenders for a way through to be found. The full-backs are a part of the packing.

There is no necessity for me to draw attention to the title which has often been given to the team for which I used to play - 'lucky Arsenal'. The words are constantly used. Although over-played, Arsenal prevented goals from being scored with a packed defence, and scored goals themselves in quick break-aways. Note was also made of the number of times so-called 'certain goals' were prevented by a full-back heading or kicking the ball away from under the bar on occasions when the goalkeeper was helpless. Lucky! Well, *that* wasn't luck anyway. A full-back can't head the ball away from under the bar - as Eddie Hapgood did dozens of times, and as Wally Barnes does now - unless he has taken up that position under the bar. He is there by design, not by accident.

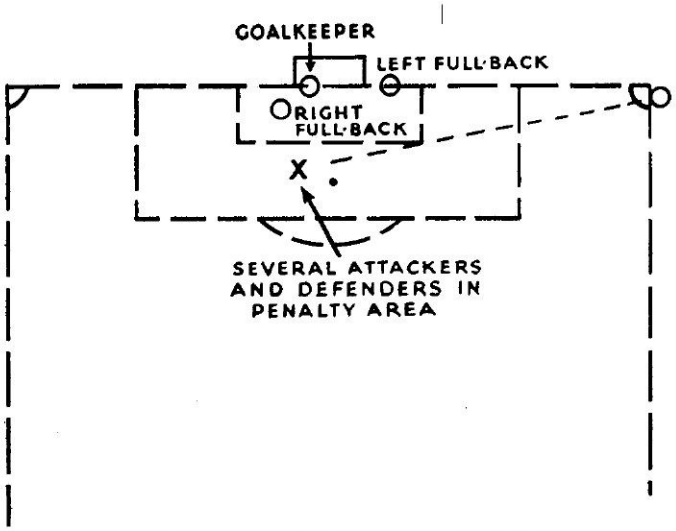
In the course of the recent England - Austria match, to which I have previously referred, England's left full-back, Bill Eckersley, having taken up position under the bar, saved the England goal on three occasions. He was there to stop one low shot with his stomach: one with his head, and another - which

was too high - with his hand. I am not advocating that full-backs should become goalkeepers. It can even be argued that the full-back who punches the ball out with his hand when there is no other way he can stop it, is not 'playing the game'. It will continue to be done, however. Being under the bar with the object of stopping the ball from going in, almost any full-back will stop it with his hand, instinctively, if that is the only possible way. He certainly won't be able to stop it with body, head - or even hands - if he isn't in position.

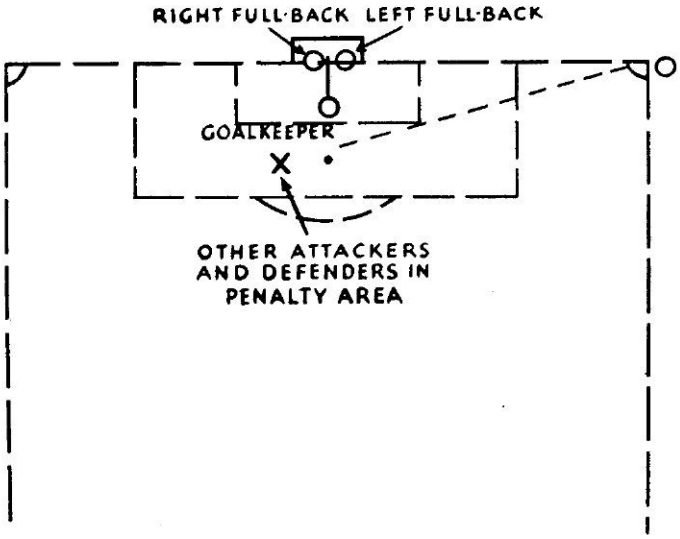
When a corner-kick is being taken against his side the goalkeeper positions himself somewhere near the far post. The most useful position for one of the full-backs is close to the other post - that is the one nearest the kicker. He may not be wanted there, but being there he may be able to save what would otherwise be a certain goal. Thus, saving it is no fluke: just a part of the general defensive plan.

The full-back with a sense of positional play helps the goalkeeper. By way of returning thanks, the goalkeeper can help the full-back, and his side, out of trouble. It is with some misgivings that I advocate a backward pass to the goalkeeper by the defender who is in difficulties. The reason for the hesitancy is a definite opinion that this business of passing back to the goalkeeper is being over-done in these times. Some people would even bar it by football law. There isn't the slightest doubt, however, that the backward pass to the goalkeeper is a most valuable emergency move.

Of course it is true that the pass back sometimes leads to that dreadful mark which is placed, in the newspapers, alongside the name of a goal-scorer; the asterisk which denotes: 'Scored against his own side.' But the black marks which are the sequel to a deliberate back pass only get there because the back pass was a bad one. It is easy to make a pass back to the goalkeeper in such a way that even if he doesn't get to the ball there is no goal to be duly recorded and wept over. The back pass can and should direct the ball so that it will go wide of the goal.



This shows the positions of the full-backs when a corner-kick is being taken against them. The near full-back is on the goal-line, just outside the post. The other is a short way up the field of play, outside the far post.



Having taken up those positions the full-backs can move outwards if necessary. But if the goalkeeper goes out to meet the ball, the full-backs can take up positions under the bar in case he fails to clear. They become temporary goalkeepers.

FIG. 4

Positional play, combination among the defenders, plus understanding! These are among the important things which serve to keep the goal intact. There are what might be called little things which call for attention too. When Newcastle United played Tottenham Hotspur in the Charity Shield match recently, the full-backs of Newcastle overlooked a minor detail which nearly cost their side a goal. The Newcastle goalkeeper fluffed a goal-kick: only rolling the ball to a place just outside the penalty area to where the Spurs centre-forward Duquemin was standing. Both the Newcastle full-backs were well away from goal, and Duquemin's shot, made with the goalkeeper out of position, only missed scoring by inches. On the next occasion on which the Newcastle goalkeeper took a goal-kick one of the backs stood under the bar until the ball had been truly hit by the goalkeeper. The precaution might have been too late.

Speed in general, and especially quickness in turning are

valuable assets in a full-back. He must be strong too, but not necessarily big. I said earlier that the tackle was dying. I am almost prepared to say that the shoulder-charge is dead. Referees have come down on it: the obstruction rule has helped to kill it. Perhaps the almost complete passing of the shoulder charge is a good thing. To-day, to a greater extent than ever in my time, it is realized that full-back play consists of something more - much more - than brute force and ignorance.

CHAPTER 7

THE POLICEMAN AND HIS BEAT

Do you know that in all the laws which govern this game of football, only one player gets mentioned in relation to his position on the field? The exception is the goalkeeper. As the law has it, a team consists of a goalkeeper and ten other players. This means, in effect, that there is no jurisdiction over the distribution of the other ten players. On the team-sheets, as printed, there are two full-backs, and a centre-half. In practice, and in most teams of the present time, there are *three full-backs* with the centre-half- in many teams - at least as much a full-back as either of the others given that title. Over this use of the third full-back, there has been more ink spilled, many arguments raised, and more words used - swear words some of them — than on any other actual playing topic which has cropped up in my time. We give the centre-half in modern football many names, in addition to that of third full-back. We call him a stopper, or a policeman.

The stopper centre-half is no modern invention. Always — certainly all through my time — there have been stopper centre-half-backs. Several door-ways lead to the goal. The most important of these door-ways is in the middle. Wouldn't it be sheer folly to leave that door wide open? The centre-half is the fellow to whom the rest of the team look, first and foremost, to keep that door as tight shut as he possibly can. I recall a match in which I played even before the offside law was altered. After the game had been in progress for half an hour or so a conversation between the centre-half and the other team's centre-forward went like this. 'Look here,' said the centre-forward, 'isn't there any other player on the field except me?' 'Possibly

there is,' replied the centre-half, 'but I wasn't told about them!' Yes, right down the line, the primary task of the centre-half has been to stop the opposing centre-forward from scoring goals. Having made this clear, I must bow to the inevitable and admit that, for good or ill, the change in the offside law had the effect of changing, to a considerable extent, the ideas concerning the job of the centre-half. The late Herbert Chapman had much to answer for in that connection, but believe me, if he were still here, he would most emphatically decline to make any apology. By common consent Herbert Chapman was one of the best football team managers of all time. He, of all people was responsible for the start of a controversy concerning the duties of the centre-half which has been carried on for a quarter of a century, and which, according to present indications, will be continued for at least that length of time again. Chapman's opinion was that, almost literally, the centre-half should be a stopper and nothing but a stopper.

On one occasion the Arsenal manager of that time left me in no doubt as to how he expected the centre-half of his team to play. Circumstances caused me to be given the 'pivot' position. I have a newspaper cutting which tells about that game. (I always kept cuttings which said anything about how I played. Quite often something can be learnt from the opinions of the watchers.) That newspaper cutting caused me to puff out my chest. 'Joe Hulme played at centre-half in the Arsenal team, and was in fine form. The one-time winger scored the Arsenal goal which won the match.'

Of course I was pleased that somebody else was pleased with my display at centre-half, and especially about that match-winning goal. From my place high up in the clouds, however, I was soon brought back to earth by the Arsenal manager. On the carpet in the manager's room next morning I was told that it was not, as a centre-half, part of my job to score a goal, that in doing so I had traveled much too far off my beat. The lecturer pictured what might have happened at the Arsenal end

of the field if, instead of scoring, I had lost possession of the ball.

All true, of course - very true, and leading up to the question of whether the job of the centre-half of a football team should be a stopper: just that and no more. Herbert Chapman created the stopper centre-half as a part of a general plan of match play. He had in his mind a blue print of the sort of football he wanted from his team as a whole. It might be said that in the blue print there was a red ink mark showing the centre-half as the 'policeman'. That policeman was 'Herbie' Roberts: not a great footballer in the all round sense, but what a stopper!

Many other clubs, important and not so important, have copied the Arsenal plan. Some of them have made a success of it. And that undeniable fact is not overlooked when I express the purely personal opinion that I would still rather watch a team in which the centre-half is the pivot of the whole side, rather than merely the pivot of the defensive portion of the team.

If it is agreed, however, that the centre-half must be little more than a third full-back, then he must play that way, whether he fancies himself in the policeman's role or not. It follows, too, that if the centre-half is not to be allowed to wander up the field, if his duty begins and ends in behaving like Mary's little lamb towards the opposing centre-forward, the play of other members of the side must be ordered accordingly. There must be somebody, in the space left around the middle of the field by the backward centre-half, who will get the ball there, draw an opponent, and feed the men in front. Alex James was that cog in the Arsenal wheel.

Now, accepting for the moment that the decision in relation to the team tactics of any particular side is that the centre-half shall be first and foremost, and nearly all the time, a policeman, we can go ahead to look at the things he must do, and the things he must be, while on his beat. Whether, in the real police force, the big boys in blue are better than the policemen of average size, I have no means of knowing. It is very obvious

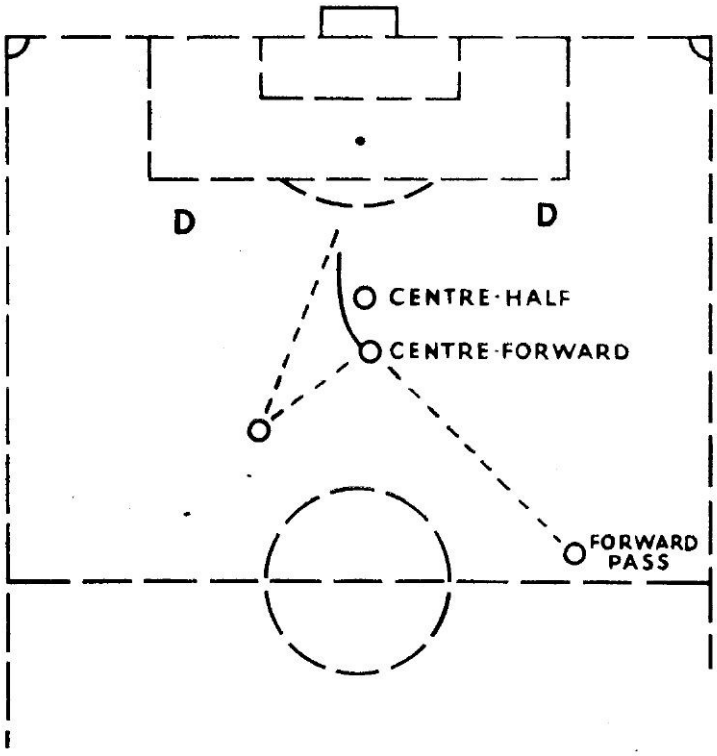
however, that when the centre-half of so many teams was turned into a policeman, we proceeded to produce a race of big strong fellows to fill the bill. As one manager put it, 'I want a centre-half who stands six feet in his socks, and if he is a bit more than that, all the better'.

Think of some of them - Leslie Compton, Harry Clarke, Frank Brennan, Allenby Chilton - and others from current first-class teams who will be readily recalled by followers of the game. They've got to be tall, these stoppers. Of course the game should be played with the ball on or near to the ground. We all know that, and how we love to see the teams which keep it there most of the time. But it's an ideal — a dream we can scarcely hope will ever come true. Anyway, how can the outside winger get the ball into the goal-area except by putting his toe under it and sending it there through the air? That is just one of the many occasions when 'lift' has to be given to the ball. It has to be accepted that as the game is played, many of the attacks will be air-borne. And that is where the value of the extra inches of the centre-half come in most useful.

The big fellow must dominate the middle. If he is big enough, or can get up high enough, then the majority of the lofted passes which are meant for the centre-forward become the property of the centre-half. They should be, because he is in the happy position of being able to meet those high up-the-middle balls. He is moving forward whereas the centre-forward has somehow to watch the ball coming towards him when he is facing the wrong way.

Always in position to head - or nod - the ball away from his immediate opponent. That is part of the job of the big centre-half. Much the same thing applies to the balls on the ground. Quick, intelligent intervention is at the root of successful centre-half play.

Last season, in two successive matches I saw the same team play with different centre-halves. The regular first-team man was hurt in the first of these two games, and the reserve was



The centre-forward often gets the ball through the air when he is facing his own goal, with the centre-half in close attendance. The centre-forward can make a backward pass to an inside man, run around the centre-half- without the ball - to be in position to accept the quick pass from his inside man.

FIG. 5

promoted for the other game. Between the play of the two men there was this big difference: the regular first-team man repeatedly moved in to get the ball while the opposing centre-forward was waiting for it to come to him. The reserve centre-half, a little afraid perhaps of making a mistake, stood back until the opposing centre-forward was in possession of the ball. He then proceeded to the much harder task of taking it from him.

If the centre-forward does get the ball - and he will - the ever present centre-half must worry him, bother him, tackle him, and by sheer persistence either get the ball or compel the centre-forward to make a hurried pass. The good centre-forward doesn't take all this attention by the policeman lying down. He tries to get out of the way, he may wander over to the right or to the left. Should the centre-half pursue the centre-forward on his wanderings? There are times - when the centre-forward is dribbling away from the middle - when the centre-half must follow; when he must be there to worry. But if the centre-forward goes over to one wing or the other, then the centre-half who follows him is overlooking the main part of his duty, that of dominating the middle of the pitch.

The Manchester United club was among the first to try to confuse the stopper centre-half by forward switches. Jack Rowley, the centre-forward repeatedly changed places with Jimmy Delaney, the outside right. The plot worked for a little while because opposing centre half-backs, having been told to keep the handcuffs on the centre-forward, went wandering after him. This meant that they weren't in the middle when the ball was put across. The move has ceased to pay such good dividends because centre half-backs discovered, in due course, that permitting themselves to be lured off their beat didn't pay. Goals were stolen while they were off duty.

The big centre-half - even the fellow who is under orders to be a stopper - *can* leave his position as guardian of the middle pathway to his own goal, with advantage to his side. That is

when his own team has been granted a corner-kick. Arsenal would not have been Cup-winners in 1950 — they would have been beaten in the semi-final — if Leslie Compton had not gone right into the Chelsea penalty area to head a ball past their goalkeeper as it came over from the corner-flag. Do you ask me why, if the centre-half is the sort of fellow who can head a goal from a corner-kick, he isn't allowed - or supposed - to try it until the side is in desperate straits for an equalizing or winning goal? Here is the answer.

In the early stages of a game even the big stopper centre-halves are so scared of being found out of position: so afraid that the opposing centre-forward will break away to snatch a goal, that they don't go up to try to use the corner-kicks until it is considered worth while to run the risk of a goal being given away. With due reserve I say to even the classic stopper centre half-backs, and especially to those of teams which have not so big forwards, go up all the time for those corner-kicks! The risk of a goal against can always be minimized by some other player — one of the forwards — falling back to act as deputy controller of the middle. Such a move is an essential part of team play. By the very nature of his defensive duties the centre-half becomes a good header of the ball.

In several ways he can play his part in starting attacks by his own side. From his third full-back position he can often nod the ball down to one or other of his full-back partners; or to a wing half, always provided, of course, that those other players are in position to receive the ball.

Much as I would enjoy doing so, I must resist the temptation to speculate at length on what the future will have in store for the centre-half. Some clubs may even copy the Austrian idea. Their centre-half was a different sort of player, a man with a roving commission. Actually, his only connection with the centre-half position was the fact that he wore number five on his back. Perhaps one of these days some British club will have the courage to copy the Austrian idea. Such a change, however,

will mean something like a revolution of defensive tactics in general.

I hope what I have written about the centre-half who is primarily, and nearly all the time, the man who keeps the handcuffs on the opposing centre-forward, leaves nobody with the impression that this type of centre-half is barred from giving any assistance to the men in front of him. The centre-half who is doing his job gets the ball often, and is frequently able to make good use of it. He can send long swinging passes to the wing men, for instance, or up the middle.

We now come, automatically, to the other type of centre-half, the player who can work the ball up the field. Without qualification - save that the position play of other members of the team is affected -1 prefer the centre-half who is the complete footballer. I remember Frank Barson, the most complete centre-half of my time. In case there should come a reminder he that was at the top of the class prior to the change in the offside rule, I would like also to quote the name of Stanley Cullis. He played for the Wolves *after* the offside law was altered, *after* the stopper centre-half became the general fashion.

These fellows could work the ball up, could beat an opponent, could move forward with it. By their adventurous play they made goals, and if the question was put to centre-forwards of their time as to whether they had a harvest festival, a loud laugh would be their reply.

Thank goodness we still have in the game to-day centre half-backs who can do both jobs, and this should at least encourage the ambitious 'pivots' of the present day to carry on their efforts to become complete footballers. Jack Rigby of Manchester City is one of them. Perhaps the outstanding case, however, is that of Jack Froggatt of Portsmouth. I mentioned earlier in this book how, changing from the outside left position, he dropped back to centre-half. There he quickly gained an International cap. What I did not mention was that, after the international game, he was dropped like a hot cake. Why?

Because he wandered too much from the generally accepted beat. The people connected with his club, however, are quite content that he should keep on doing this, and Portsmouth are among the attractive sides which still win matches. Take note, however, that when the adventurous Jack Froggatt works the ball up the field, wing half Jimmy Dickinson goes over towards the middle of the field. The path down the middle is still guarded.

To budding centre half-backs, this is my advice. Don't come to the conclusion that it is the easiest job on the field, that all it calls for is a grim determination to stick closer than a brother to the opposing centre-forward. Stop him, certainly. But you can't possibly be a less efficient member of the team if you are a complete footballer. It may be that, working your way up the ladder, you will eventually find yourself under orders to be just a third full-back. I hope you won't.

CHAPTER 8

THE PLAYERS WHO MAKE OR MAR: WING HALF-BACKS

To a very wise old-time footballer this request was made by a somewhat anxious manager: 'I wish you could come to see our team, and tell me what you think of it.'

To this the old-timer replied: 'It isn't necessary for me to see your whole team. Show me your half-backs and I'll tell you what sort of team you have.'

There is very little wrong, even in these times, with the idea behind that retort. By the power of their half-backs football teams are known. It might be suggested that in these times, because of the different approach of so many centre half-backs, it is no longer possible to judge the general merits of a side by merely watching the men in the middle line. I won't stop to argue that. What is true is that nothing has happened to the game to cut down, in any shape or form, the responsibilities of the wing halves. They are the fellows who make or mar the team. Take a close-up view of the successful sides of these modern times, and you can't fail to be impressed with the importance of the wing halves. The good teams, the most successful teams, are those best served by the men who play in these positions.

They are the fellows who should command what is roughly described as the middle of the field. They are the connecting links between the forwards and the men who mostly play close to their own goal. They must be important because they are always in the play. No idle moments for them. Wing half-back is the place which, from the utility angle, has least connection with the tape measure.

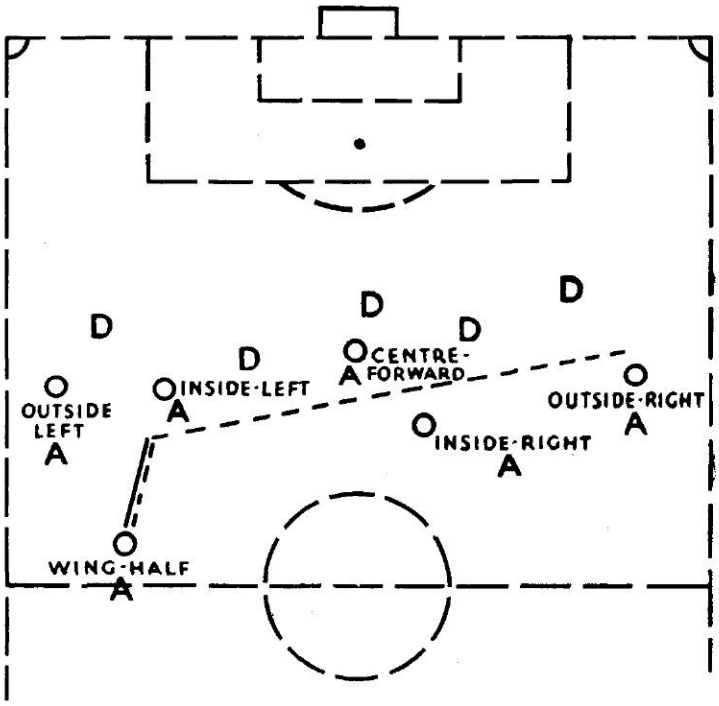
Some of the best of the wing half-backs have been little fellows, of less than average height. There was the great little Scotsman, Jimmy McMullan: a tiny fellow of West Bromwich Albion named Tommy Magee. Old-timers take off their hats when the name of 'Nudger' Needham is mentioned. The top of his head and the studs of his football boots weren't so very far apart. The same remark applies to Ben Warren. A list of tough little fellows as long as your arm could be made. Indeed, as we look around, even in these times, there seems to be some justification for the suggestion that the six-footers are given some other job on the field. They aren't placed in the wing half positions. If it is not necessary to supply the wing half-backs with lots of inches, there are other qualifications which are certainly indispensable. I have used the word *tough.* The wing-half must be that. He must be strong, too. Almost the first question which should be put to the young wing-half who has ideas of going to the top, or even to the player who wants to be of maximum value to a side lower down the scale is, 'Do you like work?' If the answer to that one is in the negative, some other place on the field must be found for that particular player. The fellow for whom there is no rest: no respite, throughout the ninety minutes of a match. . . . That is the wing-half.

Recently I asked a manager, who was searching for a wing-half, what he specially looked for. 'It isn't so much what I look for,' was his reply. 'It's what I look *at.* And the reply to that is first and foremost the thigh muscle.' It must happen - it does happen in every game that the legs of two players, one on each side, are concerned in a close-up grapple for the ball. The one who gets it, in such struggles, is the player with the greater strength in the legs. The wing-half, the terrier, doing his job of putting a full stop to the attacks of his opponents, must be good in the tackle; must get that ball before those clever opponents who play in the inside wing positions are able to carry out their scheming.

There should be nothing of the trust-to-luck and hope-for-the-best about the tackling part of the wing-half's job. Save for the sliding tackle, with outstretched leg, which should never be made unless there is a certainty of connecting boot with ball, the tackle should be made with the body well forward and the balance retained so as to permit recovery in case the tackle does not result in its first objective, getting the ball. Remember, the ball, not the man, is the objective.

The inside forwards, who are first and foremost the wing half-back's headache, are bags of tricks. Their bodies go this way and that, their legs say they are all out to kick the ball in one direction when they haven't the slightest intention of kicking it in that direction. If they succeed in kidding the wing-half to watch their bodies, or their legs, they have gone most of the way to beating him. The ball is the thing that matters, and while I agree that the temptation to watch the other fellow is strong, to keep your eyes on the ball is the first principle behind a hold-up effort. Watch Billy Wright of the Wolves, or Jimmy Scoular of Portsmouth, typical of the terrier-like, ever worrying wing-halves, and note how they keep their eyes on the ball, going for it with one leg, with the other so placed that the body balance is retained so that they can turn if beaten. Only the player who gets the ball can do anything with it.

Assuming that the wing-half knows how to get the ball - and there are many other ways of getting it in addition to the direct tackle - the question of what must be done with it follows naturally. Here it must be insisted that, as most teams play in these days, it is the wing half-backs to whom the forwards look most for service. Get the ball down and keep it down, giving the service along the ground. Provided there is a near-by forward in position to receive the ball, let him have it, along the ground, and quickly. In making that statement I am not overlooking the virtues of the long pass to the opposite side of the field, which can be made with advantage from time to time. Billy Wright is an expert in the art of switching the



Wing-half, in possession, works the ball inwards a little. Defenders veer over to that side of the field, but instead of feeding his own winger, or even the centre-forward, the wing-half makes the long pass to the other winger. If the defenders, anticipating the long pass, go that way, the wing-half can then make the reverse short pass to his near winger.

FIG. 6

point of attack with the pass to the other wing. Even for the expert players, however, the short accurate pass, along the ground, can be made with a smaller margin of error than the long pass.

Having made the forward pass, or even the square pass with the object of initiating progress in attack, the wing-half hasn't finished. He must follow up. The inside man, or the outside man, to whom the ball has been pushed may need the assistance of the wing-half. Here I am fully aware that I am treading on what many students of the game will describe as delicate ground. There was a time when three Sunderland players made a watching-winning reputation with what was described as the triangular wing game. The men who made the triangle were the right-wing forward pair, Charlie Buchan and Jackie Mordue, with wing-half Frank Cuggy to complete it. When either of his right wing men had the ball, Cuggy would follow up, in a position to take a short backward pass if either of his pals was in difficulty. In these days we have no trio of men playing the triangular wing game as consistently as those three used to play it. I shall be told that the reason for this is that experience of the modern game proves it doesn't pay, that it is dangerous for the wing-half to advance to such an extent. All this may be true. It may be risky for the wing half-back, having set his wing in motion, to go up in continued support. There is trouble for his defensive colleagues if the wing-half goes up too far in support of an attack, but my opinion is that the dangers are exaggerated. I remain firm in my faith in the old tag that attack is the best defence.

I would even go so far as to say that the triangular wing play can be brought back into effective use, always provided that the position play of the other defenders is moulded accordingly. The suggestion that the half-back should change his title sometimes, and become a half-forward, won't meet with unanimous approval. But if going up in support of the men in front can be a fault - well, it is a good fault.

The extent to which the wing-half goes up in support of his own forwards must be a personal matter, depending on the power of recovery of the individual. There are wing half-backs in top class clubs of to-day who are better in attack than defence. They insist on being at hand to support their forwards. And the goals against some of the first-class teams with two wing-halves of the adventurous type sometimes tot up alarmingly. This happens because these particular players are not complete half-backs. They lack some of the essential power of recovery. In recent times the goals haven't piled up against Tottenham Hotspur when Billy Nicholson and Ronnie Burgess have been in their wing-half positions. Yet they both go up quite a long way from time to time. The secret is that they get back. Wasn't the point made earlier that the wing-half must be a worker?

There come occasions, too, when the wing-half, having got the ball somewhere around the middle of the field, finds himself with a fairly wide open space in front of him, and no colleague nearby to whom the slick quick pass can be made with advantage. The number of such occasions is apt to increase because of the defence-in-retreat tactics which are now considered 'the thing'. A telling pass being ruled out for the time being, the wing-half has no alternative to taking the ball towards his opponents' goal. Sooner or later one of those defenders must challenge. The opposition can't allow the wing-half to come up as far as he fancies. When the challenge comes, the wing-half will then have a better chance of making a useful pass. There is just one thing it is necessary for the wing-half to bear in mind when making these moves up the field: he can't afford to lose the ball to an opponent. That's the way to brew trouble for his own side.

Now we come on to the debatable question of whether it is part of the job of the wing-half to score goals. There have been times in our football, not beyond the memory of those now in middle age, when wing half-backs got into double figures

among goal-scorers in the course of one season playing for first-class clubs. The wing-halves don't do it now, although I have seen Harry Johnston of Blackpool crash a couple home in one game, being far enough up to take advantage of a backward or square pass from Stanley Matthews. Wing-halves don't do it regularly, however, because, taking it by and large, their efforts to score goals don't pay a worth-while dividend. Certainly, the desired results are not forthcoming if the only effect of the half-back advancing to within shooting distance is to 'clutter up' the attack he is trying to help. Too many cooks spoil the broth.

The thought can be passed on, however, that these advances by the wing-half only serve to clutter up the attack because other players don't think quickly enough. Suppose the left-half, in possession of the ball, and unchallenged, moves up towards the penalty area. The forwards are covered: so is the way to goal. That is the moment when the inside left should move out of the way of the oncoming half-back. By moving away from the mass of players, he may draw an opponent. In any case, he has left an open space through which the advancing wing-half can get a view of the goal: an opportunity to bang the ball into the net.

If I have insisted that the wing-half, the fellow with the strength of leg, the wind and the speed which enable him to get back to his proper position, can go up to get goals, I must hasten to clear myself of the charge of neglecting to point out the pitfalls. They are very real.

In a First Division match I attended last season, a wing half-back worked the ball into his opponents' penalty area, dribbling this way and that, with the crowd cheering him on. Very cleverly he got far enough up to have a shot at goal, too. And the crowd still cheered, because the shot was a good one. The goalkeeper saved the shot: caught the ball, and without hesitation cleared to somewhere about the half-way line on that side of the field the half-back had come from. There was no

half-back in position to stop the attack, and in a few seconds from the time the spectators had been cheering the effort of the half-back at one end of the field the ball was in the net at the other end.

In any case, the merit of this advance move by the wing-half lies in its surprise. When it becomes a habit, the surprise element is reduced or its effect completely lost. The surprise element also applies to another important part of the wing-half's job, the throw-in. Everybody knows the value of the long throw, how it can be made to catch the defenders napping. Sam Weaver was among the first to show how the long throw can be made. He could throw the ball from anywhere near the corner-flag to a place approximately opposite to the far goal-post.

The long-throw, like other long shots at various games, can only be made with all the muscle of the body in harmony. Take the ball back behind the shoulders, bend the whole body back, and as the hands containing the ball come over, bring the whole body with them, rising on the toes at the same time.

If the long throw is tried every time, the defenders are ready for it, and take up their positions to meet it. So the long throw, like other moves in football, should be kept up the sleeve, as it were, ready for production in much the same way that the expert conjuror suddenly produces the rabbit when it isn't even suspected that he has a rabbit anywhere around.

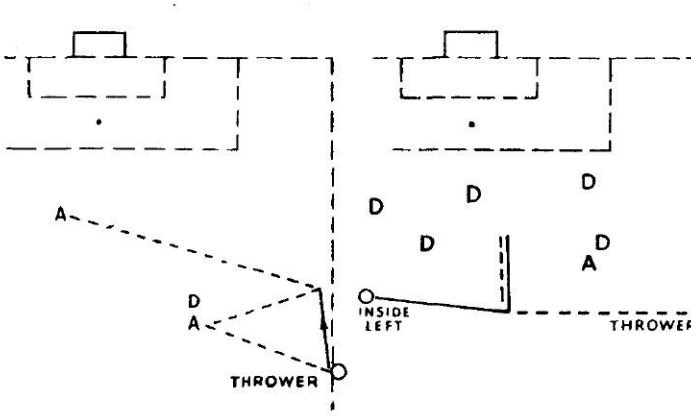
The orthodox short throw should be an advantage to the side which has been awarded the throw. Consequently, to the wing half-back especially, my advice is not to transfer the advantage to the other side by making a foul throw. The laws of the game set out very clearly what can and can not be done in the process of throwing the ball from the touch-line. There is no sound excuse for the throw-in being wasted, despite the obvious fact that the side having the throw has, for the time being, one player fewer on the pitch. The advantage is still with

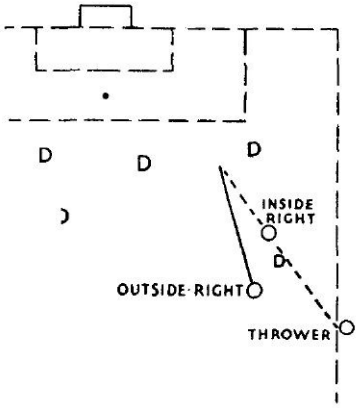
the side taking the throw, the half-back is the player in possession of the ball. He can throw it this way or that, straight ahead of him, to the left or to the right.

The short ball to the head, the chest or the foot of a colleague, who immediately returns it to the thrower is the method of making good use of the throw most generally adopted. The thrower, getting the ball back, is then in a position to make a long kick towards the middle, or alternatively to work his way along the wing. I always had an impression, during my playing career, that this method of using the throw to advantage could be stopped by some opponent taking up a position quite near to the thrower, but perhaps the answer to that is that this means taking a covering player away from some opponent he should be watching. Maybe such a counter-move wouldn't always work, but I would like to see it adopted.

Anyhow, my immediate concern is the effective use of the throw. If the opponents have taken up covering positions so far as the near-by players of the throwing side are concerned, there is a way out of this situation. Here is an idea which can be 'worked' occasionally. The left half is in position to make the throw. All his colleagues are covered. Suddenly, from out of the blue, the inside right comes running at top speed towards the thrower. Having had a flying start over all opponents he is then in an open space, and the ball can be thrown to him as he runs into position.

At the root of the business of making use of the throw, is understanding between the thrower and his team mates. The opposition can sometimes be kidded by dummy signs which seem to mean something, but which actually, mean anything save what they seem to indicate. When David Jack and I were right-wing forward partners, we had a working arrangement with Charlie Jones for some of these throw-in operations. I would be in position to receive the ball from the throw, and would either call to Jones for the ball, or signal that I wanted it, to my head or to my feet. Behind me, nearer to the





Above: The short throw to the head of a near-by player, who nods it back to the thrower as he moves forward along the touch-

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line.

Top right: As the right-half makes the throw, his inside left runs into position to receive longer throw and gets the ball free of opposition.

Below: Outside right has taken up position for the short throw. Inside right has gone nearer to goal and ball is thrown over head of opponent covering outside right. At the same time outside right runs past opponent to take pass from his partner.

FIG. 7

opposing goal, David Jack would take up his position, somewhere near to the side-line. Instead of throwing the ball to me, Jones would send it over my head to David Jack. The full-back would come across to challenge David. Meantime, I had run inwards, round the wing-half, who had been keeping an eye on me, and if my inside-right partner could not make headway on his own, he would slip the ball across to me. A simple example, this, of what can be achieved by intelligent position-switching as applied to the throw-in.

I could dwell for some time on signals which mean something other than they are supposed to mean, but I would prefer members of a side to work out their own secret code. Working them out adds interest to the play, and kidding the opposition provides real pleasure to the fellows who manage to bring it off. Understanding between the players of a side can be very helpful when applied to Operation Throw-in.

In defence, as in attack, the utmost possible measure of understanding with other players must be developed; and especially between the rest of the side and the wing half. When two players go for the ball, an opponent is probably left unmarked. There is no law against players on such occasions talking to each other, or shouting instructions to each other. In their own way the defenders should be a combined force. The wing-half should be up with the play on his own wing when that wing is attacking. He should be back into position to help check an attack by the other fellows on his own flank. And if the attack threatens danger on the opposite flank, then across towards that side the wing-half must go. Up with the attack; back to play a prominent part in defence; jumping to it like a flash when an emergency arises! Always in it! The wing-half who can say he has done these things can hold out his hand for his money at the end of the ninety minutes with a clear conscience. If he hasn't done all these things he hasn't filled the role. A real footballer, the wing-half. A full time worker.

If you had played in the same side as non-stop Wilf Copping, ever in the thick of it, or played in a match when Willis Edwards was on the opposite side, you would have realized how invaluable a wing-half can be to a team.

CHAPTER 9

THE WORK OF THE WINGERS

A FEW minutes after Billy Meredith had played his last game of football he was discovered by a friend, sitting in an out-of-the-way corner, looking dejected.

'Cheer up,' said Bill's friend. 'After all, you have had a good run, and the end must come sooner or later.'

'It isn't so much that,' said Meredith, with something like a tear in his eye. 'I wanted to play a bit longer because I have been learning a new trick, and I'd like a few more games in which to try it out.' It should be mentioned that the day of Meredith's retirement from the top-class game did not come until he was fifty years of age; the number of his International caps equaling his years.

He was, of course, an outside right, and between the lines of that little story of his swan song quite a lot can be read. It disposes, for instance, of the idea, which I know runs through the minds of many people, that the winger has one of the really easy jobs in football. Meredith wanted to stay longer in the game - after thirty years at the top of the tree - so that he could try out a new trick or two. That makes the point that there is always something new to be learnt even by an experienced winger. I was a winger, too. I didn't stay in the game as long as Billy Meredith, but I had the same sort of feeling when finally I packed away my football boots. Another point should also be noted - a consoling one. The wingers, generally speaking, last longer than the players in most other positions. In theory, and if they are clever enough, the wingers do not come into stern personal physical contact with oppo-

nents as do players in some other positions. They can dodge trouble. And as Stanley Matthews himself would probably say, in his quiet way: 'What's the use of growing old if you don't grow clever.'

The mention of Matthews (how difficult it is not to mention him in connection with wing play) also serves as a reminder that, easy as the winger's work is from some points of view, it is possible to earn real and lasting fame on the line. Matthews is still playing, still turning the other fellows dizzy; and he has played such a part in the game in our time that I haven't the slightest doubt that twenty years hence old-timers will still be talking about him. They will probably be asking then, why don't we produce a Stanley Matthews, or a Cliff Bastin?

By all means let the young players watch Stanley Matthews. Let them try to do some of the things he can do. It must be borne in mind, however, that all wingers can't hope to emulate Matthews. What is equally important is that they will not necessarily be dubbed failures if, in some directions, they don't even approach the Matthews heights.

Indeed, it might be said - I hope I shan't be misunderstood in saying this - that some of the wingers of to-day would render greater service to their sides if they weren't quite so keen to turn themselves into carbon copies of the one and only Stanley. Tom Finney, another great winger, has sometimes come in for criticism on the grounds that he has tried to do his stuff on the Matthews model, and has overdone it. That criticism, justified or not, has behind it the thought that Preston's Finney has not always 'got on with it' as quickly as the interests of his side called for. There is scope for variety in wingers, and scope for variation in their play.

It is merely natural, I suppose, that I should range myself on the side of the get-on-with-it wingers. This is an obsession with me because my success in football was due to what are called straightforward methods. As the game is played to-day, the wingers who cut out the frills can be of very real value to

their sides. In another place I have explained the current tendency, in relation to general tactics, for the defenders to back-pedal towards their own goal when danger threatens. The wingers are the fellows who have it in their boots to carry the play into the enemy quarters at a good pace. Therefore it follows that if the winger dallies with the ball - unless he is a genius in beating opponents who are drawn to him - he gives the opposition enough time to fall back and cover the way to goal which the inside men have to take.

Often was it said of Arsenal that we stole goals, sneaked them against the run of the play, and won matches. It was true, too. A long clearance pass to an outside wing man - to Cliff Bastin or to myself - a quick run by the winger, a rapid cross to the centre-forward, and the ball was in the net. A four-kick goal, if you like.

I have known Alex James work backwards, towards his own goal, with the ball. The idea was to draw opposing players from their defensive positions, give them the idea that they had a chance to set up an attack. Battering at a packed goal is like kicking at a stone wall. There's no way through. So my advice to the average winger is: 'Get on with it: don't slow down the whole line.'

Thus we come to the part which speed can play in the work of the winger. Assuming that the play is kept open from his point of view, he will have opportunities for bursts of speed. When I was with the York City club, in my early days, I was slow, not quick off the mark, and not even fast when I had space in which to get going. In the effort to cure this fault, the trainer took me out even on dark evenings (we did a lot of our training in the dark) along with the fastest runner on the staff. I was given ten yards' start in a fifty-yards race, and the trainer had his flashlamp focused on the finishing mark. In due course, but not at once, I so cut down my running time, without the ball, that we two players were started for our race from 'scratch'.

After speed *without* the ball comes speed *with* the ball. This is really not so difficult to acquire. The winger who can go fast, make those sudden dangerous breakaways, can find opportunities for cutting in to score goals himself. Think of the matches which Billy Liddell has won for Liverpool by cutting inside, getting into such a position that, capable of hitting the ball hard with either foot, he has beaten the goalkeeper. The fast winger - no winger in fact - should consider it his job to wear the whitewash off the touch-line, with the corner-flag as his continual objective.

Possibly I am in danger of making the job appear simple. It does not always happen, in actual play, that the winger has plenty of space into which he can run with the ball unchallenged. That is why he has to learn tricks to beat the back, to dodge this way or that with the ball 'tied to his bootlace'. There are far too many wingers who can only go one way, outward, along the line. That is where his opponent wants him to go. So, even in this respect, the art of working the ball with both feet must be mastered.

Often the young player can only get practice on a rough piece of ground, very different from the smooth football pitch. Don't grumble about that. Indeed, Stanley Matthews himself has practiced - and I believe still does from time to time - all by himself on a stretch of uneven ground. It is a very good way of improving the art of ball control, with the ball having to be kept close and watched all the time lest it should break away, out of control. Another idea may be passed on which has the same object in view. Do some dribbling, if possible, with a rugby ball. Its shape will cause it to do the impossible. The fellow who can prevent a rugby ball doing the impossible -keeping it close and under control — will find the soccer ball much easier to tame.

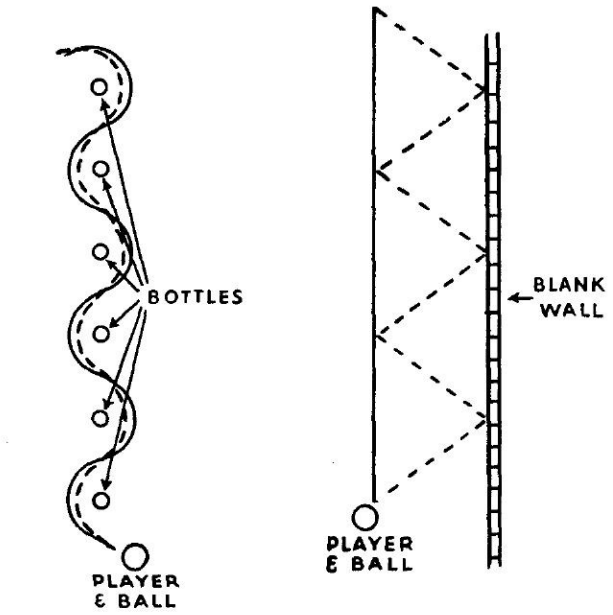
There are other ways in which the winger can develop and improve his game in general, learn to do, by himself, all the things he will have to do in match play. Take half a dozen

sticks - bottles standing on end will serve the same purpose- and place them four or five yards apart in a straight line. Take the ball, and work round those sticks — zigzagging in and out — from the first stick to the last. Turn round in the shortest possible distance and work back to the starting point. The closer the player keeps to the sticks, as he does the dodging run, the better. In due time, speed can be brought into it. I know of no better practice than this for a winger. Indeed, it is good for any player. The ball must be kept close to the feet, and not the least important thing about it is the development of the swerve.

All right! Our winger in the making has speed, ball control, tricks, and body swerve. There are other important qualities he needs, some of them on occasions when he has time to think first and act afterwards.

Corner-kicks, for example. These, as everybody knows, provide spectators with an excuse to get excited or anxious. Goals are visualized from these corner-kicks, but the hopes are not often fulfilled. Not so long ago there was a team which was good enough in general play to win a first-class championship. They did it without scoring a single goal immediately following a corner-kick until more than half the season had gone. Yet in the preceding months that side had been awarded dozens of corner-kicks. It goes almost without saying that when corner-kicks are taken the odds are on the defence. The defenders have merely to get the ball away, without undue concern as to where it goes, whereas the attackers must steer the ball into the comparatively small and well-guarded goal space. Granting this, it is none the less a fact that a big proportion of corner-kicks are wasted.

I am not at all sure that the law-makers, in changing the rules so that a goal could be scored direct from a corner-kick, did the game a real service. Wingers seemed to get the idea that it was worth while to make the attempt to score direct from the corner-flag. I don't need to be told that, from time



Stand a few bottles in a straight line on the ground, three or four yards apart, dribble in and out around the bottles, keeping as close to them as possible and going as fast as possible. Also make the zigzag journey in the opposite direction. An alternative, but less complicated way, is to make use of a blank wall, kicking the ball against it at an angle, and taking it again on the return. The inside and outside of both feet should be used in these practices.

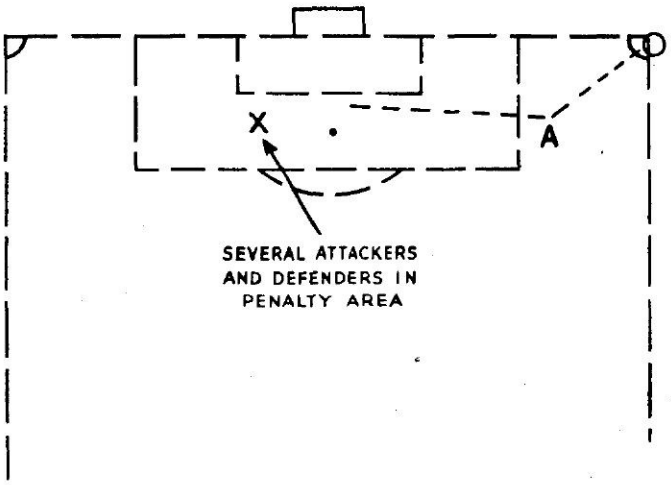
FIG. 8

to time even in first-class football, wingers do manage to get the ball into the net direct from the corner-flag. Regarding such goals, however, I am tempted to turn my back on the old tag which lays it down that the best shots are those which see the ball resting at the back of the net.

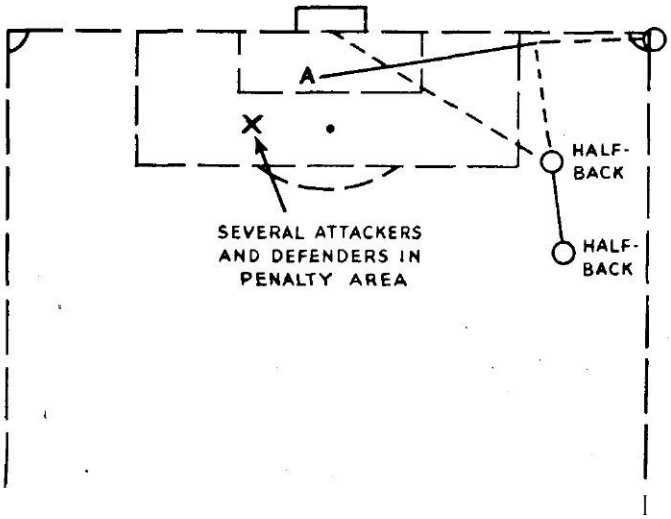
The plain fact is that the attempt to score goals direct from the flag doesn't pay. A ball from the flag so close to goal that it may swerve into the net is also close enough for the goalkeeper to get at it first. He is allowed to use his hands, a privilege which is not permitted to the attackers. Save when there is a strong wind to turn the ball inwards when the force of impact ceases to be effective, goals direct from the corner-flag come under the heading of flukes. The ideal to be aimed at, for the ordinary corner-kick, is that the ball shall come down, so far out from the goal mouth, that the goalkeeper can't advance to it without running a risk of not getting there before one of his opponents applies his head. A little way out, just opposite the far post - that's the hallmark of a good, if conventional, corner-kick.

There is merit, too, in the corner-kick taken in such a way that the ball eventually swerves inwards. Outside rights who take corner-kicks on their side of the field with the left foot, and outside lefts who take theirs with the right foot, don't do it just to convince everybody concerned that they are two-footed. They do it to apply the inward curve. Sometimes, from the corner-flag, the winger should impart backward spin to the ball in such a way that, late in its flight, the ball seems to hang. I was never able to do this myself, but there are wingers who can do it, so there may be some knack which I never discovered. Once more bringing in Matthews, I have heard defenders say that he can do it at will, and also heard them add that this hanging ball is apt to deceive them.

A paragraph or two earlier I used the word conventional in relation to corner-kicks. That was done deliberately, because one of the reasons why such a small proportion of corners,



Instead of the usual lob to approximately opposite the far post, the taker of the corner-kick makes a short pass to an inside man who has taken up position. The latter can then either shoot or make another short pass into the penalty area.



The best of the short corner-kick moves to open up the defence. As the ball is about to be kicked on the right an attacker — say, inside left - runs to a position near the goal-line. Getting the ball, he makes a first-time pass to the wing-half, then well placed for a shot.

FIG. 9

taken even by accurate ball-kicking wingers, fail to produce goals is the fact that too many of them are of the casual copy-book type: the orthodox lob into the middle. Let us have some more variety in corner-kick methods. Every team -junior or senior — puts on guard men in the penalty area to deal with these balls sent across from the flag. I have made the point that these defenders usually deal effectively with this sort of ball. By way of a change from the high lobbed ball, what about the ball sent crashing low among the players gathered near goal? That low ball across from the corner-flag isn't easy to deal with. Indeed, it can, and has, led to some of those tragedies of the game, when so-and-so put the ball through his own goal.

Again, by prior arrangement, the short corner-kick to a colleague who has taken up position, can also be used with advantage. The effect may well be to upset the covering plans of the defenders, get them moving from their 'set' positions. The same notion is behind another corner-kick dodge which is worth trying. As the winger moves to the ball placed in position near the corner-flag, the inside forward starts to run towards him, as if the two had entered into an arrangement by which the ball should be kicked short to the inside forward. It isn't, however. The winger lifts it into the middle — or a bit beyond. If, by running towards the taker of the kick, the inside forward has drawn a defender out of position - as he is likely to do — one desirable effect has been achieved. If nobody follows that inside forward, then the winger has just time to slip him the ball.

This variety of corner-kick merits a rather more detailed description, for it can bring definite results. The short ball is placed along the ground, quite near the goal-line, to a col-league. Often it is then passed back to the taker of the corner-kick, but that can be a waste of time. There is a better plan than that. Instead of passing the ball back, the forward who receives the short pass turns it, with one quick tap, to a wing-

half who has taken up position. By this time the defenders are not so closely concentrated as they were when the kick was taken, and the wing-half has an opening for a first-time shot. Try this method occasionally, but make sure it has rarity-value.

Corner-kicks, properly used, could be made, much more frequently than is the case, occasions for cheers, or tears. Brains should be put into them.

Up to now I have dwelt, in the main, on the things which the outside winger may be able to do when the play is on his own side of the field, or when he is actually in possession of the ball. At no time, however, should the winger consider himself completely out of the play. Certainly he should not consider himself out of it when his opposite wing partner has the ball. That is the time to take up position for the possible cross-pass. Among the moderns, Jimmy Mullen and Johnny Hancocks, Wolverhampton Wanderers' wingers, have demonstrated what can be done in this direction. When one of these two is in possession of the ball, working towards goal, the other comes in from the side-line, finding the open space, and is there to receive the cross-pass which has led to so many goals being scored by these Wolves wingers.

Nor should the modern winger be regarded *solely* as an attacker. Years ago, in a complaining mood, I said to Manager Herbert Chapman, after a particular game, that I had had scarcely a kick at the ball. He rounded on me, in his typical straightforward way, by telling me that, such being the case, the fault was mine, not that of anybody else. He told me I should have gone looking for it - chasing it. Maybe, in making that observation, the then manager of Arsenal was looking forward to a day which has now arrived, when the winger *does* go looking for the ball to a much greater extent than he did in other times. He comes back for it - to the half-way line or even well to his own half of the field - when his side's goal is being attacked. It is unlikely that there will be any opponent

taking much notice of him in that isolated position. If it should happen, as it will from time to time, that a defensive colleague is able to clear the ball, he is likely to be able to send it to the waiting wing man, who can then start a reply raid, switching the scene of action, and bringing danger at full speed to the other goal.

It will happen, too, that the winger will either lose the ball to the full-back who tackles, or fail to pick up a pass because the opposing full-back intervenes. The winger worth his salt won't, on such occasions, stand there watching that full-back work the ball up the field. He'll chase him, worry him into making a hurried pass - or even surprise him by getting the ball as he is preparing to make his pass. Nor is it unknown, as a tactical move, for the winger of one side to be asked to play a part in holding up, or bothering, the winger of the other side if that player happens to be a particularly difficult customer. A thinking outside left will come back with a view to intercepting the passes meant for the star outside-right. The most effective method of preventing such a player as Stanley Matthews doing damage with the ball is to prevent the ball from reaching him. A wing opponent who comes back can often do this. Keep in the game, even if this necessitates, sometimes, wandering from the original position on the wing!

My conclusion is that wingers must be complete footballers. I have laid some emphasis on the manner in which they can work to make goals for themselves, but let me fall back on their paramount duty: which is the work they must do to provide scoring openings for the other fellows. There's no point in banging the ball at the goal from impossible angles. Indeed, and this is an axiom which wingers in general should keep in mind: Don't try a shot if there is a man on your side better placed.

The winger above all others who lingers in my memory is Alec Jackson. This Scot had everything it takes: speed, swerve, skill in both feet, plus a deadly shot. With these

qualities he made for himself that extra split second in which he could look up for the player in position to use the ball. And that player was picked out with deadly accuracy. Blind centres are not good centres. They are usually gifts for the opposition.

CHAPTER 10

INSIDE WING MEN-THE BRAINS OF THE TEAM

On the first occasion on which a transfer fee of two thousand pounds was paid for a footballer, an inside forward was the player concerned - Horace Barnes. In due course a record transfer fee of ten thousand pounds was paid for David Jack. The first fifteen thousand fee was handed over for Bryn Jones; the first twenty-five thousand fee for Eddie Quigley. In the spring of 1951 Sheffield Wednesday sprang to the previously unheard of fee of £34,000 to secure the services of Jackie Sewell.

Don't get alarmed by that serial story of the steadily rising prices. I am not, at the moment, even thinking of entering into a discussion as to whether any one footballer can possibly be worth anything like that amount of money. The point is that a football club only pays for a footballer what it thinks that footballer will be worth to it. What the story does tell, in the plainest possible language, is that right down the his tory of transfers, the inside wing men are the fellows who have been there when new record fees were established. It couldn't be just coincidence that each time new transfer figures were set up an inside forward was at auction. The facts as set out must mean that in the old days, through the years, and right up to the present time, inside forwards are the most highly valued members of the side, and the most difficult to find. Let that be the over-riding thought in anything which is said about the inside men. (For the sake of simplicity the use of the words inside forwards will apply, for immediate purposes, to the inside wing players.)

With all due respect to the other members of a football side,

and even while insisting that thought must be put into the game by any and every player, it isn't going too far to say that the inside forwards are the brains of the team. The best of the inside forwards, if asked by a young player for the secret of their success, would put a ringer to their heads as they replied: 'That's where you want it!' Brains - in the football sense - are the first requisite of the inside forwards. They must be the quick thinkers, the fellows who solve the football problems in the shortest possible time.

Accepting brains as their chief qualification, there is interest in speculation as to the physical type most likely to make good. Recently a sort of footballer census was started at St. Andrews with a view to testing whether there were set physical types for various positions on the football field. A questionnaire was sent to the big clubs asking for weight, height and various measurements of the members of their playing staffs. So far, I have no information as to what the answers to this questionnaire proved — if they proved anything at all. I shan't be surprised, however, if the evidence in general makes the point that the sturdy, strong little fellows usually turn out to be the best inside forwards. If this proves to be anything approaching a rule, it is open to the qualification of all rules: there are exceptions to it.

Big transfer fee man Harold Hassall is one. There have been many others, including long-legged David Jack, lately the manager of Middlesbrough, and Charlie Buchan. What a fortunate fellow I was to have had, as inside partners, two of the greatest the game has known in my time.

Even as I think of these long-legged inside men, the little inside fellows who have adorned the game come to mind. The list is too long to be set out in full, but it includes Billy Steel, Eddie Baily, Wilfred Mannion, Ernest Taylor, Alex James, Jackie Bestall, and Jimmy Logie. It may be that these and other pint-sized players, realizing that they hadn't much chance of using their heads except for thinking, came to the

conclusion that their only hope was to make greater use of their bodies and to become cleverer than their rivals with their feet. That's the plain truth. The inside forward who can't develop on those lines would be well advised to use his ability in other positions.

In recent times few players have received so much attention, or been given such honorable mention, as did Tommy Harmer on his spasmodic appearances in the Tottenham Hotspur first team last season. All told, there's only a trifle over nine stone of him. But he is master of as many tricks as a whole wagon-load of monkeys. He isn't sturdy, and lacking strength of leg, he can't fire the ball at the goal with any considerable force. But he can make openings for others by side-stepping and other controlled accomplishments which get defenders at sixes and sevens. I wonder what his value in the transfer market would be if, in addition to his other qualities, he possessed the bullet-drive of a Joe Smith. But you can't have everything.

What does stand out is that there is almost endless scope for variety in the play and players in these inside positions. In the physical sense Alex James - a daddy of all the inside forwards in his own particular style - and Jimmy Logie are as alike as two peas. I get rather tired, however, of the oft-repeated statement that Jimmy Logie is another Alex James. He isn't. Those two players can do the same sort of things with their bodies and with the ball, but James used to do his stuff almost standing still. He would trick an opponent or two and then make the pass, scarcely ever going sufficiently far forward to get in a telling shot at goal. Logie, on the other hand, goes forward. I know he doesn't score many more goals than did James, but he makes the goals for others by keeping on the move, with the final short pass to a comrade.

The game has changed a bit in relation to what is expected of the inside forwards, even in the short time since James was a star. The 'W formation of the attack has become obsolete to a considerable extent. In its place has come a better idea for

defeating defensive tactics. This idea is for at least four forwards to go well up, with one inside man — either inside right or inside left - a little back according to the development of the particular attacking movement.

Nothing has happened to the game, however - and I don't believe anything will happen to it in the near future - to save the inside men wearing down the studs of their boots in a shorter time than other members of a team. The pendulum of my grandfather clock provides a continual illustration of the work of inside forwards: swinging this way and that, backwards and forwards as the seconds tick off, always on the move. That is how they should respond to the play — if they are doing a complete job. And this metaphor applies - or should do so - to all grades of football.

A few months back I saw an International match. At inside left in the England side was a comparative newcomer, a player of great promise who has nearly every fine quality. In the course of the play an attack was developed by the right wing of the opponents of this English side. The development was such that a goal resulted in due course. As the ball was sent into the net I looked around for the inside left. He was standing quite still in his opponents' half of the field: just an interested spectator. Of course, he should have been back in his own half of the field, first of all challenging the opponents who were developing the attack, helping the defence. I wasn't the only one who noticed that the pendulum had stopped working. The name of that particular player was missing from the next England eleven, and has been missing from it ever since. It will go back - because he is a really good footballer -when he learns that the inside man can't be a drone at any time.

Suppose, in relation to that incident from the International match, the attack by the other fellows had been checked by a defender around the penalty area. This player couldn't have got the ball to the inside forward away in the far half of the

field. If, on the other hand, the inside forward had come back - as he should have done - the ball could have been passed to him, and he would have been able to start a movement towards the other goal.

As the inside forwards are to a considerable extent the fetchers and carriers, it follows that the brains must be used too in taking up position to receive the ball. It was said of Peter Doherty, when at his best and busiest, that he always seemed to have plenty of time to get the ball under control. This meant that he was ever mindful of seeking the open space, in short, he was in position to receive the ball.

Peter developed a way of getting the ball down, which pays a good dividend for any amount of time spent in practice by 'catching' it on the instep. As the ball drops the instep of the raised foot gives, and thus can hold the ball for a fraction of a second. I have seen Doherty even beat an opponent, by swivelling on the sole of one foot while he caught the ball on the instep of the other foot.

The inside forward can't do much with the ball until he gets it down and under control. Having gained possession, he is then ready to make progress; and the quicker he makes it the better.

Opponents will soon be there, of course, and to beat them he must resort to body swerve and tricks. I have already told how swerve and balance can be improved, and have also mentioned something about ball control. I should be happy if I could teach the tricks which are an essential part of the stock in trade of the inside forward. I am afraid it can't be done, however. It isn't possible, for instance, to set down on paper the recipe for selling the dummy, for sending the opponent the wrong way.

There are little things which can be learnt, on the practice field, which help you to diddle the opposition. There's the art of varying pace while on the run, with the ball close to the feet — a disturbing skill to the opponent who is running along-

side, on the look-out for the moment to make the effective tackle. You take a few quick steps; then suddenly slow-up, knowing your opponent can't follow suit because he doesn't know, until too late, when you're going into lower gear. Watch Stanley Mortensen do this. The Blackpool man can go as fast as anyone in the game at the present time, but he is also a master of the art of changing pace while on the run.

Then there is the dummy kick, the foot being quickly passed over the ball instead of connecting with it. The effect is to induce the opponent to hesitate, 'kidding' him that the intention is to put the ball inside. He moves that way and, immediately he does this, the player still in possession of the ball carries on along his original patch. I expect many of my young readers, who go to see the stars from time to time, have noticed that quite a number of them use this dummy kick to deceive their opponents. The trick isn't easy to master. But it can be done, and is certainly among the tricks worth giving time and patience to learn.

By the way, when watching the experts in any game, try not to let the general run of the play overpower you. If you want to make good as an inside forward, when you go to watch a match keep your mind on the inside forwards. How do they do this? Why do they do that? There is much to be learnt by watching the experts. Nor is it a bad idea to watch alongside somebody who knows; at whom the questions *why* and *how* can be fired. I have known managers of football clubs take with them, to several matches in succession, their promising young players. The manager puts the budding star next to him and explains to the learner the *why* and the *wherefore* throughout the game.

Back to our inside forward! Let us suppose the inside man gets plenty of the ball and works up the field with it, dodging one opponent after another. He isn't on his own, however. There are colleagues to right and to left, maybe in front, to whom the ball can be passed. In the places where first-class

footballers foregather a phrase is often used which I have never seen in any of the textbooks. That phrase is *'a poke with the toe'*. This is a most useful short pass which can be made easily and accurately. Just as the opponent conies in to tackle, when he thinks he has a chance of gaining the ball, the player in possession shoots out a foot, puts the toe of the boot against the middle of the ball and thus 'pokes' it to a near-by colleague. The ball keeps close to the ground, and there is no spin to be mastered by the player receiving it.

Passing with the inside of the boot has a similar effect, but the inside of the boot can't very well be applied when the leg is stretched out. The outside of the boot can also be used to beat an opponent or to make a pass, but the effective flick with the *outside* of the boot is far from easy, because it isn't a natural movement. Part of the success of Eddie Baily of the Spurs is due to the fact that he can make better use of the flick with the outside of the boot than most other players.

Included in the inside man's box of tricks is one which any player can do, and which may be described as making the pass without touching the ball. The outside man passes the ball to his partner. The inside man goes through all the motions of taking the pass, but at the last moment, as his opponent closes in, he steps over the ball, allowing it to run on. The trouble with this dodge is that it often comes unstuck because the player for whom the ball is intended isn't ready for it. The fault isn't with the trick, however, and the inside man can help it to come off if he gives the word to the fellow on the other side of him.

Thinking all the time, all the time getting the ball, the inside forward should assess the merits of the opposing defenders. Is there a weak spot in that defence? Has the centre-forward the measure of the opposing centre-half? Is his wing partner being mastered by the full-back? On the answer to these questions, which should come to the brain of the inside forward almost automatically, his tactics must depend. The inside for-

ward is also the fellow who has the most favourable chance of beating the offside trap, should his opponents be inclined to play that risky game. By hanging on to the ball in the quick run through, rather than passing it, the inside forward will make those advancing defenders think again.

I am quite convinced that modern play, in general, calls for direct action by the insiders. Jackie Sewell is the type I have in mind to carry out the tactics - though there is room in the game for the Len Shackleton type, the ultra-clever player who can make rings round his opponents. But even this Sunderland player has responded to the current call for more direct action. What seems to me very clear is that there is no room in the modern forward line for two inside men of what are called the 'diddler' type. One of the two must be a quick mover, splitting open the defence by varied play.

Part of the tactics of direct action is the scoring of goals. It will take a lot of people a long time to forget the goal which Sammy Smyth scored for the Wolves in the Cup Final of 1949. It came as the outcome of a wonderful individual effort in the course of which this quick-moving inside man promised more than once to pass the ball to a fellow forward, without ever fulfilling the promise.

Mention of Sammy Smyth offers a good example of how an inside forward can put new life into an attack. In the early stages of the 1951-2 season Stoke City played eleven matches from which only two points - in drawn games - were obtained. Smyth joined the club, and the next five matches were all won. Ivor Broadis, another of the stocky little fellows, brought about a similar change in the fortunes of Manchester City at about the same time.

It isn't surprising that the inside forwards are considered to be worth their weight in gold. And if they take their place at the head of the queue on pay-day they can be forgiven. Having done all they should do, they will have earned their keep.

During the match they will have bobbed up all over the place. They will have shown that they had complete understanding with their wing partners by inter-changing positions from time to time. If they have done their job they will probably have a headache - the consequence of long and hard thinking, of thinking all the time till the final whistle blows.

CHAPTER 11

THE WORST-AND THE BEST-PLACE: CENTRE-FORWARD

NOT long ago I happened to drift into a party of young footballers. There was a whole team of them, and I soon discovered that they were in the midst of a heated discussion of a question which was probably discussed by their grandfathers, or even their great grandfathers. The question is as old as football itself. Which is the most difficult position on the football field?

In the discussion first one player and then another put in his claims, the centre-half, the wing-half, the centre-forward, the goalkeeper. I didn't stay to hear the finish of the argument, and have no knowledge as to whether those players came to any decision. But it was good that every member of the football team, from goalkeeper to outside left, should consider himself to be the most important member of the side, to have the most difficult task. Looking at his job from that angle, it should follow that each player will decide that he must be up to snuff, do his very best. And, hey presto, the foundations of a good team are laid!

Without going further into the matter of the relative difficulties of the various positions, we can certainly agree that the centre-forward has a vital part to play. It is at once the best and the worst job on the field, the place which experience tells us is the most difficult of all to fill satisfactorily. Go right to the top class and the evidence piles up. Since the days when Tommy Lawton was an automatic choice for the centre-forward position in the England team, the International selectors have turned their eyes this way and that, looking for the ideal

successor. So far as can be gathered, from the number of different centre-forwards who have led the England attack in recent times, they are still looking. The same story is told by the managers of many of the best teams. They can't find the right centre-forward. Never in my time has there been an unemployment problem among centre-forwards.

Here we come up against a paradox. Centre-forward is the most coveted position, the one above all others which growing lads hanker after. In the football fiction stories I used to love, and which are loved by the present generation of boys, the hero, nine times out of ten, is the centre-forward. He comes into the team unknown, bangs three or four past the opposing goalkeeper in next to no time, and at one mighty bound he jumps to the top of the ladder. It's a pretty picture. What is more, often a true one.

The centre-forwards do spring up like mushrooms. They do win matches off their own bats - almost. But they don't always stay, and in passing, an inevitable explanation may be mentioned. It is easier to make a reputation as a goal-scoring centre-forward than it is to maintain that reputation. I remember a boy named Howard, promoted from some comparatively obscure Lancashire club into the first team of Manchester City. He shot three past the other team's First Division goalkeeper in the first fifteen minutes of his first game for the City. Before the end he shot a fourth. Howard hit the headlines in the newspapers, but he didn't keep it up. Opponents knew about him, and watched him much more closely than they did when he was an unknown. That is something which the centre-forward has to overcome.

The mystery about this scarcity of centre-forwards isn't very deep. The truth is that there is so much difference of opinion concerning what is wanted from that man in the middle of the attack. Is he there to score goals for his side and to be judged by the number of times he hits the ball to the back of the net? Or is he to be the leader of the attack, in fact as well as in

name, the man who holds the line together, who doesn't necessarily score goals himself but who brings the other members of the line into play, even makes goals for them? It is easy enough to say that we want the centre-forward to do both these things, but because so much is wanted of them the ideal players are difficult to find. Many footballers rolled into one; that's the ideal. And while the ideal may be difficult to attain, there's no harm in keeping the ideal in mind.

The scoring of goals in quantity is an impossibility unless the centre-forward has a telling shot in both feet. The split-second chance - the half chance which leaves no time for juggling the ball from one foot to the other - can only be taken by the quick-witted and two-footed player. There is a fair amount of space, inside the goalposts, on each side of the goalkeeper. Alas, there is much more space over the bar! The secret of successful shooting, of keeping the ball low and booting it hard at the same time, is to get the body well over the ball. That helps in hitting the ball with the instep, which means with toe towards the ground. On the golf links, when a shot is muffed, the advice usually given is: 'Keep your head down. Look at the ball.' Similar advice can well be given to the footballer trying to score goals with his foot, keep the eyes on the ball.

Somewhere near your home there is probably a blank wall which can be used, for practice purposes, as a goal. Take the ball out, hit it against that wall, and as it comes back hit it again. The angles and the distance will vary, but keep at it, eyes on the ball, remembering all the time that to keep the shots low is a virtue. A goalkeeper covers much more space with his arms than he does with his legs. In this shooting practice use both feet.

On the field of play the motto for the centre-forwards should be 'Shoot hard, shoot often.' The goals won't come all the time. Some of the shots will be stopped. But it is a certainty that the goals won't come at all unless the shots are duly delivered. Wembley spectators of the 1951 Cup Final will

remember for a long time the shot from Jackie Milburn which registered the second goal for Newcastle United. He was well out from goal as the ball was put to him. Many centre-forwards would have tried to work it nearer. An opponent was approaching, however, so Milburn put everything he had behind the ball and it whizzed into the net - an unstoppable shot.

None of this is meant to encourage shooting from impossible angles, or shooting when the situation is hopeless. Scarcely ever in these days do I watch a game in which I don't see players - centre-forwards especially - who seem to imagine that it is possible to shoot a ball through an opponent. One of our up and coming centre-forwards, having been told to shoot hard and often, repeatedly falls into this error. Shoot if there is a chance of getting the ball home, but it is bad football to try to shoot through an opponent. The attempt should be made to beat him, or to get the ball to a player with a better chance of scoring.

Up to now I have dealt mainly with the finishing touches of the centre-forward's job. Obviously the centre-forward can't score goals unless he gets through himself - very difficult - or is put through by one of his colleagues - much easier. So we come to the helpers. Among the most serious of the troubles which assail the centre-forward is that he so often receives the ball - either through the air or close to the ground - when his back is turned to the goal he is attacking. And of course there is somebody else on the spot - the opposing centre-half.

If the ball is controllable, so far as the centre-forward is concerned, he may, if he is a clever ball player, beat the immediate opponent with a trick done on the turn. On these occasions, however, it is more profitable to use one or other of the inside forwards, who should be in a position to give assistance. One of the most effective scoring moves can be worked out in this way. The centre-forward receives the ball, say, thirty yards or so from goal. The centre-half is in close attendance, can't be dodged. The centre-forward makes the short

pass back to an inside man. This may have the effect of taking the centre-half away. In any event the centre-forward has a much better chance of dodging that centre-half without the ball than he would have if he tried to take the ball with him. So he slips round the centre-half, using that burst of speed which is so essential, while the inside forward is pushing the ball through. The merit of this move lies in its slickness. Even if in the first place the centre-forward receives the ball to his head, rather than to his feet, he can, by nodding it downwards to his inside forward, often get the same effect.

Let there be no mistake about it, the centre-forward must be able to use his head for other purposes than mere thinking. The best centre-forward to head the ball in our time was William - 'Dixie' - Dean, who played for Everton and England. The records show him to have been a wonderful goal-scorer.

In a last match of the season against Arsenal, Dean scored three goals, bringing his total from League games for that season to the record figure of sixty. That happened about a quarter of a century ago. In the intervening years no centre-forward of a first-class club has got anywhere near to equalling that figure. Don't tell me that the reason for this is that as the years have gone by things have been made more and more difficult for the centre-forward. It is much nearer the truth to say that few players can head the ball as effectively as Dean. *He got roughly half of his goals with his head.* When the ball came over from the wings, through the air, Dean was a menace.

A little story may be told to illustrate the point. One Saturday afternoon the two Merseyside clubs - Liverpool and Everton — played a match. Liverpool had a great goalkeeper in those days - Elisha Scott. He made many saves from the Dean headers, but could not stop them all. On the evening of the same day Dean was walking along a street in Liverpool when he spotted Elisha Scott on the opposite pavement. In the Lancashire fashion, Dean nodded his head to Elisha by way of

saying 'How do!' The response of Scott to the greeting was to throw himself full length on the pavement of the street.

The real point about Scott's attempt at a full-length save when Dean nodded, was that the goalkeeper knew the ball from Dean's head was likely to be nodded *downwards.* Watching a match last season I was delighted to see Len Duquemin score a fine goal for the Spurs with his head. He got well up to the ball as it came over from the wing, and from about twelve yards out nodded it down so that it struck the ground just inside the post before travelling on to the net. I remembered then the hours Duquemin had spent, while I was manager at Tottenham, learning to head the ball downwards. In his early days Duquemin was constantly getting the ball too high on his head to send it forward low enough to go under the bar. So out he went on to the practice pitch, with an outside man to send the ball across, time after time, with the sole object of teaching 'the Duke' to master the art of the downward header. There was an occasional burst nose as Duquemin made the effort, but eventually he learnt to get on top of the ball and to nod it downwards with his forehead. Some of our young centre-forwards - and even some who are very near the top of the tree - would get many more goals if they learnt how to head the ball downwards.

The ball must come over from the wings sometimes through the air, as that is the only way in which it can be got past the intervening defenders. The centre-forward will see to it that these outside wing men get the opportunities to put the ball across. The virtues of the short pass to the inside wing men have been extolled. Equally telling can be the sweeping pass to the outside right or the outside left. It opens up the attack, and often has the effect of drawing the defenders away from the middle. Having made the pass, the centre-forward should think about his position for the return pass, try to get clear of the opposition. It is just as important to dodge an opponent without the ball as it is to dodge him with the ball.

When Stanley Mortensen is playing at centre-forward for Blackpool, he repeatedly shows how this can be done. He starts the forward run while outside-right Matthews is still in possession of the ball; and he tries to get clear of the opposition. If the centre is an accurate one he is there to receive it — and there is a possible goal in the making.

That's the theory, to be on the move, making the effort to get clear of the opposition. Of course, it isn't easy. The battle of wits between the centre-forward and the opposing centre-half is always on. And by the way, when the talk turns to the scarcity of goals in these days, especially in relation to the scoring by centre-forwards, the point should not be overlooked that the centre-half is usually just as efficient at his own game - the stopping game - as is the centre-forward in his attacking role. That, however, doesn't provide an excuse for the centre.-forward to be on the losing side in this battle of wits.

No good purpose is served by the centre-forward standing around grumbling because the centre-half of the other team is always there. Take him for a walk - or a run. If he refuses to go for that walk or that run when the centre-forward moves away from the middle, that is something attempted, something done. The centre-half has been 'lost'. If he does follow, a step has been taken towards disorganising the general defensive line-up. Alternatively, fall back a bit, by way of a change; lure the centre-half away from his goal. For the centre-forward to give up is the unforgivable sin.

What I have said will bring readers to the conclusion that in my view the ideal centre-forward must be much more than the mere spearhead of the attack: the man for whom the other fellows make the scoring openings. He can make himself useful in many ways. Cliff Holton, who now plays in the middle of the Arsenal attack, is not yet the complete centre-forward. He may become that before very long. He deserves to, because he obviously gives thought and attention to bits of play which are not ordinarily considered a part of his centre-forward job.

Let me illustrate by recalling an incident from the recent floodlight match between Arsenal and Glasgow Rangers. Holton wandered over to the wing in the way I have mentioned earlier. The ball went out of play over the side-line - a throw-in for Arsenal. Holton picked it up and made a tremendous throw - right into the Rangers goal area. There was Douglas Lishman, completely unmarked, in such a position that he was able to head the ball into the net at will and without any hindrance.

Why wasn't Lishman being watched by some Rangers player? The answer is that the length of the throw took everyone completely by surprise. Indeed, the players probably said to themselves, subconsciously, as they saw Holton preparing to take the throw: 'There won't be much to this because it's the centre-forward who is throwing the ball in.' They knew, we all know, that the centre-forward is not expected to be a champion thrower of the ball from the touch-line. In his spare moments, however, Holton had practised the long throw. That practice of one of the arts of football which had really no concern with his general position and play, brought its reward in the shape of that match-winning goal.

I have a very clear, composite picture of the make-up of the ideal centre-forward for modern football. He will have the craft and the art of leadership of Tommy Lawton. He will have the finishing power, with his head, of 'Dixie' Dean. He will have the power of foot of Jackie Milburn, plus the dash of strong man Ted Drake. He will have the speed of Stan Mortensen to dart through the middle. He must be full of determination, too. He must have never-say die spirit which inspires him to chase the forlorn hopes.

There are other points in this picture which my imagination paints of a centre-forward. So many accomplishments required of one player! Perhaps it is a hopeless ideal, perhaps in asking for so many qualifications in one player I am asking for the moon and the stars as well. I am certainly putting a finger on

the reason why the hunt for the men in the middle who can do it all still goes on.

Yet the final - the supreme - test lies in the answer to the question: Can he score goals? That has been the test in the past; it is the test in the present, and I take it will be the test in the future. If the centre-forward can get the goals, the goals by which matches are won, everything else is readily forgiven. Who am I to say that it isn't right that this should be true?

Still very fresh in our minds is the sensational entry into first-class football of Derek Dooley. Lots of things were said about his shortcomings as a footballer. That he was clumsy. That he lacked finesse and ball control. Because of those shortcomings he was kept in the reserve side despite the fact that he was scoring goals, the opinion being held that he wouldn't be able to do as much against more experienced opponents. But he did get the goals for Sheffield Wednesday — two, three, and sometimes even four in a match. He got them because he could hit the ball hard with both feet, as well as with his head. All else was forgotten and forgiven!

We can dream our dreams of the ideal centre-forward, but the first lesson for all the dreaming centre-forwards is taught by Derek Dooley, learn how to score goals.

CHAPTER 12

THE PROPER USE OF THE HEAD

ACCORDING to many critics there are just two things wrong with football. One is that the players don't make enough use of their heads. The other is that they use their heads too much. Those opinions aren't as Irish as they seem. What they really mean is that the players don't use their heads sufficiently for thinking purposes, and that as the game is played, they have to use them too much in dealing with the ball. In both directions there is truth in the observation.

There are plenty of players, young and not so young, who don't think about the game as much as they should. In this chapter I am not concerned with that. There isn't much doubt, on the other hand, that too much of our football is played with the ball in the air, resulting in a considerable amount of headwork. It is also true to say that lower down the scale the ball spends more time travelling through the air rather than along the ground. Even if it is correct, however, that so far as learners of the game are concerned, there is too much kicking the ball hard and running after it at top speed, the young players need not be criticized unduly. The fellow who is learning to drive a motor-car crashes the gears. The footballer in the first stages of learning, crashes the ball.

Higher up the scale, players who have long passed the learning stage are inclined to give the ball too much air, calling for the use of the head rather than the feet. Perhaps in time to come, when floodlit matches become more common, the ball will be kept closer to the ground. To-day the flood-lighting arrangements are such that the ball is 'lost' to the players when it is put high into the air. Let us hope that there will be no

rearrangement of the lighting which will enable the players to see the ball just as well when it is in the clouds as when it is comparatively close to the ground. Some people are so upset, however, about the up in the air play that they would go to the length of barring the use of the head. Whether it would be a good thing for the game if it became more literally football, and less head-ball, is a question which can be left to the Brains' Trust. We have to accept things as they exist, and the proper use of the head to the ball is one of the things which have to be learnt. Let me add that the game would certainly lack some of its charm if a law was passed which made heading the ball an offence.

Few football incidents give greater pleasure than the occasions when the centre-forward goes up for the ball, as it is pushed over from the wing, rises to his full height, and then, perfectly timing the application of the head, sends the ball into the net with as much speed and accuracy as he could have done with either foot.

But such a shot needs something more than speed and timing - extraordinary skill. Effective heading of the ball is difficult. And the difficulty arises because, in the first place, heading a football is not nearly such a natural process as kicking it. Much more natural is it for the young player to be frightened of the ball when the occasion arises for the head to be applied. Unless the young player of to-day differs from the young player of my time, he will, in the first place, have to overcome the natural tendency to try to head the ball with his eyes shut. Of course, it can't properly be achieved like that. So in learn ing how to master the art of heading, priority should be given to taking fear out of the task.

If I had a team of boys in my care — from the very beginning —I would certainly bar the use of the head to the ball in the very early stages. Unless the head is properly used in contact, the ball can hurt. It is a truism to say that any action which is associated with pain gives rise to fear. I would start the lads

off with a soft ball - a rubber ball without leather casing. With such a ball fear would disappear, and the habit would soon be formed of heading the ball while the eyes remained on it. In due course, the ordinary football could be used, but for practice purposes it would be better that the ball should not be blown up too tight.

If you have a spare room, where a ball can be dangled from a piece of string in the ceiling, it can be turned to good purpose in learning how to head the ball properly. Another helpful form of practising heading is to take the ball on to a spare piece of ground and see how many times in succession it can be headed into the air. This is the best way I know of getting the habit of keeping the eyes on the ball up to the actual instant of contact.

Even top-ranking professionals, realizing the importance of heading practice, can often be seen out in the middle, during their mid-week preparation, in groups of three or four, heading the ball this way and that to each other, counting as they do so the number of times one head or the other is used without letting the ball go to earth. The point should be stressed that this form of heading practice is mainly habit-forming. It calls for the head being set back in order that the ball can be kept in the air. In actual play the ball has mostly to be headed *downwards,* or in such a way that it moves towards its intended target.

Here we come to another natural fault which has to be cured - that of tucking the head into the shoulders as the ball comes in contact with it. Try, without a ball, twisting the head this way and that, with the head tucked in. The movement of the head is restricted, isn't it? Now go through the same process with the neck at its full stretch. The movement either way is much freer. It is the flick of the head, at the moment of impact, which can direct the ball to the desired place, and also apply the sometimes necessary force. Exercises which strengthen the muscles of the neck will serve their pur-

pose in helping to master the art of heading the ball properly.

The forehead and the temples are the parts to use to give the ball direction. Indeed, the top of the head only comes into deliberate use to 'slide' the ball by way of a pass to a colleague behind the player who is doing the heading. From time to time it does happen, in the course of play, that a footballer will have to head the ball as he can, not as he wills. He takes the hard-driven ball on the top of his head, and out he goes as completely as the boxer who has taken a fierce blow on the vulnerable part of the chin. Some heads are harder than others.

There were several reasons why I admired that great full-back Eddie Hapgood during the years in which I played with him. Particularly, however, did I admire Eddie for the fact that he refused to shield his 'soft head' when the necessity arose. Yet it was nearly certain that if Hapgood used his head to a heavy ball, driven hard in his direction, he would immediately go down for the count. This wonderful full-back could have been excused if he had permitted the consequences of heading the ball to affect his play. He must have been as much afraid of the ball going to his head as any boy starting on his football career. Indeed, his head was so susceptible to injury that at one stage of his career the idea was given serious consideration of converting him from a full-back to a winger, where he would have been able to use his head almost exclusively for thinking purposes. But Eddie stuck it at full-back to pick up dozens of International caps. He has a place to himself in my memory as the only player I ever saw score a goal with a penalty 'kick', with his head. Taking a penalty for his side, Eddie drove the ball within reach of the goalkeeper, who punched it straight back to him — hard. Hapgood headed it back - also hard - into the net.

The legs are connected with heading, too. If two rival players go up together with the object of heading the ball, obviously the one who gets highest into the air is the one most likely to get to it. So it is worth while to practice the jump and

heading at the same time. There are odd players who somehow or other - I have never quite been able to decide how they do it - get high in the air and then, for a split second, seem to be poised there, and with neck at full stretch head the ball where they want it to go. Watch Nat Lofthouse if you get the chance, and you will see what I mean.

Don't be afraid of the ball. It won't hurt if the timing is right. Keep the eyes open, and on the ball. These are the main things which make for mastery in the art of heading. In this phase of the game there is, perhaps, the greatest gap between the various grades of football. The way to narrow that gap can be written in huge capitals - PRACTICE. Get down to this heading practice early, too. I have frequently been asked, by ambitious players anxious to catch the eye of the scouts, what these experts really look for in the budding player. Opinions differ, of course, but I know one good judge of a footballer who has ideas in that direction which are connected with heading. Manager Jimmy Seed, of Charlton Athletic, declares that the first point on. which he makes a note, when watching a young player, is the use he makes of his head in connection with the ball. This manager says that as the result of long experience he has come to the conclusion that the player who has mastered the art of heading can generally be accepted as having acquired also the gift of ball control on the ground.

To talk of mastering the ball with the head may be a new line to many. That is good reason for allowing the thought to sink in deeper. There is the nod of the ball, this way or that. There is the full-blooded header, not best done, as many people suppose, by leaning the body backwards and bringing the head forward. Force is much more easily applied when the body is in line with the head. The shoulders have a part in heading at its best.

Connected with heading, of course, even at the bottom of it at its best, is proper timing. I expect you have seen more than one sensational goal headed by a player who has flung

himself forward like a catapult to meet a ball with his head at precisely the right moment. That takes a bit of doing. *All* correct heading takes a bit of doing. The most amazing headed goal I ever saw was scored by Charlie Buchan, playing for Sunderland against Blackburn Rovers. We players of the Rovers knew all about Buchan's heading habit; how very dangerous he could be, for instance, when the ball came across high from the corner-flag. 'Don't worry,' said 'Aussie' Campbell, the Rovers wing half-back. 'Leave Charlie to me when they have a corner-kick.' In due course, there came the corner-kick to Sunderland. In accordance with his promise, Campbell took up position close to 'Big Charlie', near the Rovers goal. The ball floated into the penalty area head high; Campbell's ball, so he thought. Then the near miracle happened. Buchan, with Campbell still between him and the ball, stretched his neck out over Campbell's shoulder and met it perfectly. Into the net it went. Campbell's body was still nearer to goal than Buchan's head. After the game 'Aussie' had his leg pulled. He was teased about his marking of Buchan. Still wondering how it had happened, he eventually summed it up thus: 'That fellow isn't a footballer,' he said. 'He's a bloomin' giraffe.'

Buchan had stretched his neck to the full extent, had timed the movement of the head perfectly.

CHAPTER 13

ON ALL SORTS OF PITCHES

WE are fully justified, in my opinion, in being proud of the fact that we - that is, England - have not yet, at the time of writing, been beaten by a Continental side playing on an English ground. The record is something we can boast about. It's surprising, in a way, that the pupils — the Continental players are largely the product of British tutors - have not proved equal to beating the teachers on our grounds. They are good footballers, these foreigners, keeping their noses down to it, receiving, in many instances, greater financial rewards and incentives than our own players. There is one precaution which we could take — not often referred to — by way of making almost sure that these Continentals don't beat us on our own grounds. We should see to it that we only play them on heavy pitches. They don't often play on that sort of pitch, whereas our players just have to get used to them.

The test for our individual footballers (and for our teams) is whether they can play well on *all* sorts of pitches. We certainly get a hotch potch in the course of an average football season. One week the game has to be played *on* the ground, the next week it has to be played *in* the ground. Between the two extremes there is no lack of variety. One of these days we may solve some of the problems which the clerk of the weather sets our footballers. We may be able to keep the pitches free from the effects of frost. We may find ways and means of keeping them comparatively dry, and possibly even grow grass which will stand up to the wear and tear of regular play in all sorts of weather. Until that day arrives it will remain true that the team which wins any championship - and I don’t

mean only First, Second or Third Division championship -will be the one which can play best on all sorts of pitches. The best players, and the best teams, are those capable of adapting themselves to the existing conditions; of using them to their own advantage.

Mind you, I think there are ways already to hand in which our play and players could be helped to produce better stuff on the difficult pitches. The white ball has come into use in recent times. Many of the players of my generation wish we had known about it in our time. The white ball is covered with some substance which prevents it from absorbing water or picking up mud to the same extent as the commonly used brown leather ball. During one First Division match last season I saw the white ball used throughout the whole game. The pitch was inches deep in mud. When the ball, which had been white, became dirty, the referee called for a clean one of the same kind. The football was of better quality than it would have been with an ordinary ball.

On the same day, under similar pitch conditions, the ordinary ball was used in other games. Why, in the name of common sense, and in the interests of everybody concerned, this white ball isn't more generally used during the worst of the winter, beats me. It isn't just a case of using an object which can be better seen and followed. The players like it.

Remember, too, that the makers of the original football laws came to the conclusion that the weight of the object to be kicked up and down the field mattered. It is laid down in the rules that the football shall weigh, at the start of a game, not more than sixteen ounces, fourteen to sixteen ounces being the agreed ideal weight at the start of the match. Surely arrangements should be made to keep, roughly, to such weights throughout the ninety minutes of play. Not long ago I tested 1 ball which had been used throughout a match. It then weighed twenty-one ounces!

However, the question of whether there should be a society

for the prevention of cruelty to footballers can be left in abeyance. We have to take conditions as they exist, and the thing the footballer should do, before the game starts, is to get to know all he can about the conditions under which the game has to be played. I have heard players of first-class teams in the dressing-room say at half-time that they were beaten by the state of the pitch, that they weren't properly shod. The half-time interval may be too late to make the discovery, and there is no good excuse for 'not knowing what the pitch was like'. Take a look at it before the game starts. Try it. Run about on it. There may be places where the pitch varies.

Taking things in something like proper sequence, consider the general state of the weather. At times the toss does matter. Some may dissent from this view, but experience tells me that on the day when there is a wind blowing from end to end, maybe with driving rain as well, there is one wise decision to make when the toss has been won. Use the conditions as the twelfth man. I remember the toss before a match on the Blackpool ground, which slopes a little towards one end. Rain was coming down in torrents. The skipper who won the toss said: 'We'll play with the tide.' He was right. Play with the tide.

Several good reasons can be given for the decision to use weather conditions. One of them is that the state of things at the start of a game are known. They may not be the same during the second half. The sun goes down, or the slant of its rays change during the course of a match. Again, when the climatic conditions are in favour of one side, that side may be helped to a winning lead with the other fellows so tired out, trying to stop the tide, that by the time the conditions turn in their favour, they are not in the physical state to make use of them.

So much for the kick-off. Now turn to the pitch itself. Let us assume for the moment that it is soft, perhaps up to the ankles, or over them, in mud. The surest thing about this

type of pitch, whether it is the village green or Hampden Park, is that the mud will not be of the same consistency all over. Because of the extra wear, there are two places where the average pitch is at its worst in wet weather. One is along the centre of the field, and the other is round the goalmouth. For the attackers then, the tactical policy must be to give the ball, as often as possible, to the players who have the most favourable chance of working it forward - the wingers.

Plugging the ball up the middle to the centre-forward, where he has to plough rather than play, is the short cut to attending his 'funeral'. He will 'die on his feet' before the game is over. Let the wing men do even more of the carrying than usual. Where they play there is usually some grass left, even in the middle of winter, and on that grass the ball behaves itself to a reasonable extent.

Even good players, those who should know, often neglect or forget to suit their play to the pitch. I recently saw the inside forwards of Aston Villa play like world-beaters in the early part of a First Division match, but before the end of that same game they had faded right out. At the start of that game the pitch was reasonably good. The ball could be 'worked', closely, and the inside forwards of the Villa did work it artistically and effectively. As the play proceeded, however, the tramp of feet so churned up the pitch that it became like a Christmas pudding. The ball, as well as the players, was carrying some of the pitch around. As the surface got worse, so did the play of those clever Villa inside forwards. They continued to try the close stuff, making passes along the ground which, on the sticky surface, failed to reach the intended objective, and thus helped the opposing defenders. Instead of booting the ball, they fiddled with it, getting nowhere at a slower and slower pace.

Here I may refer to the pitch on which Cup Finals are played. For these occasions Wembley is always described as being in perfect condition, the sort of pitch, it is said, on which

any real footballer ought to be able to play well. As the Wembley pitch is kept almost exclusively for the occasional ultra-important match there is a lovely velvet carpet of grass on a smooth surface even late in April. The football in Cup Finals, however, and also in the England v. Scotland games, has often been disappointing. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that, at that time of the year, Wembley represents for the players something different. They have probably come from fields mostly bare, perhaps hard as iron. They find themselves on the green carpet, which slows down the ball, and on which it is so easy to get too far under it. Even at Wembley the playing area varies. Because of the use made of part of the pitch for greyhound-racing, a portion of the ground has to be re-laid each year. The 'new' pieces don't settle down to the consistency of the other parts of the pitch. That is my personal reflection after playing in five Cup Finals on this pitch. I merely mention it to illustrate the importance of what I said earlier, of taking stock of the playing surface before the game starts.

It is not my purpose to tell players who get to Wembley how to win the Cup, or how to win an International match there. The reference to the pitch does contain a warning, however. What I have said here about Wembley may be the explanation of something connected with the games there concerning which much comment has been made: the number of shots which go over the bar. On the Wembley grass the ball is, as it were, teed up. It is so easy to get the toe underneath.

Now let's go back to the difficult places on the average pitch during the wet winter months. Often the worst place is under the goalposts, and two or three yards in front of them. Here it is easy for the goalkeeper to make mistakes. If he is wise he will take up position, for most of the game, well in front of the goal-line. He shouldn't make the conditions worse for himself by patrolling between the posts to keep himself warm. The goalkeeper, of all the players, must beware of those 'different'

spots. Last season, watching a match between Fulham and Millwall, I saw what was properly described as a freak goal. It was scored from near the centre-line, and off the head of a Fulham player at that. The Millwall goalkeeper took a goal-kick. As the ball was coming down, around mid-field, Fulham full-back Reg Lowe 'hit it', with his head, back towards goal. It was a sticky-pitch day, and the young Millwall goalkeeper, obviously expecting the ball to keep low when it struck the ground, went out to meet it, even bending down in position to make the catch. The ball struck a hard patch, however, and off this it bounced over the head of the goalkeeper and into the net. A freak goal, yes. But also a lesson for the young goalkeeper. Don't trust the ball to do the expected thing under abnormal conditions.

Because the ball so often does the wrong thing on a muddy and uneven surface, there is another point which attackers should bear in mind on such occasions. That is to chase *every* ball. The bounce, the variation of pace, or even the greasy cover of the ball may beat the full-back or the centre-half, causing him to foozle a clearance which, under good conditions, he would have made in comfort, and the chasing of which, by an attacker, would have been a waste of wind and energy. It is profitable to remember, too, that on the wet or muddy pitches the advantage is with the man who is moving forward, rather than with the fellow who has to turn. Why does the average number of goals scored in first-class football go up when the pitches are treacherous? The answer is that, apart from the mistakes caused by conditions, defenders can't turn quickly. If they try to - well, they may find themselves numbered among the muddied oafs.

That's the reason why footballers who know their job make up their minds on these awkward pitches to cut out the fancy stuff almost completely. The player who tries to twist and turn on such pitches doesn't need to be beaten by his opponents. He beats himself. Success is more likely to be achieved

by keeping the ball moving, which demands strength in the leg muscles.

As a heavy ball, on a wet surface, can't be relied upon to obey the accepted rules, the passes should be made to the feet of the player for whom the ball is intended, rather than ahead of him. On top of it all, on these slippery pitches, 'have a go' when the goal looms in view.

Hereabouts the question is likely to be asked: What about the studs to use on these varied pitches? The short reply is that the perfect arrangements of studs hasn't yet been invented, and I doubt if it will be. Good players differ as to the best arrangement even for normal pitches. Through my playing career I came to the conclusion that cone-shaped studs suited me best, four in each sole, and two in each heel. I also found that I could get a better grip, on the turn, with the stud on the inside of the boot a little further from the edge of the sole than the stud on the outside of the boot. Johnny Mclntyre, a Blackburn Rovers' colleague of mine, who in one match scored four goals in five minutes, had a preference for one of his studs being placed on the toe. He may have been right in the impression that this helped him to pivot when on his toes. There's no harm in making the experiment.

For the slippery, hard grounds, with ice on top, I had a personal preference for very short studs. Under such conditions some players advocate strips of rubber, though I myself never had the same satisfactory feeling of contact when thus equipped.

Rules can't be laid down in relation to studs for pitches. One player's meat is another player's poison.

One last tip about the studs, however, and about this one I don't think there is any argument. On sticky grounds, with clinging mud about, put vaseline round the studs before the match starts. It helps to keep the mud clear of the studs. No footballer can really give of his best if he is carrying pieces of the pitch around with him. On such days, too - with the same

object in view - it pays to blacklead the football boots all over. Such treatment helps towards making them waterproof. The mud doesn't stick so much to blackleaded boots, either. If it is true that twice-armed is he who gets his blow in first, then thrice-armed are the players most suitably shod for the pitch on which they have to play.

Whatever the pitch or weather conditions, two main principles should be kept in mind. The first is to make the effort to master them. The second is to make use of them. Conditions won't win matches for you, but I have seen lots of players whose methods suggested that they thought they would. For instance, when a half-gale is blowing, it isn't good enough for the fellows playing with it at their backs to boot the ball as hard as they can and run after it at top speed. Such slapdash methods adds up to abuse, rather than use, of the helping wind. Forward kicking must be controlled. Indeed, I would say that it is easier to play good football against a fairly strong wind that it is to play with such a wind. Against the wind the ball comes back to meet the player. If the wind is behind the ball overruns the player, unless the kicking is controlled. But when the wind is adding pace to the ball, the advice 'shoot hard, shoot often' should certainly be followed.

CHAPTER 14

THOSE ATTACKS OF NERVES – AND THE CURE

SURPRISES are part and parcel of football; to a considerable extent they are its lifeblood. They are always cropping up. The biggest surprise I ever got - off the field - during the whole course of my career was in the dressing-room at Wembley a few seconds before we were ready to step out to play in a Cup Final. That, of course, is the day of days for every real footballer; the day he dreams about, and looks forward to. A Cup-winners' medal is the most prized of all the possessions which can be won at the game. The fellows who get to Wembley are the envy of their contemporaries. Imagine my surprise therefore when, with our whole team just about to walk into the middle, one of the players came up to me with this plea: 'Don't give me the ball for the first quarter of an hour!' Imagine it, a fellow in a Cup Final who didn't want the ball for a sixth part of this match of matches!

I gave him a gentle kick on the seat of his shorts as I replied: 'I'll give you the ball in the first five seconds if I get the chance.' It was quite obvious why that player didn't want the ball in the early part of that Cup Final. He was scared stiff he would make a mess of it. He had a bad attack of the jitters. For all footballers there come the occasions when matches of special importance are on the programme. Nerves are an important, often a telling factor.

Many followers of the game will recall one of the most sensational Cup-tie results of the last thirty years. Arsenal were drawn to play at Walsall in the first round. In the Arsenal team for that match was a player named Walsh. New to the team, his hands were trembling as he got himself ready to go out for

the kick-off. He was duly decked in shirt, shorts and football boots. The part of the equipment lacking was his football stockings. In his excitement, his state of nerves, he had forgotten to put them on. This player stood out in marked contrast to many I have known who certainly didn't forget their stockings: they put them on and took them off three or four times. The Arsenal player who had such a bad attack of nerves may have been partly responsible for the most sensational result, the defeat of the Cup-holders by 'unknown' Walsall.

This nervousness, this feeling of being so worked up that it is odds against giving of your best on the field, takes many different shapes. Incidentally, I am always a bit sceptical about the player who boasts that he takes every game, no matter how important, 'in his stride'. There aren't many players who can do that, even when they have had considerable experience. Players in the running for caps often fail to produce anything like their best if they have knowledge, in advance, that they are being watched by members of the International selection committee.

Part of the ordeal of the big Cup affairs lies in the period of waiting for the great day after the semi-finals have been won. Another part of the ordeal is the unusual two by two procession on to the field of play, the presentation to royalty before the ball is touched, and the rest of the ceremonial. The fellow who can stand up to all this without getting butterflies in his stomach is a better man than I am. Indeed, very few players can truthfully claim immunity from a certain amount of nervous tension. What is a fact - don't the stories of the biggest games of the past tell it plainly? - is that the side which most often wins is the one whose men come nearest to playing their natural game. And that, I think, should be the keynote for the preparation of the young players, as well as of players with wider experience.

Just because a match is of extra importance is no good reason for discussing it at twice the usual length, or for trying

to bring into it all sorts of fancy new plans. I know why, in the various Cup competitions played up and down the country, there is such a high proportion of surprise results. It is because there has been developed, through the years, the idea that a different style of play is required in a knock-out tournament. That isn't so. The type of football which can win League matches is the type of football which can win Cup-ties. This idea that something different is required, some style of play to which the players are not fully accustomed, is the short cut to an attack of nerves. After all, it is the player who knows his job, who is confident that he can do it, who in the ordinary course of events is least likely to get the jitters. The player who is asked to do something different - well, he is not so confident that he can do it, and the nervous tension has its inevitable sequel.

To say to a young player stepping up into a higher class: 'Don't worry, just play your own game,' is easy. What is more, the advice is quite sound, but it is more easily given than followed. There are other things which can and should be done to help the player to get over his attack of nerves. One is to trust him, at as early a stage as possible in the game, to cut loose with the ball. If there is a new and nervy goalkeeper in the side, don't wait for the other fellows to have a shot at him. Slip the ball back to him at the earliest opportunity, let him get the feel of it, and incidentally show that confidence is reposed in him. The same line can be taken with players in other positions. I recall a young full-back who got his first International cap not so long ago. He was a good full-back, but rather highly strung. It so happened that for the first five minutes of the match the side on which he was playing was on the attack. He didn't get a kick at the ball during that time. In due course, however, an attack by the other side developed along the flank where he was operating. The full-back, a bundle of nerves by this time, made a fatal blunder. The mistake added to his worry, and it is almost literally true to

say that, good player though he was, he scarcely did the right thing for the first twenty minutes of that game. He would have got over his nervousness much more quickly, have forgotten all about it and gained confidence in himself, if some pal had given him the ball quite early on, in circumstances in which he could have cleared at his ease.

Other things being equal, I want in my team at least one player who, hardly knowing the meaning of the word nerves, has a lighthearted approach to the game. The humorist, the fellow who keeps the laughs going in those twenty minutes of preparation for the match is worth his weight in gold to any side. The trainer can also do much to ward off nerves, to persuade the players, in a roundabout way, that it is just another game they are getting ready to play.

The first time Arsenal went to the Cup Final, Manager Herbert Chapman took a portable gramophone to Wembley, with a selection of the cheeriest records he could lay his hands on. The music was started as the players began to strip, and so we had players whistling the popular tunes as they prepared for the big game. After that - in case the 'official' gramophone was forgotten on these occasions - I made a habit of taking my own portable to Wembley on Cup Final days. A writer who got to know of this said kind things about me; emphasizing how thoughtful it was of me to cheer up my colleagues in this way. That was a pat on the back I didn't really deserve. The main purpose was to cheer up myself.

In 1939 Portsmouth got through to the Cup Final. Their twelfth man on the trip to Wembley, and in the dressing-room, was a well-known comedian, whose sole purpose was to keep the minds of the players off the coming game. The then manager of Portsmouth, Mr. Jack Tinn, has told me that the comedian kept the jokes going at such a rate that there wasn't a mention of football during the whole time the players were dressing for the match. Between this performance and the result of the match there may have been no real connection.

It is a fact, however, that straight from the kick-off those Portsmouth men gave such a fine, confident display that the Wolves, who were firm favourites, scarcely saw the way their opponents went. Portsmouth won by four goals to one.

There is more in this approach to the game than is sometimes dreamt of in our philosophy. For instance, we are constantly being reminded, in football of all grades, of the advantage to a side of playing a match on its own ground. All sorts of reasons are given why home teams, in all sorts of football competitions, win the majority of the matches. We talk about the influence of the spectators, of familiarity with the surround ings, the size of the pitch, and so on. These things do have an effect on the results, there's no doubt about that. Much more important, however, and of greater effect, is the *approach* to a match. The fellows due to play a game on their own ground feel that they can win that game, and, approaching it con fidently, they play to win. The approach to an away game is, all too frequently, very different. The advance decision is that the match must not be lost. Away from their own ground too many teams play *not to lose,* and playing not to lose is a very good way of losing.

A look at the League tables which show the records of the big clubs, provides the evidence of this difference between playing at home and playing away from home. In them can invariably be found some teams which repeatedly win games on their own ground, and just as regularly lose when playing away from home. They are the same footballers, but they play differently. A confident approach is among the foundations on which victories are built. Inspire the lads with confidence! That is part of the cure for nerves.

One other reason may be given for the failure of some teams to reproduce their best form when away from home. Surprising as it may be, it is a fact that there are players of first-class teams who, for some mysterious reason, leave all their fighting spirit at home. Perhaps it is a form of nerves, maybe the mental

make-up of some players demands encouragement. They thrive on praise. What I want in my team are players who will put in all they have on those occasions, away from their own ground, when their best football is greeted with a chilly silence. To young players my plea is, resolve not to join the ranks of the 'own ground' army. There are enough of them knocking around.

Here it seems advisable to put in a word to those who select football teams, the selectors of the village team, as well as the selectors of a First Division side. 'Don't disturb a winning team' is a popular slogan. My view is that the slogan is over-worked. Rather there is truth - slightly exaggerated - in the idea that it is safer to make a change here and there in a winning side than to play musical chairs with a losing side. A winning team, playing confidently, can 'carry' a new and young player to success, and the new player will be all the more likely to do himself justice - less likely to be a victim of nerves - in that side than in a losing one. There is an old story connected with a record which still stands in first-class football. In 1920 the Burnley club made a bad start. Several matches were lost. The supporters were downhearted, clamoured for wholesale changes in the side. The manager called together the players who had worn the club colours in those games which had been lost. 'Look here,' he said. T know you haven't done well, but I have confidence in you; so much confidence that, unless there are injuries to upset the plan, I shall play the same eleven for the next six matches, win or lose.'

From that moment those Burnley players started on a run in which they were unbeaten in thirty successive First Division matches.

To the selectors of a football team, then, the advice is, make up your minds concerning the best eleven players available, and stick to them as far as possible. The show of confidence outside the team will be reflected in the confidence of the players on the field.

I am tempted to put in here a few words to the barrackers of football players. I shall resist the temptation. It's such a silly business, this barracking of a player or players of a side. The player who is being told, by the watchers, 'to go off and strengthen the team', is doing his best. He has the confidence of the selectors. He may have started on his football career without nerves. Severe criticism will turn him into a bundle of nerves. Why bother?

CHAPTER 15

CAPTAINS IN NAME - AND IN FACT

IF you are an average football fan, taking an average amount of interest in the play and the players of the first-class clubs, I should like to ask you how many regular captains of first-class football clubs you can name off-hand. To amuse myself, I have already tried this question on several average football fans. As a result of the experiment I am prepared to enter into a little private wager. I'll bet that your quick list of captains of first-class clubs doesn't contain more than half a dozen names.

To the average mind the captain of a football team doesn't matter very much anyway, he is of little more importance -if any - than other members of the team. Of course, he leads the other ten players out on to the field, and says heads or tails, as the whim takes him, before the kick-off. There the captaincy begins and ends, such is the widely accepted view. What is more, the average man on the terraces is quite right in thinking that even in many first-class clubs the captain doesn't *really* matter. He is just a figurehead, one of the team. Not long ago the decision was made by the officials of a Second Division side that the 'honour' should go round; that the captaincy should change hands in every one of the first eleven games.

Here and now I want to scotch this idea that captaincy doesn't matter. If he is the right player in the right place the captain can make a lot of difference to the success of the side. For the life of me I can't understand managers who appoint this or that player to be skipper of the side and then say to him, in effect: 'You mustn't do anything on the field in the captaincy line, except to carry out my instructions.' While the

captain of a first-class team should be more than just one of the bunch of players, it is even more important that the skipper of teams lower down the scale should regard their position as an honour and an important job.

Naturally, the captain will be popular with the other members of the team. They will respect him, respond to anything he asks of them. One of the things the captain can do, by his own play, is to set his stamp on the whole of the side. If the skipper snaps his fingers at the laws of the game it is natural and reasonable that the other players will copy his example. Thus the team gets a bad reputation.

By example, by advice, by encouragement, the captain can wield a big influence on the play. This brings in its train the question of the place in the team which the captain should occupy, provided he has the other necessary qualifications. In our time there have been few more popular players than Frank Swift, goalkeeper of England and Manchester City. It was doubtless this popularity which inspired his appointment as captain of his club side. Frank tried it for a little while and then gave it up, coming to the conclusion that as a goalkeeper he was too far removed from the scene of most of the operations for him to have the necessary influence on the play, or to be able to pass on ideas on tactics to the players far removed from him - the forwards, for example.

A facetious reply is sometimes given to the question of why, in actual practice, the centre-half is so often made the captain of a football team. People say that his playing job is easy and he does so little running about that he has some spare breath with which to issue instructions. But, of course, that isn't the real reason why, other things being equal, the centre-half is made skipper of many first-class sides. He is at the centre of operations, in close enough touch with front and rear to carry out captaincy duties.

Much the same, and possibly something more, can be said for giving the captaincy to one of the wing half-backs. Here,

partly for the edification of those who think that the captain matters very little, attention may be drawn to an interesting fact. The last three players who carried the F.A. Cup off the field at Wembley were Billy Wright, Joe Mercer and Joe Harvey - each a wing half. Further, no matter which of the four clubs playing in the Finals of 1950,1951 and 1952 had won, the Cup would still have been carried off by a wing-half. The skippers of Liverpool and Blackpool — among beaten finalists — played in those positions. Tottenham Hotspur, performing the exceptional feat of winning two championships in succession, were under the control of their left half-back. Maybe those facts will be brushed aside by some people as a mere series of coincidences. Being fully convinced that the captaincy appointment is important, I refuse to accept that explanation.

There is evidence that some teams fail to do themselves justice because there are too many captains on the field, too many players giving instructions to other players. I make no plea for silent football, but I put much more faith in silent signals than in advice bellowed from all and sundry.

The big grounds where the really important matches are played echo with the parrot cry: 'Hold it!' That cry goes up from half a dozen throats time after time in the course of one game. The player to whose chest or even head the ball is going is told to 'hold it' when he hasn't the slightest chance of doing so. To many players the best advice a real captain would give is : 'Shut up!' In any case, apart from the possible advice of the captain, there is no point in several players giving instructions to the player in possession of the ball - different instructions, quite often - which are invariably impossible to carry out. It must be assumed that the player receiving the ball has made up his own mind, instinctively, as the ball is coming to him, what he will do with it. The unsolicited advice from his team-mates merely confuses him.

It should be the captain's prerogative to manage the team once they are on the field, even to the extent of switching

players from one position to another when the need for this occurs to him. The captain must take important decisions when the make-up of the side is affected by one player or another becoming a casualty. That is why - again, other things being equal - I like the captain to be a versatile player, and the wing-half is usually that type of footballer. In a. recent International match between Wales and England the English centre-half, Malcolm Barrass, was so badly hurt that he had to leave the field. Billy Wright, the England captain, brought one of the forwards back to play at wing-half, while he himself took over the centre-half position. And there, rising to the heights, he played well and remained an inspiration to the rest of the side.

From time to time Wright has been criticized as a captain, but whatever may be said against him, there is this in his favour, he responds to every call made to him by circumstances. The fact that he is captain does not prevent him from playing his ordinary game in other respects. That test must be applied to the skipper of any side. Many fine players, given the responsibility of captaincy, have taken it so seriously to. heart that their own contribution to the play has been seriously affected.

In effect, the enforced absence of Billy Wright from an England team served to demonstrate very clearly, for those with eyes to see, the effect of appointing a different type of leader. The honour of leading the England side was given to Alf Ramsey, the Tottenham Hotspur full-back. It so happened that, in one match in which Ramsey was skipper, things began to go wrong with the side, the play running badly against them. Panic took possession of some of the England players. They dashed wildly, throwing law and order to the four winds. But not so Ramsey. For a few minutes he played more calmly, and with even more deliberation than usual. The example set by the skipper had its effect. The players who had inclined to panic pulled themselves together and duly

pulled the game round. No loud-voiced instructions, no frantic waving of the arms. Just setting the example, which is better than precept.

In cricket, good sides have been known to 'carry' a captain who, so far as his place in the side was concerned, was not quite good enough to be there. A football team is different. The football captain must be a top-notch player first.

In actual practice the real captain of the big teams, largely composed of professional players, has many responsibilities. He is the spokesman of the side, the liaison officer, if you like, between the heads of the club and the players. He is also spokesman-in-chief at the conferences. He is - or should be -the man who knows each player, his strong points and his weak ones. To a lesser extent, perhaps, the captain of the minor teams should take on his shoulders the same sort of role.

Appoint the captain, give him his head. If he is the right player the side will be all the better. If experience doesn't prove the choice to be right-well, give him 'the sack'. No good purpose is served by fostering the idea that the skipper's job consists of calling heads or tails. Any fool can do that. The best captains are not fools — or tools. They know the game, they study it. They play it, and make others play it.

CHAPTER 16

PLANNING FOR VICTORY

NOT long ago a young player joined the staff of one of our First Division clubs. The manager of that club was included among the many who put considerable faith in what might be called planning for victory, on behind-the-scenes talks, with a blackboard at hand. The blackboard was duly produced and the new player was among those called upon to watch. The corks were placed in position to represent players, and the manager proceeded, in his learned way, to move one lot of corks - those representing his team - to left and right, explaining the move as he went along. At the end of the moves, the cork centre-forward was in a perfect position to bang the ball into the net.

The manager turned to the new player: 'You see how it is done, don't you?' The new player, being of the blunt outspoken type, didn't stop to think. 'It looks good,' he said, 'but while our fellows were planning that goal, what were the other beggars doing?'

In that one question the new player had pointed out, in plain language, the limitations to all this planning business, this effort to win matches off the field. What the other fellows do is certainly important. Those other fellows have a way of putting a spoke in the wheel, of making a mess of the most carefully laid plans. That is the simple truth. Equally true is it, however, that many important matches have been won, almost literally, before the first kick has been made at the ball. The plans for victory were well laid.

It is fully realized, of course, that in regard to planning, the thousands of players who make up the Saturday afternoon

games can't possibly copy exactly the examples of the first-class clubs. For one thing, they aren't nearly so much together during the week. But they can take a leaf or two out of the planning books of the big clubs. For example, it is not beyond the range of possibility for the players of every club to hold a brief 'inquest' after each game. Why did we win? Or, more important — why did we lose? Gould anything different have been done - something to prevent that all-important goal from the enemy inside right?

The big clubs certainly consider it worth while to hold these inquests, even getting modern science to help. James Seed, manager of Charlton Athletic, has gone so far as to have full-length films taken of matches played by his team. The pictures are duly produced, with the most interesting or vital parts run through in slow motion, at the weekly talks with the players. Valuable lessons can be learnt by playing a match over again, and within limits the players of all football clubs can do this.

Perhaps it isn't quite right to use the word 'inquest' in relation to these after-the-match conferences. It definitely is not the right word if it is translated into an inquiry to fix the blame. That isn't what the review of a match is for. The purpose is to learn something from the discussion which will be of value in future games. These talks then, are item number one as a means of preparation for the next contest. Item number two is a concentrated study of the forthcoming opponents.

During that part of the season when Cup-ties are on, with the draw often bringing into opposition clubs which do not meet in the ordinary course of the League programme, the big clubs go to great pains to plan for victory. An expert is sent to spy on forthcoming opponents; to assess, as far as possible, their style of play, their strong points and their weaknesses. Let me hasten to add that these plans don't necessarily mean that the match will be won. Both teams can't win, and as both clubs have made plans - have had their spies out - the result

may depend on which club has made the better plans, or succeeds in carrying them out.

Watching your opponents isn't always infallible. For one thing, the best-laid plans can't take full account of human nature, or of match-to-match form. On the day the spy is watching, this or that player may be in sparkling form, while the star of the side may be having one of those days when he can do little right. Again, on the day the spy is watching the forthcoming opponents, the pitch may be inches deep in mud. On the day of the game for which the plans have been made, the pitch may be bone-dry, or so frozen as to be more like concrete than a football pitch. The side which has been under scrutiny will play a very different type of football on the two extremes of pitches. Even the make-up of the team may be different.

A question about the study of forthcoming opponents may be asked. If, in hope of making plans for victory in a Cup-tie, it is considered wise to send out a spy, why isn't the same thing done in relation to League matches? Part of the answer is that the teams which are met regularly in the course of a League programme are fairly well known. Actually, however, much more of this spying is done in relation to what might be called ordinary games than is generally supposed. Only when a Cup-tie is on the programme does the presence of a spy on the ground get publicity. The big clubs do quite a lot of routine spying even on regular opponents. Seldom, if ever, do Arsenal prepare for an ordinary League game without the manager and the players having in front of them a report, by a man who knows, about the way next Saturday's opponents played last Saturday.

As I previously hinted, such elaborate match-winning plans can't be made by all football clubs. But there is one simple and useful thing which can be done. Even the village team usually plays in a local league, and the various sides are met at least twice in the course of a season. Somebody connected with each

of these clubs should make notes, concerning the first match, which can be turned to profitable account when the same opponents have to be faced again.

As I see it, quite apart from the question of whether the pre-match schemes work, there are two good features about this sort of planning. One is that it keeps the minds of the players alert. There is too much of the haphazard about our football of all grades. The way to develop a football brain is to think about the games. We all know that this applies to the individual; but it also applies to teams.

The second good point about this planning is that it inspires confidence. Take a young full-back who, in a particular match, has been repeatedly beaten by the outside right of the opposing side. When the lad knows he will be up against that same opponent on the next match-day he may work himself up into such a state that he is beaten before he goes on to the field. He is much less likely to get into this state if somebody who knows takes him on one side and tells him just how he can stop that particular outside right from making a fool of him. If he is made to feel that he can do it - well, he will probably go on to the field and do it. Confidence goes a long way in duels on the football field. The confident footballer is the better footballer.

The conferences and pre-match talks are worse than useless if they merely have the effect of giving a player - or a whole team - a bad attack of the jitters. Before Colchester United had risen to the heights of membership of the Football League, they did things in the Cup competition which carried them so far that they were eventually drawn against First Division sides. On the face of it they didn't really stand much chance of beating First Division opponents, but did the manager tell them so? He did not. He told the players - and told the world - of the secret plans which were being made to lower the colours of the giants, of special diet to make his men fitter than men had ever been, and all the rest of it. No need for

them to worry about Stanley Matthews by day as well as by night. Here was the way to stop him.

All the scheming, the planning, the pre-match preparation may be of no avail. On the field of play they may be beaten by the better team. But if the planning has given the players confidence they won't be beaten before they go on to the field. They may even beat the better team. The Davids sometimes beat the Goliaths. Quite often the reason for the so-called surprise results is that the Davids have had so much confidence pumped into them that they are bubbling over with it. The young player who helped the Davids to win is noted and quickly gets the chance of playing in better company. Confidence is not a good substitute for ability, but it is an excellent support, and confidence is one of the things which the pre-match talks, the planning for victory, puts into the players.

So, keeping in mind the pitfalls associated with pre-match planning, the overall conclusion is that it is well worth while. One last word must be said about the plans, however. They must be made of elastic. Few matches between teams of more or less equal ability go completely according to plan. The other fellows do something they shouldn't have done, something which wasn't reckoned on. Then comes the test of adaptability: of suiting the play to the occasion. It may mean, in effect, the complete scrapping of the original plans. Yes, plans you make must most certainly have elastic in their composition.

A final question rises as to whether, in any case, planning for victory is worth while. After all, the game is the thing, isn't it, not the result.

Of course the game is the thing; but I suggest the game isn't real unless the players of both sides scheme, plot, and struggle for victory. Surely it is all wrong to approach a game with a shrug of the shoulders and the remark: 'The result doesn't matter, anyway.' The result does indeed matter. The aim must be victory, not victory by any means — fair or foul — but victory which comes from better play, better tactics, better plan-

ning. Where is the merit in victory for one side if the players of the other side care little about the result? If they don't put in all they have? My view is that every team owes it to the opponents to make every effort to win. To take any other line is to rob your opponents of most of the joys of victory.

At the end of it all there will be winners - and losers. If the losers have done their best they will have no regrets. Rather will they have sincere congratulations for their conquerors. That's the test of a game. Be good winners if you possibly can. If you can't, then be good losers.

CHAPTER 17

MOVES WHICH WIN MATCHES

THE history books are vague as to the actual date when the idea of kicking a bag of wind around first made a popular appeal. What we do know, however, is that more than sixty years have passed since the start of League football. That is a long time. Part of the trouble with our football of to-day is that too many players of too many teams accept it as a fact that during the years in which the game has been played everything which can possibly be done with a football has been done. It hasn't, you know. To assume that there is nothing new under the sun, no new tricks to be tried, no new moves to be worked out, is a mistake. The Dynamos from Russia taught us things about how the game can be played which we had never even thought of. Of course we are pretty quick to learn, but it is nicer to think that we can be the teachers of new ideas rather than the learners. And, of course, we have taught the world much of what it knows about football. Some of the moves worked in unison by the two Stanleys of Blackpool, Matthews and Mortensen, have been planned while the midnight oil was burning. When the Blackpool team has an away match on the programme, these two players share the same bed-room at any hotel where the players stay, and it follows that they talk football.

In the season in which they won the First Division championship, the Tottenham Hotspur men brought much variety in tactics to their programme of games. Not all their ideas were new. Some were old with a new twist, but they did at least surprise opponents. One particular move brought them eight

goals in the course of a single season. Now a difference of eight goals in a season may well mean the difference between a championship won or not won. There was nothing complicated about the Spurs' goal-getting move. When the side was awarded a free-kick, say somewhere about the half-way line, the players of both sides took up positions around the penalty area towards which they knew the ball would be driven. One Tottenham player, outside left Leslie Medley, stood away from the general assembly, seemingly taking very little interest in what was going to happen. As full-back Ramsey took the kick, however, Medley started on a quick run towards goal, the object being to meet the ball with his head as it swerved over from the free-kick taken on the right. Provided the kick was accurate and the timing of the forward run just right, the outside man, with a high jump, would get to the ball first. He was on the move, running in. It follows that being on the move, he could get up higher than opponents who, of necessity, were standing more or less flat-footed waiting for the ball to come over. Those extra goals duly materialized, with some near misses thrown in.

This particular goal-getting dodge is based on two points. First comes the accurate placing of the ball from the free-kick, The second is that the kick calls for perfect timing by the player running in to meet the ball with his head. Neither of these skills present tremendous difficulties, or even extraordinary ability.

What I like about it is the difficulty it presents, even when it it has been 'rumbled'. The move was successfully carried out against the Austrians at Wembley last season, the variation being that it was the England centre-forward Lofthouse — deadly with his head - who stood off, over on the left, until the ball was actually in transit towards goal from Ramsey's foot. Lofthouse raced in, met the ball perfectly, and the Austrian goalkeeper was helpless. Some of the Austrian defenders were so staggered that they thought Lofthouse must have

been waiting in an offside position. He wasn't. He made the run in from behind the defenders.

Of course, efforts will be made, by thinking players, to find the answer to the known moves, but in trying to close one door another may be left wide open. The other side may even change their team in the attempt to find the counter. The England selectors did this recently. It was known before the Austrians came to this country that their centre-half wasn't a centre-half at all, rather a wanderer, moving frequently among his own forwards. In choosing the side to oppose Austria, the England selectors actually planned their team, switching Billy Wright to the forward line, with the admitted objective of preventing these dashes up the field by the Austrian centre-half. A series of injuries prevented the England plan from being put to the test. Many people were sorry about that, and I was left to debate with myself whether, if the original idea of giving Wright the job of watching the Austrian centre-half had been in operation, that centre-half would have been prevented from making a goal for his side.

It will be gathered from what I have said that I am not keen on the idea that tactics should be arranged, primarily, with a view to stopping the other fellows from carrying out their ideas. The team which dictates the policy has the initiative; and that is worth *much*.

When the Scots knew that the England team had Stanley Matthews in it, ways and means were thought out to prevent the England winger from doing his stuff. Two men - not one -were detailed to check Matthews. The England reply to that was intelligent. For considerable spells in one of the matches in which England and Scotland met, Matthews was almost completely starved, the left-winger rather than the right-winger being continually served with the ball. Stanley Gullis, the England captain, was pillored in some quarters for what was called the deliberate neglect of his star winger. But what was the use of giving the ball to a player who was so well covered

and watched that he had little chance of doing anything really useful? Moreover, the 'starving' of Matthews for periods meant that the Scots defenders, whether they liked it or not, were gradually lured away from Matthews, and he was forthwith given the ball only when he had an odds-on chance of doing something really useful with it.

Some years ago Sheffield United won a Cup Final by a similar tactical move. The left-wing pair, Billy Gillespie and Fred Tunstall, were known to be the danger men of the Sheffield United side. The Cardiff City team laid their plans to scotch that left wing pair. The Sheffield reply was to do most of the attacking on the right wing, even Gillespie himself working over to that side of the field rather than keeping in close touch with his partner. Yet it was Fred Tunstall who scored the winning goal in that final, getting his chance when a switch pass was made to him at the time the Cardiff defenders were concentrated on the other.

I have mentioned a Tottenham Hotspur free-kick move which led to many goals for the side. Many free-kicks - especially those just outside the penalty area - come to nothing because referees are apt not to insist on the regulation keeping opponents ten yards away from the ball on these occasions. Even those who do measure out the ten yards allow the defenders to move up towards the ball before the free-kick is actually taken.

Much more frequently, however, such free-kicks are wasted because so little thought is put into taking them. If the defenders - may-be seven or eight - are lined up to block the way to goal no good purpose is served in banging the ball straight at them. One useful move, on such occasions, is for the player who shapes to take the kick to jump over the ball instead of kicking it, and for another player coming up behind him, to 'have a go'. The move may have the effect of creating a break in what was 11 solid line of defenders. An even more effective dodge is for the kicker of the ball — by arrangement with a near-by colleague — to make a short pass instead of a full-blooded shot. Talking of

free-kicks, note well the instructions to referees that these should be taken as quickly as possible. I wish more of our referees would observe and carry out these instructions.

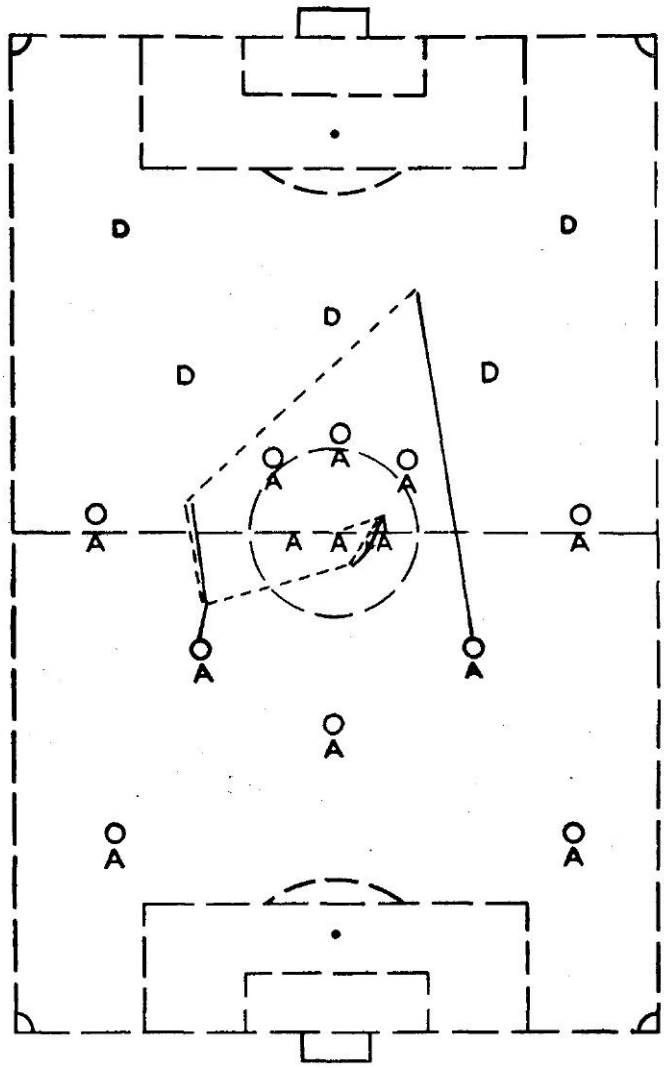
Before Arsenal played Huddersfield Town in the Cup Final of 1930, due note was made by our players, in conference, of the fact that the appointed referee was one of those who *did* permit free-kicks to be taken quickly. Plans were made accordingly. In due course a free-kick was awarded to Arsenal in the Huddersfield half of the field. In a twinkling Alex James put the ball in position, slipped it to Cliff Bastin, and then ran forward for the return pass. Before the Huddersfield Town defenders had even sensed the danger the ball was in their net from the boot of James. The move, thought out in advance, had come off. The Huddersfield players protested that the ball had been kicked off before they were ready, and I believe that Cup Final goal is still a sore point with Huddersfield people who remember it. But why should the players of a side which has broken the rules be given time in which to take up positions enabling them to escape the consequences of their own rule-breaking? Anyway, if the referee is the sort who allows a free-kick to be taken quickly, make use of the kick in the Alex James way. It can be a match-winning move. What I would do to the opponent who prevents the free-kick being taken quickly is nobody's business.

The one thing necessary to make use of the quick free-kick is the understanding between the players concerned. This applies to other match-winning moves. Last season I saw Bolton Wanderers score a goal very easily, and also very cleverly. Centre-forward Lofthouse wandered away from his middle position over to the left-wing. From there he passed the ball along the ground, square, towards Webster. As the inside left shaped to get the ball under control, the defenders, quite naturally, moved to cover him. Instead of gathering the ball, however, Webster allowed it to run on. And there was inside right Moir, all on his own, unmarked in a position to gather

and shoot. Even the opposing goalkeeper was out of position, having moved to the place between the posts where he thought the ball would be most likely to go if Webster delivered the shot.

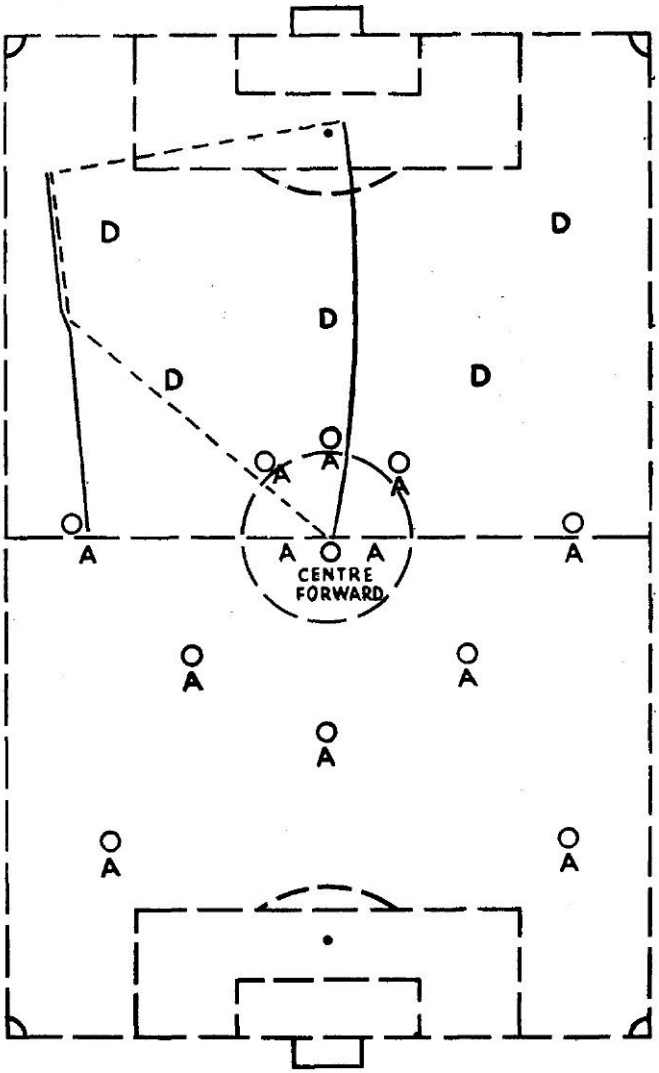
In short, the defenders in general were deceived. It is thus that matches are won. Watch that expert full-back, facing his own goal, sorely harassed by a forward of the other side. The goalkeeper advances a little. The full-back makes a dumb show of getting out of trouble by passing the ball back to him. As certain as night follows day, the worrying opponent will then be 'kidded' into turning away from the man with the ball to intercept the ball when it is passed back. But it isn't passed back. The full-back turns in the opposite direction, thus making for himself time to make a calm clearance which can be of real value to his side. There are some footballers who send a post-card to their opponents with the details of intentions clearly set out. By all means send the post-card, but having sent it, do something entirely different.

Has it ever occurred to you that there are fellows who play what is called a 'blinder' even though only touching the ball occasionally? It can be done. The centre-forward can do it, and here is a typical move which can be recommended by reason of the goals which have accrued from it. (I have seen Tom Finney, the Preston North End winger, helped to several goals in this way.) The ball is passed to Finney, and as it goes in his direction the Preston centre-forward runs off, ahead of the winger and towards the side-line. The centre-forward calls for the ball, but he doesn't really expect the call to be answered, doesn't even want it to be. As he runs towards the touch-line, :he probability is that he will be chased by the opposing left jack or by the centre-half, or even that both of them will move n his direction. If this happens, Finney can then cut into the i)pen space, carrying danger to the goal with him. Should the opponents, being wise to the decoy move, decide to ignore the centre-forward, then the ball can be duly passed to him, and



From the kick-off the ball is passed forward to the inside right, who plays it sideways to the left-half. These moves give time for the right-half to run far up the field into position to receive the long pass at shooting distance.

FIG. 10



A two-man effort which produced a quick goal from the kick-off in a Cup Final. Instead of the usual short pass, the centre-forward hit the ball hard over to the wing, where it was taken up by the outside man, who made ground. The centre-forward was in the penalty area ready for the cross from the wing.

FIG. 10 *{continued)*

the extreme winger, cutting in without the ball, is in a position to make use of the return pass. Quick, slick moves, double purpose affairs even, designed to split wide open even the best organized of defences! The moves which win matches . . .

Don't forget, either, that in any match, the sooner you get the other fellows worried and flurried the better. This idea was always in the forefront of the Arsenal plans.

One move is mentioned to illustrate the point. It being Arsenal's turn to take the kick-off from the centre of the field to start the match, our centre-forward set the ball rolling in the orthodox fashion - a short pass to an inside wing man. That insider would then back-pass to a wing-half. While this was happening, Jack Crayston, the other Arsenal wing-half, was racing up the field as fast as he could go, past the opposing centre-half. The ball was then banged in his direction.

Sometimes the move worked as if the other fellows weren't fully awake. More important was it, so far as the run of the play was concerned, that it had our opponents wondering what in the world we were up to; wondering what we were doing, instead of concentrating on what they intended to do. Get the other fellows on the hop - quickly!

I am always sceptical of the stories we read each football season about some side having broken the record in the time taken to score from the first kick-off. The claim is sometimes made that a goal has been scored in fewer seconds, from the sound of the first whistle, than it would take a fast runner to get from the centre-circle to within shooting distance of the goal even if he didn't have to worry about the ball. All the same, it is true that goals have been scored in double-quick time, and the value of such quick goals can scarcely be over-estimated. There is no good excuse for getting into a rut even when it comes to the kick-off. There are good reasons for trying something different.

The other day, chatting over old times with Tommy Glidden, the former winger of West Bromwich Albion, he told me of a

kick-off" plan, thrashed out before-hand, which put the Albion players in the way of receiving Cup-winners medals. Twice in the same match the move was tried. Once it nearly came off, and once it did come off. Taking the first kick from the middle of the field circle, centre-forward 'Ginger' Richardson didn't just tap the ball to a near-by pal; instead he sent the ball forward, with a long kick, over to the left-wing. Moving ahead as the ball was kicked, outside left Wood ran on to it, and made quick progress with it as centre-forward Richardson raced up the middle. The ball was swung back from the wing, into the penalty area, and Richardson met it with his head. Almost literally, the ball was in the net from the centre of the field with two kicks and one header.

Glidden's memory of the rich haul from that unorthodox kick-off suggested another tactical point. If the other side have scored a goal, it isn't a bad idea to roll up your sleeves in the effort to get your own back before the opposition have fully recovered from their natural excitement about scoring themselves.

Some players get tremendously elated over the scoring of a goal. One of the most striking of football pictures impressed on my mind is connected with the goal by which Charlton Athletic beat Burnley in the Cup Final of 1947. Chris Duffy, the Charlton outside left, seized on what was little more than a half chance to send the ball into the net. As he saw it lying there he threw up both his hands. Then, as his colleagues rushed in his direction to offer congratulations Duffy started an amazing run, in the direction of his own goal, darting this way and that until he got to left back Shrieve, around whom he threw his arms, and the two of them gave a good imitation of a war dance. All very natural, very human, too. I wonder, however, if, just then, those Charlton players were in the right mood to hold up a Burnley attack if the side who were then a goal behind had put everything into an effort to get level again.

It isn't easy to keep cool when you have just got your noses

in front in an important match, but the effort to cultivate calm is worth while. It does of course, offer a good chance to get in another blow before the enemy have recovered from the one dealt out to them.

As for the players who have just had the goal chalked up against them, they must remember that the way back is not by panic, but by making an extra effort in which every member of the side *doesn't* rush all over the place trying to do the job which should properly be done by somebody else. In the battle of wits, the players who keep their heads are the likeliest to get through on their feet. A move here, a counter-move there.

A few final words on the subject of tricks and dodges which win matches. However good the move, it will lose much of its value if it is continually repeated. Brains are not the exclusive possession of the players of one side on the football field. The others will do some thinking too. The way to success is to out-think them. Try things - new things. Opponents who spend their time guessing are on the road which ends in defeat. Your job as an individual, your job as a member of the team, is to get them guessing - wrong.

CHAPTER 18

PLAY TO THE WHISTLE

In many walks of life there are more people ready and willing to give advice than there are people ready to take it. Above all this applies to football. There are so many folk eager to tell the player, or the manager, or even the Football Association what should be done for the good of the game. There are so many deaf ears turned to the advice. Analysis of much of the advice given brings one to the conclusion that it is just as well, in the general interest, that most of it falls on deaf ears.

Among the bits of advice given to footballers by every manager, every trainer, every coach, and even by directors, is in the simple phrase: 'Play to the whistle.' Every player knows he should do it. In theory he is ready to do it, too. In actual play he doesn't. So it is really important that the advice should be repeated. The referee is the man who decides when play shall stop, or whether play shall continue. He is the boss; his whistle counts. Players still overlook that fact. One of these days somebody may reckon up how many really important matches are lost because the players this or that team stop playing in the expectation that the whistle will sound. It doesn't. The total, even in first-class games, must be large. If it were possible to calculate the number of minor matches which go wrong because of the failure to wait for the whistle, the figure might be so appalling that the lesson would be taken to heart and remembered for all time by everybody concerned.

That hasn't happened yet, however, hence do I stress the point here. In the course of a Third Division (North) match last season a defender, quite certain in his own mind that the

ball had been over the line, caught it as it was crossed towards his goal. The referee, who had not previously sounded the whistle, had no alternative but to award a penalty-kick to the other side. That penalty-kick duly produced a goal, which set the team on the way to their first defeat of the season. Not an isolated case, either, but a simple and outstanding example of the necessity of keeping on playing until the play is officially stopped.

How many times, in the course of each season, do we see in the newspapers this sort of sentence: '. . . scored while their opponents were standing still, being under the impression that one of the opposing players was offside.' In a Gup Final between Arsenal and Newcastle United, the Arsenal defenders were convinced that the ball had been over the line before the Newcastle player chasing it sent it across to the middle. The full-backs ceased to give their undivided attention to the course of the play. A goal was scored. It was duly allowed, and by the odd goal Newcastle United won the Cup.

Chelsea would have gone down to the Second Division at the end of the 1950-51 season if their opponents, Wolverhampton Wanderers, had played to the whistle in a match the result of which was vital to Chelsea. Most people present, including the Wolverhampton players, thought Ken Armstrong had handled the ball in the penalty area. He may have done so. The whistle didn't go, however. Armstrong sent the ball into the net with Bert Williams not even making a serious attempt to stop it. Chelsea won the game, got the points, and avoided relegation. These instances are mentioned - and they could be multiplied many times over - to emphasize the point that even first-class players forget the lectures given on this topic.

It must be agreed that it is very natural for a player to stop playing if he feels confident that something has happened against the laws of the game which will induce the referee to sound the whistle for the cease-fire. But until the whistle goes the really wise player carries on.

There are occasions, too, when the player who stops, or hesitates, because he is confident that the whistle will be blown, can be forgiven. I have a feeling that we have by no means reached the ideal in the matter of control of play. The referee has a linesman on each side of the field. Those linesmen are put there for the purpose of helping him control the match in accord with the rules. From time to time it happens that one or the other of the men patrolling the line sees something which he thinks justifies him in raising the flag. When that flag is duly raised - and noticed by the players — it follows almost as certainly as night follows day that the players stop. They shouldn't. The referee may not agree that a breach of the laws has occurred, or he may be looking somewhere else when the flag is waved. Maybe it is just as well that there is only one supreme controller among the three officials on duty at any game. But it does seem - and is certainly a subject for argument - that if a linesman raises a flag such action should mean something. But according to present regulations, only the referee's whistle actually brings the play to a stop.

Even the lawmakers themselves stress the importance of carrying on. It is laid down in the rules that neither by word or action shall a player show dissent from a decision given by the man in control.

To show dissent - according to the lawmakers - from the decision of a referee is to lay oneself open to being found guilty of ungentlemanly conduct. I am afraid that few of us who have played much football could conscientiously plead not guilty to such a charge. It's difficult not to raise an eyebrow - or something even more expostulatory - when the referee fails to notice some breach of the law which is obvious to the player himself. But when the protest threatens to deprive the referee of his coat — or sometimes even of his trousers — that is going too far indeed. Not very gentlemanly.

In point of fact, referees themselves often take a line of action which seems to encourage the protests. If, when a goal is

scored about which members of the defending side are up in arms, the referee, who may have been in a much better position to see what happened than either of his linesmen, is often persuaded to consult one or other of those assistants. As the result of the consultation, the original decision is often reversed. This means, in effect, that it sometimes pays to argue, but the argument is an undignified business anyway, and there cannot be any question that in the all-round sense our enjoyment of the game would be greater if the arguments with the man with the whistle could be cut out entirely.

Of course referees make mistakes. The ideal, however — which I pass on to contemporary players rather than suggest that the old-time players lived up to - is to accept the decisions of the appointed controller and to get on with the game. Sad stories are told of this or that side being 'robbed' of some prize by a wrong decision. We must accept, however, that our referees, like our policemen, are really wonderful. The good ones are also splendidly neutral. That being so, it must follow that in the course of a season the wrong decisions, for or against any side, more or less balance themselves.

I just don't believe those sob-stories told by players to the effect that they had all the bad luck in relation to decisions given by the controlling officials. It is also beyond question, in my view, that the management of the big games has improved in our time. The diagonal system of control, a system by which the referee can, if he so desires, get much more help from the linesmen, has reduced the margin of error. That's the theory, and I would say that referees, given charge of matches with neutral linesmen on either side, are well advised to make use of those linesmen.

However, it is not part of my task here to tell referees how to do their job. What should be insisted upon is that it pays to play the game; even to give the referee the minimum amount of whistle-blowing. Making the other fellows regular presents of free-kicks is one reasonably good way of losing matches. Learn how to tackle fairly.

Recently, a very fine player - one who had been good enough to be chosen to play for his country — was mysteriously dropped from the first team of his club. He was put into the reserves, and told to report back to the manager after each match with the reserves how many free-kicks had been given against him. Steadily the reports made by this player showed that the total was being reduced in each match. And in due course he was able to report that he had gone right through a reserve game without one free-kick being given against him. The manager said: 'That's splendid. You're in the first team again next Saturday.'

I am not preaching perfection, or posing as the white-headed boy who never did anything wrong. Far from it. On one occasion I was dropped from the Arsenal team, the reason given to me, in direct language, being that I had lost the game on the previous Saturday. How had I lost it? By making an unfair tackle somewhere near the middle of the field. The free-kick led to our opponents scoring the goal by which the match was lost. Free-kicks presented on a plate to the other fellows *do* lose matches.

There are other sound reasons for playing the game fairly. The player who does this is likely to remain a player for a longer period, with fewer interruptions from injury. Footballers are human, with human failings and human repercussions. The player up against an opponent who insists on dealing with him unfairly becomes irritated, and consequently yields to the temptation to 'get his own back'. That leads to trouble for both.

It's nice to see two players, who have been in direct opposition during a match, each putting in everything, but doing it fairly, shake hands when the final whistle blows. There's no reason why that shouldn't happen after every match. The fellow who plays the game fairly is doing himself a good turn, and doing his side good turns as well. He's a better player.

That reminds me that footballers should know the rules of the game they are so anxious to play well. Elementary, my

dear Watson. Of course! But experience with young and even with not so young players, tells us that it is no exaggeration to say that about two out of three players haven't read and studied the laws of the game. During last season a first-class player was upset - indeed was involved in such a heated argument with the referee that he was in danger of being sent off -because he thought he had scored a goal. He took a penalty-kick, banged the ball against the goalpost, and when it came back to him sent it into the net. 'But I couldn't have been offside,' he said. Of course not! The goal was disallowed because he had played the ball twice without it being touched in the meantime by any other player. This lack of knowledge of the laws cost that player's side a goal. There was a colleague at hand who could have put the ball into the net if the original taker of the penalty kick had stood aside to allow him to take the ball on the rebound.

Learn the laws of the game and play to them! When twenty-two players do that, the twenty-third man also enjoys himself - the man with the whistle. The referee knows the laws. And his job is to interpret them, not make them.

'The offence wasn't a serious one. It didn't call for such drastic punishment as a penalty-kick.' If the pound notes I possess added up to the number of times I have read these words, I shouldn't work for my living. When a defender other than the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball in the penalty area, or trips an opponent, the referee can't start an argument with himself as to whether a penalty-kick is too severe a punishment. The rules say he *must* award the penalty-kick. If the rules are wrong, that isn't the fault of the referee. Don't shoot him.

Many are the ways in which I think the laws of football could be altered for the better, but the lawmakers are wise people. They set forth the laws, the referees carry them out. What amazes me is that there so many fellows ready to qualify for the job with the whistle.

CHAPTER 19

GETTING ON THE LADDER - AND FALLING OFF

SOMEBODY once said that any fool could get on to the ladder which leads to fame in football, but that it is only the wise lads who climb to the top.

One of the reasons why it is easy»to get started is because such a small proportion of those who *do* get started manage to keep going. The demand for players is such that there is always somebody ready to take on the young player who shows promise above the ordinary. For the promising lads the gayest of pictures is painted, and the promising lad, eager to get on in the game, is dazzled by the bright colours.

In these days, however, there is no need for the player of promise to be in such a hurry to get his feet on the ladder, to accept the first offer of promotion which comes along. Think it over. The club to which the young player goes matters a lot so far as many of these promising lads are concerned. Whether, as a growing lad, I was wise to book up with York City doesn't matter now. The point is that only York City offered me the chance; and I took it with both hands, without stopping to think for any length of time.

Anyway, the chance of promotion is sure to come, in these days of scarcity of players of the right type. And in this connection there is one piece of advice which can be handed out to any ambitious lad. Give of your best in every match for your local team, no matter how obscure that team, because (if for no other reason) you never know whose eyes may be upon you.

If we traced from the beginning the career of several men who are at the top of the football ladder to-day we should find that luck played a part in the early days. Many stories could

be told of football scouts making special journeys to watch a particular player who scarcely saw the man they had set out to watch because their attention was diverted towards someone else of whom they'd never heard. The big clubs sign on the players of promise, and hope for the best. They do rather more than hope, of course. They make the most elaborate arrangements to bring on the lads. What no manager can safely promise any lad is that he will be sure to rise to the top. So much depends on the player himself.

The manager, the trainer, the coach may do everything possible to help the player to climb the ladder of fame, but they can't lead the player to the top of the ladder. The last few steps depend on the player himself. Nobody can tell which one of any given number of players of promise will rise above the rank and file.

How well I remember the day the opportunity came to leave Blackburn Rovers and join the Arsenal. When it was all fixed up, Mr. Herbert Chapman said to me: 'I'll do all I possibly can for you, but I can't do everything. A lot is up to you. Look after yourself. If you do that you can be a first-class player for ten years.'

There is no necessity for me to preach a sermon on that text. Everybody who has spent years behind the scenes of football knows that many young players whose feet could and should have been firmly fixed on the ladder have fallen off because they did not look after themselves. Unfortunately there are so many good-natured people who hinder the player, rather than help him to look after himself. The young footballer who makes good quickly gathers around him a host of friends. He is a popular hero. The willpower of the young player is soon put to the test. Sure enough one of the most frequent causes of failure crops up - the player develops a swollen head. A little story may be recalled which made a big impression on me when I was still young. A player of Blackburn Rovers had made a big jump up the ladder. He had risen from obscurity

to fame in next to no time. One day, after we had done our mid-week practice and most of us were back in the dressing-room having a rub down, this particular player was missing. 'What's happened to Jimmy Brown?' somebody asked.

'Oh,' came the reply, 'didn't you know? He's met with an accident out there.'

'How did it happen?'

'Well,' replied the wag of the party, 'he was trying to head the ball into the net, when his head got stuck between the goalposts.'

It's easy to do! One of the nicest compliments which can be paid to any footballer who has risen to the top of the tree is 'He takes the same-sized hat as when he got into the game.' What is more, as often as not, it is only the player whose head remains the same size who has a chance of getting to the top and staying at the top. There's always something to be learnt about this game, and the player who, having arrived, comes to the conclusion that he knows it all is on the way down. And for such a character the steps of the ladder are apt to be greased.

I had been on the Arsenal pay-roll for some time - a regular member of the first team - when the lesson was taught to me in the most direct way. As you know, for the average professional player who has had a game on the Saturday, Monday is a holiday. It was my habit, in company with other Arsenal players, to use the holiday on the golf course - which, by the way, is not a bad place for change and useful exercise. Our foursome was duly arranged for the Monday morning. At nine o'clock I was on the first tee, ready to hit the ball out of sight. In the middle of my first swing a messenger came dashing from the club house. 'Hi,' he said, 'you're wanted on the phone - quick!'

'Tell them I'm busy', I said, 'and can't be bothered just now.'

The messenger went away, but he was back in no time.

'It's Mr. Chapman,' he said, 'and he must speak to you now.'

Off I went to the 'phone, saying things under my breath. But the things I said about him were nothing to the things he

said to me when I picked up the receiver. The conversation went something like this: 'What are you doing?'

I replied 'Playing golf.'

'What were you doing on Saturday?'

'Playing football.'

'You may think you were,' said the boss, 'but you weren't. You must know you had a bad day, and if you had any sense you'd have been at the ground by now instead of on the golf course. Report here immediately. There's no day off for you this week.' Bang went the phone at the other end, and off went Joe Hulme to the Arsenal headquarters to be put through his paces. The manager was right, too. After a bad game - and no player needs anybody to tell him when he has had a bad game — I ought to have been back at the ground, learning again, trying to remedy the faults which had been so obvious during the match played two days previously.

There is no way known to me of testing whether the young player has the right temperament; and I am very doubtful whether temperament can be cultivated. The nearest thing to a test is to see whether the footballer is capable of playing his own game no matter how important the match happens to be. That great half-back Peter Me William was honoured by being chosen to play for Scotland just after he had celebrated his twenty-first birthday. Two hours before the game was due to start, when the other players were ready to leave the hotel for the ground on which the match was to be played, Me William was missing from the party. Eventually he was discovered in a quiet back room of the hotel, fast asleep! That's the sort of temperament which helps to make the better player. I can lay no sort of claim to having had that sort in my early days.

Lucky the lad who gets the right sort of help from his comrades when the chance comes to step up. I was one of the lucky ones. For some time after I moved from York City I was a long way from the first team of Blackburn Rovers. Indeed, I was just doing my best in the third team. Hence I

got the surprise of my life when, one Wednesday morning, 'Aussie' Campbell, a great first-team half-back, said to me: 'Joe, you're in the first team on Saturday.' Thinking this was no more than a leg-pull, I laughed off the joke, and wasn't persuaded until Campbell dragged me to see the team-sheet. There was my name right enough. A big step up the ladder. Believe me, from that moment until the day of my start in First Division football I could scarcely eat or sleep. If I did manage to drop off to sleep, from sheer fatigue, I was kicking up huge divots in my dreams instead of banging the ball into the net.

The time for the kick-off duly arrived, and out we went on to the field. My inside-right partner, Johnny Mclntyre, kept close to me during the preliminaries, whispering at the last moment, before the kick-off: 'Be ready, Joe.' The first pass Mclntyre made in that game was right to my toe. 'Off you go,' he shouted. And off I went, up the field, to put the ball across to our centre-forward in such a way that he was able to get in a fine shot which sent the ball against the goalpost.

On the way up it isn't wise to fight shy of experience in better company. The player who is a little bit too good for the class of football in which he is playing should have sufficient faith in himself to go a step higher. Those rather better players will teach him the things he doesn't know, and if he has the right approach he will proceed to improve his own game; he'll rise to the desired standard in his new sphere.

Just how quickly the upward steps can be taken depends on the individual. No hard and fast rule can be laid down. Partly because of the scarcity of good players the tendency in recent times has been to put mere lads into first-class sides. That's all right if the player has what it takes, especially in the physical sense. My own opinion, however, is that there is less risk in holding a player back than in pushing him along at too early an age. In recent times we have had boys of sixteen - or even younger - being given a run in first-class sides. And it is in the records that footballers have even played for their country

some time before they were grown men. But the lad who is pushed forward too soon may be disappointed when he fails to succeed and is relegated to the reserve team. That is where temperament comes in again.

In connection with promotion, there is one direction in which managers often err. When the emergency arises they will shuffle the team about this way and that instead of giving the vacant place to the player who has been playing in that position with the reserve side. There isn't much inspiration in being a permanent reserve. The second team players will be the more inclined to give of their best in the reserves, to train and practice to improve, if they know that they will be duly called up when the opportunity arises. If you had seen, as I have, how sick some reserve players have been when they were passed over when a vacancy arose, you would appreciate the adverse effect of such tactics. I want every ambitious player to be on his toes all the time. The way to keep him on his toes is to let him know that when the occasion arises he will be trusted with his chance.

I know it isn't easy for the managers of the big clubs to attain the ideal of having a player in reserve for each position, ready and able to step up. For one thing, the player in the reserves who feels that he is ready for the upward step isn't happy to stay in the background. If he is worth his salt he has a natural desire for the limelight. Such a player will be happier in the second team if he knows that waiting for promotion is no more than waiting for the opportunity to arise.

It may well happen that the young player will be given some choice as to which big club he joins. Shall he accept the offer of his 'home town' club, or shall he go farther field? Regrets are often expressed that the big clubs do not use a greater proportion of 'local' players. And when a player makes good with the team of a town far away from his home, the supporters of the home town side ask pointedly how it was that the local club missed him.

All told, however, I have a feeling that in the interests of the player himself it is often better that he should try to climb the ladder placed for him by some club away from home rather than make good with the local club. More than one reason can be given for this. For instance, there is the point I have hinted at earlier; that it won't be so easy for him to 'keep his head' in the place where he has grown up, and where he is so well known. Another reason is found in the trite saying: 'A prophet hath no honour in his own country.' In other words, the spectators are inclined to be more critical of the local player than they are of the one who comes from farther afield. And, as we are reminded almost every day of the week, criticism can play its part in pushing the player off the ladder.

No useful purpose would be served by delivering a lecture to club supporters on the harm they do when they make a 'dead set' at this or that player. Some spectators, paying their money to see football, consider that they have also paid for the privilege of saying what they think about the game and the players. They'll do it, too, despite the obvious comment that they do so much damage. There are players who can 'take it'; who can live down mere destructive criticism and fight back to receive cheers in place of jeers in due course. To play as if you had 'cotton wool in the ears' is, however, the best plan. But it is beyond the capacity of many footballers.

While I have said that the chances are that a player who has football in him is more likely to climb the ladder with a club some distance removed from his native town, I am not unmindful that home-sickness has held up the progress of many young players. Recently, Wolverhampton Wanderers had on their books a nineteen-year-old boy who had joined the club from Ireland. The boy was keen enough; possessing enough natural ability to make rapid strides upward. He just could not get over a bad attack of home-sickness, however. This affected him so much that he lost heart as well as weight.

Here again, of course, the human element comes in. There

are young boy footballers who wouldn't worry unduly about their home-life, who soon get over the change. There are others of the more sensitive type to whom home is, roughly, the beginning and the end of life. The wise managers, or trainers, or coaches, don't worry themselves, first and foremost, about the football of the promising lad. They see to it that he is made as happy as possible. That is why I recommend to any lad getting the opportunity to go ahead in football, to talk the matter over with somebody who knows. If there are alternative senior clubs giving him the opportunity to sign up, he should choose the one which habitually concerns itself with the general welfare of its players.

Mischief waits for idle hands, and in the early stages of his career the footballer has much idle time. How he spends it matters to his football. It should be somebody's business to look after him so that his spare time is profitably, or at least entertainingly, spent. Thank goodness that the footballers who fall by the way, those who for one reason or another fail to make the grade, are no longer the 'dead-end kids'. Even if they don't actually have other jobs - and I have said that there are snags attached to mid-week work for footballers — they can use the spare time to fit themselves for a job later in life. One of the saddest things connected with the game is the sight of stars of other days hanging around the big grounds, doing little save scrounging. They are among the ones who forgot that the footballer's life is only a short one at best. They were only concerned with making it a merry one. We have grown wise as we have grown older, however. The cast-offs, the have-beens, are becoming more and more scarce to-day.

In other ways, too, the young players of to-day are helped, not only to get on to the ladder, but to stay there. For the time being, at any rate, it would almost seem that some ways of bringing on the lads are better in theory than in practice. Never were there so many opportunities for the young players to learn the arts and crafts of the game as there are to-day. Our Football Association has fathered an extensive coaching

scheme. There are schools at which even the best players can be taught ways and means of bringing on the youngsters. Yet the fact remains, that, in bulk, too small a proportion of the promising players make the grade. This may mean - surely does mean - that there is something wrong with the coaching, or with the methods of some of the coaches. The tendency is for too much rule-of-thumb teaching. Of course, there are many things the coach, a footballer of experience, can teach the young players; ball control, heading, tricks, and so on. Moreover, the young player can be helped by paying attention to the coaching lessons. But it is true of coaching that, unless care is taken, the football will be coached out of the lad rather than put into him.

The boy should be encouraged to develop on natural lines. If he has ability in any particular direction, that ability should be stimulated. Instinctive ideas which the lad may possess should be allowed full scope. This best-of-all team games is no rule of thumb affair. The players aren't turned out from one mould; all alike and all doing the same sort of thing in the same sort of way. There's still plenty of room for originality in play and in ideas.

The wise coach sees to it that the player with original ideas is given his head. And the wise young player, for his part, won't turn his back on the advice of the expert coach. He will listen to the advice; sift it, and use it, while at the same time refusing to be other than himself.

There is a limit to what any young player can be taught. One of the brightest of young footballers to hit the headlines in recent times has been Arthur Milton, outside right of Arsenal. Among the most knowing of managers is Tom Whittaker. And of Milton the Arsenal manager says: 'He's a *natural.* He's got something you can't teach them. You've either got it or you haven't.'

If the older people associated with the game think back and recall the stars they have known, won't they sum up by saying that in the main the best of the footballers of the past have

been the instinctive ones? Some of them, at any rate, never stopped to think how they did this or that. If you had asked them, they couldn't have told you. But give them the ball and they would do it.

To illustrate the point here's a story of two cricketer friends of mine. During his days at the top of the tree Patsy Hendren was an expert at the hook stroke. He could wield the bat to hook the high bouncers round to the boundary 'off his eyebrows'. To Patsy it was almost as easy as shelling peas. Jack Durston was a Middlesex: contemporary of Hendren's, but Jack's place in the batting order was usually next to the roller. As a batsman he was in the rabbit class. One day an interviewer was anxious to get from Hendren details of exactly how he played that hook shot. Patsy tied himself into verbal knots trying to explain how he did it. Finally he gave up the attempt. 'For goodness sake take me out on to the pitch, bowl me a bumper, and I'll hit it for you.'

It so happened that Jack Durston was on the spot. He readily came to the rescue with a detailed, exact, and perfectly accurate verbal description of how Patsy played that particular stroke - how he wielded the bat; how he changed the position of his feet. Durston could do it perfectly in theory. Out in the middle he never had executed the stroke successfully.

Part of the present-day trouble; one of the reasons why footballers are not being developed in the required numbers, is that the young players are being confused by too many instructions. The player who can do the right thing without thinking will keep on doing it. By paying too much attention to how he does it he may not do it so well.

Among my readers may be boys who have the football instinct. For them the ladder isn't difficult to climb. All they need remember is that it is a wobbly sort of ladder. It is like most other metaphorical ladders — there are crowds on the lower rungs, but there's plenty of room at the top. And on the way up there are places, some of which I have mentioned, where it is easy enough to stumble.

CHAPTER 20

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

THROUGHOUT this book the main purpose has been to deal with the game as it is. Perhaps by way of a change it will be of interest to speculate on the game as it is going to be; on the sort of football for which the boys of to-day might do well to prepare.

Where is the game going? When that question is put, my first and natural instinct is to reply: 'Goodness knows.' Experience tells us, in clear-cut language, that nobody knows, not even the officials who rule the game. These officials make a change in the laws here and there, with a particular objective in view. The change, however, has effects on the game very different from those originally visualized. Groping in the dark we find ourselves getting to the most unexpected places.

We have the quarter-century-old change in the offside rule as an outstanding example of the surprising twists and turns of history. When the offside rule was altered there was an all-round impression that the new regulations would prove a boon and a blessing to attackers. In the change, so it was agreed, the seed was sown for a rich harvest in goals, especially for centre-forwards. For a short while this proved true.

In due time, however — and not so very far ahead at that -there came a reminder that in contemplating the effect the change would have on play and on players we had entirely ignored the centre-half. The change in the offside rule affected the tactics of centre half-backs to a greater extent than it did those of any other player. The harvest of goals speedily came to an end. Instead of more goals per match than ever, the goal-scoring actually decreased.

That was an outstanding case to illustrate the point that it is very difficult to get, as the result of crystal-gazing, a clear idea of exactly where we are going when we start changing the laws of football. But speculative as the subject may be it is certainly fascinating and I feel that the lads of to-day - the players of to-morrow - will benefit by giving some thought to where the game is going and make their plans accordingly. I have hinted earlier that the present tendency is for the game to become more gentlemanly; or more *gentle,* if you like.

On my shelf is a book which tells about the early deliberations of the men who framed the laws of football. According to that old book one of the then legislators put the question: 'Shall we have hacking?' The reply from another legislator was: 'Yes, let's have hacking, and enjoy ourselves.' Well, the days when hacking was permitted soon passed, but the game still remained one in which sheer physical strength played an important part. What is more, the players enjoyed themselves.

Frank Barson is still doing his bit as the trainer of the Swansea Town team. He was a great centre-half, strong as a horse, who knew the game backwards. In his playing days it was not unusual for Frank to get into touch with the opposing centre-forward and to say to him, before the match started: 'Shall we have an up-and-downer?' I strongly suspect that Frank was most pleased when he got the reply: 'Yes, let's.' This 'all-in' football - within the framework of the laws, of course - had a fascination of its own.

I remember Jock Hutton, the big Scottish full-back. In one match in which we played on opposite sides, he and I were running parallel towards the ball. We both decided, at the same instant, that we should hit each other with one shoulder. We did it, and shook each other considerably. We both managed to keep our feet, however, and for the second time we each tried to hit the other for six. During the next lull in the play, Hutton came over to me, shook me by the hand as he said: 'That was lovely, wasn't it, Joe? The spectators

didn't know what he said, but they cheered us to the echo over the incident.

That sort of fun and games, so it seems to me, belongs to the past — and the past is dead. There is at least a suggestion, however, that we are still in some doubt concerning the part which physique plays in this game. One of the most talked about of our up-and-coming players is Tommy Harmer, the inside forward of Tottenham Hotspur. When he got into the Tottenham first team he was hailed as one of the outstanding finds of the day. But he didn't just spring up overnight like a mushroom. For a season or two before he had been doing his fancy tricks, turning opponents dizzy, with his amazing ball jugglery. Tommy had been kept out of the first team, however, because he was considered to be too slight of build to stand up to the hurly-burly of the first-class competitions. Various ways and means had been tried to build him up, to add weight to that boyish frame. These efforts were unsuccessful. Harmer remained little more than nine stone, but with that weight he clearly showed that he could stand up to - and stand out in - top-class football.

No good purpose would be served by debating whether reduction in the amount of direct physical contact has been good or bad for the game. The fact is that the current tendency is to reduce it more and more, and I visualize the day when it will vanish almost completely. Already we have reached the stage when it is almost considered to be an offence for the attackers even to look fierce at the opposing goalkeeper, much less touch him. There was a bit of a to-do after a recent International match between Wales and England. Some of the Welsh-born players threw their weight about a bit. Such tactics did not meet with general approval. Far from it. Indeed, it was even suggested by a prominent English authority that these International games should be an object lesson in the arts and crafts of the game; not games distinguished for energy or the downright, honest-to-goodness will to win.

I can see the game of the future becoming more and more a thing of art and craft. If this is a correct conclusion, that is something which the would-be stars of the future should bear in mind.

Passing over the fact that rule changes are leading in that direction, there is a style of team-play which is also taking the game along the same lines. Tottenham Hotspur have won championships; Preston North End have climbed back to the First Division with football which, to summarize it in one short phrase, has made the game easy. In this up-to-date game it is no part of the business of any player to hang on to the ball until he is challenged. As he receives it, some colleague - or more than one - runs into position to receive the ball. This type of football looks fast. It is fast, too, in the speed at which movements are developed, but it is not really necessary to have fast runners to play it successfully. Making the ball do the work is its essence. By the time the opponent reaches the player in possession the ball isn't there, and the physical contact has been, to a large extent, eliminated.

Reading between the lines of the new football, it will be realized that as it is played there is little room in modern football for the artful dribbler. By all means learn the tricky stuff. It will come in useful. But remember that, as the game is going, position play, finding and slipping into the vacant places, is an art which needs to be developed. Already indications are not wanting of counter-moves by defenders to this new-style, quick attacking play. If the clamour for an increase in goals continues, other changes may follow in due course — possibly involving alterations in the laws. Have you ever thought of what would be the general effect on play if the offside law was completely cut out of the rules? Of course you have!

Maybe, like most other people, you have thought mainly of the dreadful things which would happen to the play if there was no such thing as offside. It is possible to imagine an end

to many of the delightful combined movements which we see in these days. I rather feel, however, that in this connection we are apt to let our imagination run away with itself. Should we see the centre-forwards standing like lamp-posts by the side of the opposing goalkeeper, waiting for the ball to be kicked to them? Of course we shouldn't.

I believe I may live to see the day - and modern schoolboys certainly will - when offside is *completely* abolished. When that day comes, it is likely that there will be a chorus from footballers, controlling officials, and even the watchers of the game: 'For this relief much thanks.' Meanwhile, however, the young players of to-day can't frame their tactics on the assumption that there isn't an offside law. The attackers, running into position in the manner which I have tried to describe, must not, in their anxiety to find the open space, overlook their position in relation to the offside law.

What of the future in other directions - for example, in the matter of International matches. There isn't the slightest doubt, in my mind, that we are heading rapidly for a time when a party of footballers will be picked out and gathered together to spend all their time preparing for and playing International matches. What a prospect! What an incentive to the rising generation of footballers.

The straws certainly show that the wind is blowing in this direction. The men who have played for England in recent times have disappointed by the exhibitions of team-play. The selectors have turned this way and that, chopped and changed, but still there has been something lacking. And the lack has mainly been in mutual understanding, so much so that many thinking people are of the opinion that a really good club side would beat a side of stars chosen from different clubs.

What these stars from many clubs need is additional experience as a *team*. It would help, of course, if the players selected for an International game were in close companionship for a longer time before the match for which they have been picked.

That, however, is merely tinkering with the problem. There is only one place where tactical ideas can be tried out thoroughly — on the field of play. Even then the question of whether those ideas are good, bad or indifferent can only be put to the test in real matches in which the players of one side are nearly, if not quite, as good as their opponents.

More and more of these International matches are getting on to the regular fixture list. The way to make the most of a team of stars is to get them together and to let them play together regularly. A team of stars not attached to any club. I suggest that is where we are going.

Such is the logical development of current tendencies. There is now in existence — recently formed — what is called the Intermediate International Selection Committee. Its special duty is not to find International players of to-day, but potential International players of the future. This new Committee is looking round and taking a note of the most promising of the younger players. In due course they should be able to put their hands on a whole team of them, as well as suitable reserves. Is it straining the imagination to suggest that, when the sifting has been done, the players picked at a comparatively early age will be welded into a lasting team for International purposes? I can see such a side, properly built up, properly trained, and properly developed, setting up new standards of play. And a team which sets a higher standard in this branch of the game will raise the standard of play in the general sense. If this dream comes true, the football of the future will be better than the football of the past. I don't believe that the last word in efficiency on the football field has been said. The boys of to-day can be better footballers than their fathers were.

Connected with this vision of a super-team is the question of the financial recompense for the players who reach the heights. The fitting reward should be automatic, however, and need not be stressed here. This question of pay was very hurriedly broached after the birth of football by floodlight.

That was a pity, for that there is a future for football 'in the dark' is as clear as the brightest daylight. In due time there will be regular competition games played when the daylight has faded, a new League competition for the big clubs, and maybe a Cup competition in artificial light.

The young players of to-day will be affected by this development. The big clubs will need bigger staffs with which to carry through the additional fixtures. They will be able to afford bigger playing staffs, too. If that statement produces a smile, or a retort that at the present time the demand for good footballers is greater than the supply, the answer is that there is no necessity to be unduly worried. The players of to-morrow are growing up to-day. They will be forthcoming in sufficient quantities if they know full well that the game is worth the candle. To throw in another metaphor, there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

Are all the current efforts to produce more and better footballers just so much waste of time, money and effort? Of course not. Extra players will be wanted when this football of the future takes shape. They will be there.

CHAPTER 21

THIS IS THE LIFE

FOR many years a story went the rounds about the simple way the Derby County club was kept supplied with players. It was said that if the club found itself in need of a player, an official of the club would pay a visit to one of the near-by collieries. There he would shout down the pit-shaft particulars of his requirements: 'Send me up an inside forward.' The message would be followed by a scramble among the lads in the pit, and the miner who got to the 'lift' first was the one who became the Derby County player.

It is said that this was the way the one and only Steve Bloomer was discovered.

Roughly the same sort of thing happens in other parts of the country. Jimmy Seed climbed out of a Durham pit to play for Sunderland, for Tottenham Hotspur and for England. Now he is the manager of Charlton Athletic and being the manager of a big football club isn't such a bad job - when the club does well!

I once asked Jimmy Seed why so many of the really good footballers come from the mining districts. He replied: 'The young fellow who comes out of a pit to try to make good as a footballer just *has* to make good. The fear that he might have to go back to the pits if he fails is half the guarantee that he won't fail.'

Is the ambitious player right - is the game worth the candle? My quick answer is in the words which appear at the head of this chapter: *This is the Life*! may add, that all the signs of the times seem to point towards an even better and brighter future for the footballer.

Indeed, the modern footballer is in clover as compared with the players of other days, and, for my part, I wish I had been born some twenty or thirty years later. I wouldn't know how much better off financially are the tip-toppers of to-day as compared with the fellows who were at the top when the maximum wage was four pounds a week. But we have certainly progressed some distance along the road to the answer as to whether it is worth while trying to become a first-class footballer.

At the time of writing it is possible for a footballer to make -in wages alone - fourteen pounds a week during the playing season, and ten pounds a week during the close season. The real footballer thus earns as wages, about seven hundred a year. The additional point can be made that this sum is earned from a comparatively early age - certainly from an earlier age than can be reached in other walks of life. We hear every day of the week of players in first-class teams below the age at which they can claim the key of the door.

On top of that, of course, there is the prospect of a benefit after five years service with the same club. The maximum benefit allowed is £750 which, if my arithmetic is right, can be reckoned as another three pounds per week. Ted Sagar has played for Everton for twenty years, and there are others who have had three benefits. All the time he is in the game, too -this is a recent development — the footballer is being credited with a weekly amount which comes to him in a lump sum when he finishes playing. The match bonus must, obviously, average one pound per man over all, with rich plums for the big prize winners.

All this, of course is painting the picture at its brightest, and it is unnecessary to remind me of the truth that there are quite a number of players, connected with clubs in the Football League, whose weekly pay packets contain less than the permitted maximum. But the possibility of the good money is there.

I think it is as certain as anything can be in this uncertain world, that the day is not far distant when the maximum wage will be crossed out of the football regulations. We are heading for the time when the clubs will be allowed to pay each player what they think he is worth. There are stock arguments against the abolition of the maximum wage: arguments which are still dragged out of the pigeon holes. One of them is that football first and foremost, is a team game. Hence, so the argument continues, no single player can be a complete and outstanding success unless he has the help of efficient colleagues.

Is it reasonable to suppose that the team spirit would be sacrificed if, say, the centre-forward was getting ten pounds a week more than the outside left? I don't think so. Surely the argument would work the other way. If the prospect was held out to the lower paid player of an additional ten pounds a week, surely he would try all the harder to make himself so efficient that he in turn would be considered worth that extra pay. Once a player reaches the present-day maximum wage the incentive for improvement disappears. Put in simple language, if it were known that Stanley Matthews got forty pounds a week for playing football, there would be a greater number of Stanley Matthews knocking at the door.

There is no maximum wage rule in Scotland, and it is said that even in days when a pound was worth more than it is now Alan Morton received thirty pounds a week. Scotland still produces good footballers. It is probably true that when Jack Hobbs was playing cricket for Surrey he got more money than the other members of that team. Certainly it is true that when Patsy Hendren was playing cricket for Middlesex he got more than I did as a member of the same side. Of course he was worth more, and my ambition was to be as good as Patsy.

Another argument for limited wages is that if there were no such thing as a maximum wage all the good players would find their way to the wealthy clubs. Well, isn't that where they go under the present system? Bert Williams, Johnny Hancocks,

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Doug Lishman, and two or three others who could be mentioned didn't stay with Walsall, the club which brought them out. They went to the bigger organisations.

Nor can it be argued that, by abolishing the limit on wages, the richest clubs would have so many good players that they would be above competition. There are only eleven places in a football team. Stars sitting in the grandstand, watching those eleven chosen players, would be of no use to any club, and no club would be so completely lacking in financial sense as to pay fancy wages to fellows kicking their heels in the stand. Incidentally, the footballer worth his salt hates the idea of being a grandstand member of the staff.

'If there's no place for me in the first team, let me go to some club which has room for me.' That is the sentiment behind many of the transfer requests we hear so much about.

Now let me return to extol that life which I am so enthusiastic about. For the players who get to the top there are extras which are sometimes forgotten. The wages of a player aren't stopped for the week in which he plays for his country. He gets his club money as well as the lump sum extra which go with the cap.

Anybody who doesn't ramble about with his eyes shut must know that, apart from the money received from playing the game, there are indirect ways of making money out of it. Look at the hoardings, look at the newspapers. There are no millionaires dodging around on the football field, I am not suggesting that. What I am suggesting is that the fellows playing first-class football are getting more pay for doing it than they would have got out of any other job.

That last observation is a reminder that, to a greater extent than was the case in the past, the question of other jobs comes up. Should this game of football be a full-time job for the professional players, or are they just as good, or even better, if they have some other job to occupy their minds during the rest of the week? My answer has a touch of Irish about it: yes — and no.

As the result of my experience I would say that there is one period in the life of a footballer when the way to the top is reached by giving all one's time to the game. That period is when one is learning. There is such a lot to learn about the game. I have known many useful players who have failed to get beyond the stage of promise because they didn't give enough time to mastering its arts and crafts.

In these days there are often grumbles about the quality of the play. How in the world can it be expected that the quality of the play, in the team sense especially, and in the individual sense to a slightly lesser degree, can be worked up to its highest pitch if half the members of a team only see each other on match days? In such a situation there is no opportunity for trying out tactical ideas.

My opinion is that the clubs which insist on players being under their orders during the week - those which insist that football is a full-time job - are right. And for the player himself this is the way up; to regard football as a whole-time job.

Even without going so far as to suggest that this should be a rule, I admit that there are exceptions. Never has there been a time when so many professional footballers use their summer months playing professional cricket. Ball players in general get on in their own line because they have what is called ball sense. If I had not spent so much time learning to play football I might have been a reasonably good golfer, or even a professional billiards player. To the fellow who is kept fit for, and kept fit by, playing football during the winter, cricket in many instances comes easy and naturally.

It's rather pleasing to be paid all the year round for being a footballer, and to be paid also for playing cricket during the summer, getting — don't forget - a cricket retainer during the winter months. That is certainly the life!

Having expressed the opinion that during the learning period, until the top of the tree is reached, and even for some time afterwards, football is a whole-time winter job, we must

now consider the time when the player can't reasonably expect to stay in the game much longer. That is the time to think about the other job, and to get down to seeing that the other job is assured. In this connection, football clubs have become much more helpful. They do a great deal towards putting players into business, assisting them to master some particular calling on which they can depend when their playing days are over.

I know there are men who have earned fame in football who have gone on to the rocks when they finished as players. For these there is sympathy, but at bottom the verdict must be that in most cases it was their own fault. When they were having their day they failed to give any thought for the morrow.

Perhaps it will be suggested, that, as a whole, I have painted the picture in colours altogether too bright. There are snags, pitfalls, but still the outstanding reflection is that it is - it certainly can be - a great life. The players of to-day are better looked after, in their playing days and their sequel, than they ever were. There are many little things which help to make life run more smoothly. The clubs pay out money, a great deal of it, in the effort to make certain that the player doesn't fail because of lack of constant attention or amenities. You should see those marble halls at Highbury, and all the rest of the graces of life that go with them! If the view doesn't make your mouth water for this life, I don't know what would.

Many of the clubs arrange community midday meals during the week for the playing staff. The best hotels are no longer barred to the professional footballer, as they were at one time. And whatever the merits or demerits of special training away from the club headquarters, it is a fact that during the weeks when the man of the house is away from home the women folk are at least relieved of some of the shopping anxieties. For the player everything is paid.

A fitting slogan could be: Join a football club and see the world - at other peoples expense. The Wolverhampton players

have told me what a wonderful summer they had in South Africa recently. Again, a mixed party toured Australia, where everything was good and the football not too strenuous. Trips to the Continent are routine with many clubs, while American and Canadian calls are answered.

There is also, of course, the good fellowship, the companionship, and the friendships made while playing the game. To the people 'having a go' Wilfred Pickles sometimes put this question: *If you could live your life over again, would you take a different course?* My answer to this question would be an emphatic *No*. The life in the middle may be short, but it can be a merry one for those who have the will to make it so.

Of necessity, much of it must be taken seriously. But football is still a game, and those who also make it a profession should at the same time make up their minds to enjoy it as a game. If there is a modern tendency, which can't be denied, to turn it into a grim affair that is the fault of the players. There is happiness in the physical fitness which is called for. And whether on the winning side or the losing side, the player can sleep soundly if he has done his best and played the game.

For those of us who have had our day there are memories which live; games which we can play all over again, and enjoy. For the growing lads, the players of to-morrow, the prospect is pleasing. The promise is of an even brighter dawn.