

WELL PREPARED

Independent Villa Fanzine

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NOT WANTED



**CRIMES: A LACK OF AMBITION
AND DEEP POCKETS**

WELL PREPARED

P.O. BOX 3311, BIRMINGHAM, B13 ORZ

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GETTING WELL PREPARED

Well Prepared is an independent production, for and by Villa fans. It's a medium for Villans to voice their views, but not just to sing the club's praises. Sometimes things that go on in and around the club are shit, and the shit normally gets literally thrown at the fan. This is where we aim to try and redress the balance.

The people who help produce Well Prepared are not careerists sucking up to the club, nor do we shy away from controversy. If you've got something to say you can say it here - articles will only normally be edited for reasons of space. Interesting stuff of a non - football nature is also welcomed, but note that no racist or fascist toss will be included.

General football articles that are not directly related to the Villa will be considered for inclusion. The fact is that football fans everywhere are in the same boat. The game is being pulled from under our feet and repackaged to the highest bidder. Well Prepared recognises the need for working class fans from all clubs to make a stand, regardless of what colours they wear. Any articles on any subject you think may be of interest can be submitted to the PO Box above, or given to one of our sellers on matchdays.

Well Prepared always needs additional sellers - either on matchdays, or just in the pub or at work etc... Contact the PO Box or talk to one of our sellers for bulk rates.

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P.O. Box 3311, Birmingham B13 ORZ.

Contributions

We welcome your news, views, gossip, and down right slander just send to the above address and we will probably print it. Thanks to everyone whose contributed so far, please keep sending in articles, cartoons, press cuttings and anything you think can be of use. 'Contributions' from fascists shall be taken outside and given a summary execution, so before putting crayon to paper; remember, don't be a Burke and save yourself the price of a stamp.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in Well Prepared

are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial board or Aston Villa Football Club.

Villans inside

We will gladly send free copies of Well Prepared to any fans in prison. If you know of anyone who would like a copy just send us their details and expected release date.

Subscriptions

It costs £5 for 4 issues of Well Prepared. You can buy Well Prepared in bulk if you like, price only £8 per 10 issues. Bulk orders are only available in multiples of 10. Please make any cheques payable to Well Prepared, we cannot accept responsibility for cash sent through the post.

EDITORIAL

John Gregory must be wondering what he's done to deserve what's happened over the past few weeks. After doing what you'd think was the hard

work of rescuing the disaster that was last season, pulling us from possible relegation strugglers to Euro qualifiers. The easy part should have been strengthening the team and getting prepared to build on his successful start. Maybe he broke a mirror the morning he signed Unsworth or the fabled gypsy curse has migrated across the city. What with the Unsworth sags, Dwight and Stauntons defection, Stan's antics, Bossie acting like a primmadonna and a chairman to scared to back managers with hard cash, it seems he's the only person on the pay roll at Villa Park with any faith and belief in the club.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that as ticket prices have increased by 20% the squads been reduced by the same amount. Yet Doug gets awarded a whopping 60% pay rise. If Mr Ellis you believe that players wage demands will ruin football, then shouldn't you set an example with your own wages? Is it any surprise that season ticket sales have fallen.

Still its not all doom and gloom at Villa Park, as we've got a new off-licence. Which we're informed won't be catering to the lower orders in society who want to get some cans of lager to drink while watching MOTD, our establishment will only be selling fine wines and champagnes. Its comforting to know we've got our priorities right.

DON'T LOOK BACK IN ANGER

It was an interesting close season for us Villa fans and mainly for all the wrong reasons, what with Stan 'the big man' Collymore bringing us into disrepute once again, this time with the unforgivable woman beating episode in France. We at Well Prepared believed that this was the final straw and he should have been shown the door there and then. He doesn't give a shit about Villa, he probably doesn't even give a shit about football, the only thing important to Stan is himself, we should cut our losses on him and flog him to anyone stupid enough to buy him, let him go poncing about up and down the touchline in Turkish football, anywhere but Villa Park.

We also had Stan Staunton, one of the fan's favourites leaving under the Bosman ruling to his beloved Liverpool. He really gave us the run around in the later stages, and

should of really let us know earlier of his intentions, as it was clear that he had already made up his mind a while ago.

John Gregory has to be commended for the way he set about handling the 'contract rebels' situation. He had told us at the end of last season that the players either approaching the end of or actually out of contract, that he wanted to stay at the club would be given a deadline, and if they didn't sign on the dotted line then obviously they weren't committed to the cause of Aston Villa, so they might as well say bye, bye.

Well certain players took their time and really kept us hanging on, it really is a bit of a pisser and I don't want to sound like a moaning Brummie but football really is at a crossroads at the moment. With the game awash with cash, the only motivation for players now seems to be pounds, shillings and

pence. While loyalty seems to have left on the last train to Bosman. Not even the desire to win trophies seems to be the motivation for some players. More and more often it seems to be the quest for an ever increasing bank balance, after all when a players out of contract they can demand a seven figure signing on fee and inflated wages from any club willing to pay. Gregory's ultimatum was an attempt to put the onus back on the players giving them a straight choice: either they want to pledge themselves to the cause of Aston Villa and remain part of his plans, or they can be mercenary bastards and go looking for the golden pot at the end of the rainbow. It's clear that Gregory only wants a squad made up of 'Villa minded' players, and the team will be better for it.

I'm not particularly against the idea of players earning large salaries, I just feel that there should be some accountability towards fans. If it wasn't for us paying to watch football then these players wouldn't have a career. It wouldn't be unreasonable to have a larger part of a players wages performance related, if he doesn't produce the goods on the pitch then he should be made to pay for it literally. I don't go along with the idea that the level of wages reflect the fact that footballers only have a short career. Do footballer's then totally lose the ability to earn a living when they finally stop playing? Do they have no career options whatsoever? And as for being on bad tackle away from a premature end to their career, how many of us are one accident away from serious injury at work, only for us there's no job as a football pundit waiting.

This is obviously a debate that will ensue for a long time to come, and we will happily turn over our pages to you for your views on the subject.

Villa were and continue to be sub-

ject to the usual amount of speculation and rumour that seems to be the norm around this time. Usually a lot of the speculation is just bullshit used to fill the back pages of the regional and national press after some dull cricket match has been rained off. That said it is quite interesting (and difficult) to keep track off, all the alleged comings and goings at your particular club, (still, it keeps the clubcall lines busy). It all ends up getting rather confusing, and during the pre-season friendlies if you believed what the press said you'd expect to see the Villa team replaced by an International Elite XI.

In the end we got Alan Thompson whose signing could turn out to be the coup of the summer, but where were all the other high calibre players we expected to put pen to paper for the Villa cause. If you remember John Gregory said he would sign players that were capable of improving what is a very moderate team. Well at the time of writing we are yet to see them. Gregory did magnificently to turn the team around in the time he had and the players seem to have the utmost respect for him. He also seems to make the right noises in interviews, and the 'fighting talk' in defence of Villa is admirable, but to be up with the Man Utd's and Arsenal's we need to 'spend, spend, spend.' Gregory's comment in a recent interview about cash in the bank doesn't score you goals, was very telling and obviously aimed at chairman Doug, as instead of big names coming into the club, we're having enough trouble holding on to players.

Everyone knows Doug is not short of a bob or two, as he proves much to the dismay of local Aston people trying to buy the area lock, stock and barrel. Never mind poxy hotels, I mean ask yourself would me and you the ordinary supporter be made welcome in the Ellis grand hotel bar? No, of

course we wouldn't. What we should be demanding first and foremost is investment in the team - our team - and not Fat Doug Plc.

It could transpire that while we're just window shopping for talent leaving the wallet firmly buried in Doug's ample pocket, what talent we have got could get itchy feet. Ravanelli, John Collins, Vieri and Juhnino were some of the names banded about in the close season, and as we all know none came. Being cynical you could say the speculation helps sell season tickets. On the other hand a couple of well known names don't make a team, but they would have gone some way to boosting confidence and to have some defences quaking in their boots once again would be nice.

Three players will go down in the Villa history books and not for all the right reasons. Dwight Yorke, Stan Collymore and David Unsworth made sure their names would be ingrained on Villa fans minds for a long time to come. At various stages they have been involved in making the Villa a laughing stock. Football is changing, there is no doubt about that. The changes are coming thick and fast and a week doesn't go past without a new proposal or development being cited. Stan's misdemeanours have already been mentioned, but Dwight's transfer was a right pisser to say the least. With your star player making it clear in the press he wants to leave, you can understand why Gregory reacted the way he did, and wanting to shoot him may not have been over reacting. Don't get me wrong I still believe that Dwight's been a pretty good servant for us, it is football that's changing and footballers are obviously trying to change with it too. It's funny to think that when our heroes are out on the pitch that they're not playing to impress John Gregory for inclusion for the next game, or to impress their respective international

bosses. It seems that many of them are just in the shop window for the Milan's and Man Utd's of this world. Yorkies situation has to be resolved and resolved quickly at that. We need players with both eyes on the prize not one at Villa Park and one at Old Trafford, the San Siro or wherever.

The David Unsworth saga would be funny if it wasn't so sad. We're thinking of sending David Pathfinder an atlas just so he knows for future reference that Merseyside isn't the centre of the universe, on second thoughts we'd be better of sending it to his wife. Seriously though it was a complete farce, Unsworth had the choice of signing for us or Everton. He chose us for the sole reason that there was more money on offer for him, but got a change of mind when he found out Aston wasn't a suburb of Liverpool, then began acting like a spoilt little fucking brat until Everton could scrape together enough cash to buy the useless git, (it is rumoured that the lead from the roof of Goodison park went missing at the same time). Leaving Gregory to go back to the drawing board to find a replacement for Staunton.

Gregory's behaviour through all the trials and tribulations that have dogged us has been exemplary, and in my estimation he's grown in stature. His motivational tactics are exceptional as results so far have testified, even though we've only played a handful of games at least we're at the right end of the table this time. The youngsters like Barry have been a revelation, and Joachim seems to be releshing it now Dwight has gone. But we can't rely on our youngsters to carry us through the whole arduous season, with the size of squad at the moment a few injuries could see us in big trouble. If Gregory is given the right financial muscle he could give us a team that will take us back to European Cup glory.

PLAYING WITH THE BIG BOYS

The unthinkable finally became a painful reality with the departure of Dwight to pastures redder. Let not kid ourselves here, the transfer of Dwight is a massive body blow to our club, regardless of how much tough talk emerges from within the club. Its not just because we have lost an outstanding striker who will be difficult to fully replace, nor is it that his leaving has further weakened what is an already undermanned squad. I'm aware that one player doesn't constitute a team, even a player showered in the adulation of the fans like Dwight was, but his transfer does have large implications.

The manner of his leaving should cause alarm bells to ring, as in doing so he delivered a hefty snub to the club on the grounds that it didn't share the same level of ambition as himself, and his desire to play at the highest level of club football could not be fulfilled at our club. Taken along with Staunton's claim that he left because the club showed 'insufficient ambition', then recent events have a certain belittling effect on our perceived standing in the football hierarchy, and have delivered a damning verdict on the direction the club is being steered in. Afterall where better to make a judgement on a club than from within it. Can we truly consider ourselves to be up amongst the big boys in the premier?

We are a proud club with a successful history and to have players questioning the ambition at the club is unacceptable. Yet, the truly worrying aspect of both players reasons, whether the truth behind their decisions or not, is that looking at the club you can understand why they came to those conclusions. The usual bullshit greeted us in the summer about money available for transfers and big names linked with the club. Yet the reality proves somewhat different, and it seems we are always stuck in the inadequate position of having to sell before we can buy. We currently have what must be the smallest squad of seasoned professionals in the premier, and are relying on our youngsters to plug up the gaps. We were stung with Staunton leaving under the Bosman ruling, yet have made no attempts to acquire top class players under the same ruling.

The Yorke transfer has shown that the club requires massive restructuring, during the whole sorry sags the club were continually outmanoeuvred by Man Utd, until the only option left was to let Dwight go or lose him for nothing when his contract ran out. We had no real response to the tactics employed by United as they seduced Dwight, and they run rings round us in the press. At times Villa Park resembled Berlin during the final days of WW2, except it was a different Red Army closing in. The structure of our club is out dated, being run like a tin-pot dictatorship with all power being centralised on Doug Ellis, who has shown himself to be largely incapable of carrying out adequately the jobs he gives himself, club chairman, chief executive and director of football.

Unless changes are made rapidly to modernise the club the work done by Gregory could start to be unravelled. With the flow of talent from Villa Park in danger of turning into a torrent. At the moment Bosnich is steadfastly refusing to sign a contract and judging by the comments he's made in the press Southgate would not hesitate to desert either. Our place in the elite of football's past is assured but our place in the elite of football's future hangs in the balance.

UGLY GIRLS AND PRETTY PENNIES...

The marketing has been shrewd and it's proved to be a goldmine, for top flight players, investors and speculators, broadcasters and sponsors, in fact for all those pulling on the purse strings. The lucrative revival of top flight football has been a showpiece of 1990's free market economics, here as much as anywhere - Villa are amongst the pioneers of the stock market floatation, as are Sandwell who have rocked the global economies on more than one occasion with recent performances, I'm sure!. But when you cut through the hype, glitz and absolute bullshit what you are left with is a time bomb - and one apparently placed by design, rather than financial

the point where he was forced to call for a huge increase in his own player's wages just to save them being lured away. Some pundits are grimly predicting that the trend could theoretically bankrupt even the biggest of clubs in the not-so-distant future, maybe as soon as the 2000 / 2001 season if current patterns continue.

So what have the free marketeers got planned to increase revenue and avoid collapse? The extortionate pay per view proposals are one area where they look to generate extra income, that's always been part of Murdoch's plans for world domination. On an even more worrying, sinister level you see signs that the moneymen don't give

The working class fan is under sustained attack - pay through the nose or you are no longer welcome.

mismanagement. This is not about sentimental posterity - I woefully accept that Hugh Johns is gone from our Sunday dinners forever. Football as a whole is on a crashcourse though. Call me paranoid but the facts are there, for anybody who cares to dig deep enough.

Let's take players wages, which are reportedly rising at an average rate of 20% a year. The current overall wage bill in English football is over 300 million quid, soaking up 40% of the game's total revenue. With players like Robbie Fowler currently negotiating 50 grand a week deals, hardly surprising that the wage / revenue ratio is getting narrower from week to week. Martin O'Neill was shocked by wage demands when he rang round for new players, to

a shit for the smaller clubs, might they intend to force their humble competitors out of business perhaps? As the Nationwide gets paled into insignificance there will be many casualties - last years scenes at Brighton are just a sign of things to come. At Villa we could say "I'm alright Jack" - but we can't afford not to look at the bigger picture, because there will always be a domino effect. Like any other big commodity our sport becomes putty in the hands of the rich moguls.

THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

Welcome to the new age - Coke or Pepsi? Man.Utd or Juventus? Villa will, of course, enter the equation, but that is not the point - the

point is in whose interests are these rich marketing developments? Certainly not in ours - when the price of a single ticket now makes it difficult for many lifelong fans to attend more than a handful of games a season, replaced in a lot of cases by the more solvent middle class types, that wouldn't have been seen dead on the old terraces, or maybe they'd have just ended up that way! And come xmas, when the offspring expect a full kit, Villa underpants and pillow case set...well, the merchandising just reflects the wider problem. The working class fan is under sustained attack - pay through the nose or you are no longer welcome.

THEY LIKE A LAUGH...

When Douglas Hall laughed at Newcastle fans he laughed at all of us - and all his corporate counterparts were giving big belly laughs as well, and still are. Call me an old fashioned git, but wasn't there once a day when the board was deemed privileged to represent the fans, whose money after all kept the whole show on the road? Not any more. The cat is out of the bag - working class football supporters who've hung in there are gullible, ugly and laughable. Only good to print money. Football now ranks alongside Hol-

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lywood in the rich pickings from the entertainment stakes - some states reckoned that if the Man Utd first eleven each sold just one of their cars the income would be good enough to put together a complete rescue package for Doncaster Rovers, and still leave change to buy a brand new Ford Escort each. So just who exactly is at the controls - who, if you like, is

setting the agenda?

Well, the fat cats are obviously thinking in European, or even global terms. Joe Lewis is a good example - a major shareholder in Glasgow

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Rangers, and the richest Briton in the world. Lewis' investment group, ENIC, owns three of the quarter finalists in this year's Cup Winners Cup, AEK Athens, Slavia Prague and Vicenza. Not bad going for somebody who isn't even a football fan, and freely admits his only interest is making even more money. Mark "the shark": McCormack's "International Management Group" are another big outfit trying to snap up the cream teams of European football. All scrambling for a chunk of the 130 odd billion pound revenue football generates.

Pay-per-view is estimated to be worth a potential 30 million a year to the bigger clubs. And there's rumours that media groups are looking to buy big clubs outright, or maybe dominant shareholdings, to secure lucrative programming rights. Again, from whose pockets?

It's clear that vultures like Lewis and Murdoch will benefit greatly from "football eugenics" where the media, spectator and financial focus is on a select few "superclubs" - and they can name their price and reap huge rewards. Those that get left behind are destined for a future of ground - sharing, regional divisions and club mergers. If they're lucky they might

kick yourselves out of football

The much awaited Football Taskforce and the Kick Racism out of Football campaign (KRF), have been unleashed on us football fans in the recent months.

The Taskforce held one of its meetings in the Birmingham library theatre, whose guest speakers were set to be David Mellor and Tony Banks. Both of whom showed their contempt and ignorance and didn't even turn up, to make matters worse one of the Taskforces pet projects has been ensuring disabled access and facilities at grounds. Well lo and behold their chosen meeting venue had no disabled access, meaning disabled people had to suffer the indignity of being carried up the stairs.

Lets face it Mellor and Banks have nothing in common with us ordinary football fans, no matter how 'laddish' and right on Mellor tries to be on 5 Live, and how 'down to earth' and 'man of the people' Banks tries to be. Their interests are keeping their high paid and high profile jobs. They're not there to rock the boat but to preserve the status quo, no matter how many soundbites are released where they attempt to sound controversial or right on. The Taskforce is just another way of the bigwigs imposing their agenda for the game on us, attempting to make us passive into the process. The only campaign they're involved in is KRF.

Have we heard them asking for justice for the Hillsborough families, a return to terraces for those fans that want them, supporting Man Utd's stand up campaign or the campaign against sectarian

get bought up by the corporations as nursery clubs. Profit, bankruptcy and survival will be buzzwords for the next decade - all bad news for the working class fan, unless you relish the thought of six strip changes a season, or going to Budapest just to see Villa play a league game!

BE WELL PREPARED TO FIGHT BACK !!!

Here at Villa, like everywhere else, we are towing the corporate line. These parasites think they can shit on us and rip us off with impunity. We have to get well organised to literally defend our turf. Independent supporters clubs are

springing up everywhere around the country - the one at Newcastle has been instrumental in the fightback against Hall & co. The Celtic campaign against sectarian attacks, and Man.Utd's "Stand Up" campaign at the beginning of March are both good examples of working class football fans organising and defending their own interests. What is certain is that the future for clubs and fans alike now goes way beyond what happens on the park. The businessmen forgot when they started waving their poncey cheque-books around, calling the shots...This is our game, a working class game and while we pay the piper we'll call the tune !

attacks that Celtic supporters have initiated. No of course we haven't, this would mean the taskforce having to do something useful and getting involved with ordinary football fans; and we can't have that can we.

Lets examine the KRF campaign. Is football then, the last bastion of racism in a country otherwise cleansed? The facts suggest otherwise: a European Youth survey which interviewed 16 to 24 year olds across 8 countries found the British to be, "by far the most racist and reactionary in Europe." Another report from the Human Rights Watch revealed that Britain had one of the highest rates of racially motivated crime in Western Europe, 170,000 per year and rising. Also the UN recently expressed disquiet, "at the disproportionate number of deaths suffered by ethnic minorities in police custody." So why then is football to be given special treatment, by that well known anti-racist zealot David Mellor?

During their aforementioned tour of the country the Task Force when actually talking to ordinary fans found that the main issue of concern expressed was a return to terracing. It was the Task Force themselves who were raising the issue of racism. A trend continued by Mellor, when after Chris Kamara was sacked immediately speculating on a racist motive without any evidence.

The motive for pushing and prioritising racism at football is not particularly altruistic, rather it is an attempt to make football more attractive to the still relatively untapped source of income represented by the middle class. Just look at the changes that have been made at our own ground recently, and ask yourself for whose benefit were these changes made? It is a cynical attempt to reinforce the gentrification of football, as the all new 'trendy' football seeks to purge itself of the unwanted working class fans both black and white who are being priced out of the game, replacements have to be found.

With a campaign against racism in place at football the inference is that football grounds are a hotbed of racism and therefore if your white, working class and a football fan then you must be racist. So you need to be 'kicked out' to make way for a more desirable *class* of fan, all under the cover of football putting its house in order. The campaign also gives an opportunity to smear anyone who wishes to oppose the middle class agenda currently being pushed at football. If anyone wanted to prioritise another issue, above kicking racism out, regardless of how valid, they can be immediately shouted down as racist. This can also be used to show the need and validity for the campaign.

The only part of football that the Taskforce should be looking to kick out is themselves.

Choose life, choose a career, choose music, choose shoplifting, choose playing space invaders in Oasis market when you should be down the Villa, choose being a Goth. I chose none of these, I chose something else instead.....

CONFESSIONS OF A FOOTBALL HOOLIGAN

I remember first witnessing football violence around 1976 at the grand age of eight, I'd been to a couple of games before that but hadn't seen anything. This was Boro at home. Our mom worked at the cinema and 'Big Jack' Charlton who was manager of Boro took all his players to the flicks the night before the match and gave all the people who worked at the cinema complementary tickets, so me and our dad were well chuffed in the Trinity Road stand. Football wasn't segregated then but away fans generally used the Witton end, but a good few Villa fans also liked watching the game from there including my big sister who chose to wear her bright orange cagoule to the game (weren't cagoules brilliant!). I couldn't really miss her, even from where we were sat. I remember looking over to her and all of a sudden a few yards from where she was sitting, it went off big style!

I was mesmerised and the silky skills on the pitch were far from my mind as I watched the off. The thing that amazed me at the time was that it lasted for a few minutes and there was only about two punches traded. Little did I know that the to-ing and fro-ing of mobs was the trademark of many a fight I was going to witness and indeed partake in for many a year to come.

A lot of things that happened twenty years were still happening years later. I remember going to watch Villa play Liverpool around the same season as the aforementioned Boro game and seeing scousers with loads of Villa scarves tied up their wrists. For all you younger readers, it was traditional to wear your colours in those days and especially round your wrists. OK so it may have looked daft, but that was the fashion, your curtain style haircuts don't look so clever either. Anyway, he had all these scarves and I was rather confused. Later I learnt that these had all been nicked from hapless Villa fans and were his badges of honour. Years later when the casuals/dressers/trendies, whatever you want to call them were around, draping was the fashion whereupon you robbed any piece of designer

clothing from the opposition that you could. I remember talking to a mate of mine who was dressed from head to toe in gear that he had robbed from opposing fans. A tacchini trackie top from a gooner, Lacoste tee-shirt from a toffee man, the cunt had even robbed a pair of trainers from a Cov. City fan. The idea of a lad from Coventry hobbling down Witton Lane minus his favourite Nike's still tickles me.

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So, right from an early age football violence had been a spectator sport for and my mates down the Villa, and it was just that until the age of seventeen. Up until then, all through our early teens we had witnessed many battles down the Villa - most notably Blues, West Ham and Man. Utd. Although we never got involved, as the lads taking part seemed ancient, watching the fighting was as much part of the crack on a Saturday afternoon as was the football. The nearest we got to it was running away from away fans shouting "stand Villa - stand".

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As usually happens as you get older, some of your mates leave football behind and get into boring things like music, drugs, shoplifting, space invaders etc. Some of us managed to combine one of the aforementioned but for the serious footie lad this didn't work.

Just before leaving school and about a year after, I abstained from football after falling in love (ahh) and found it hard to combine the two. I was saved from serious D.T.'s after meeting up with an old mate who I used to go to the match with. This was great as I learned that he had moved from violence spectating to being an active participant in battles with the "Villa Youth" and was quite respected in those circles. He introduced many of them to me and I was soon drinking with them and getting "involved".

No one would imagine Southampton at home being one of the first games that a football hooligan gets involved in but it was! No disrespect to Southampton but I naively thought id cut my teeth on a club with more of a reputation, which is

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bullshit as many people will tell you who have travelled up and down the country following their team that there is head the balls at the most unlikely of places! Most of us had been to the game, and as nothing in particular had been planned the thought uppermost on peoples minds was having a post match pint. Unfortunately this pastime was sorely hindered by the fact that that pubs weren't open all day (remember those bad old days?)

although this was the law many boozers flouted this and you could get lock ins, but there wasn't many who where prepared to do this by football grounds for obvious reasons. So this meant walking up and down the Lichfield road in small groups, so the old bill wouldn't give you grief or waiting up some side street until a pub opened. They were meant to open at 5.30, but seemed to believe that if they didn't open until six we'd get fed up and go home.

On this occasion we got holed up in the Reservoir, and we'd obviously been spotted by the Saints mob, although we had been drinking in there for a good while we hadn't noticed anything untoward but one of them must have mingled in with us and because one of our lads came in to tell us they're mob was on there way. We all piled out of the pub to see about fifty of them coming towards us, some of them

looked quite tasty, but I suppose the sheer fact that we were on home ground and they didn't know how many of us were coming out of the pub they started to back off, and then I hate to admit it but it all went kind of shit, one of our lads sprayed c.s. gas and the wind blew the wrong way and caught half of us in the face, someone with us got knocked over by a car and the Saints mob regrouped and charged us we got a bit of a slapping, especially some of our kamikaze maniacs who never ran from anything at the front, it was over in seconds the Saints mob fucked off and I was hooked. I was also very surprised how little you had to do to be accepted into a mob, as long as you didn't run or grass you were alright people from other mobs have borne this out by saying that there is people in mobs who have never hit any one in their lives and they have been running with the mob for years.

I remember talking to a mate of mine who was dressed from head to toe in gear that he had robbed from opposing fans. A tacchini trackie top from a gooner, Lacoste tee-shirt from a toffee man, the cunt had even robbed a pair of trainers from a Cov. City fan.

Many people who take up this particular pastime can be sure of one thing, that a nicking is nearly always around the corner. My first tug came around 1985 before the Villa - Blues game. We had been drinking in and around the main Villa pubs in Perry Barr, The Little Crown, The Big Crown and the Seventh Trap. Blues' mob would know that these were Villa pubs and we anticipated a surprise attack. Their mob was always highly organised and in general their main boys didn't seem to drink as much as the Villa mob. Mixed with their intense hatred of the Villa it always made for an interesting Saturdays afternoon sport.

Villa hated Blues, that goes without saying, they are our local rivals after all, but the Blues' intense and unrivalled hatred of Villa was unbelievable. I remember meeting an old mate who introduced me to a workmate - I stuck out my hand to shake his and instead of returning this greeting he asked me what part of town I was from. When I told him he said that I must be a Villa bastard and walked off. As it was my mates moms party I refrained from showing him a more traditional Villa - Blues greeting and left it at that.

Anyway, getting back to the job in hand - as expected the Zulu's turned the corner into the Big Crown's car park and we went for it. It was fucking chaos and I was fucking gutted that I never got a touch. A few at the front got a couple of slaps in but that was it as the old bill were right on top. One of my mates came across and told me that a lad I had come to the boozer with had got nicked as he was in the thick of it. I merely turned to him and shouted "BASTARDS" and that was it. The old bill pounced on me and threw me into one of their personnel carriers. As I

**I was taken to Queens Road station...
The camaraderie in the cell was great,
giving you a feeling that you were
part of something.**

was football scum I was made to sit on the floor while the big booted bastards came in and sat all around me, giving me a dig to the side and the back of my head. I was taken to Queens Road station and the scene there was as funny as fuck. On arriving the first thing I saw was a massive orderly queue of lads waiting for their details to be taken. As each person did so another copper checked up on a board

whether they were Villa or Blues and we were allocated cells accordingly. It was comical! I was locked up with about ten other Villa fans all of whom I knew. Many had been nicked fighting around the Crown. When I told them why I had been nicked they thought it was well funny, many of them being veterans of Villa violence and it gave me a buzz listening to their stories being a new-comer to it all. Although I was still young, many around me were younger still - from the ages of 14 upwards. The camaraderie in the cell was great, giving you a feeling that you were part of something.

**one of our lads
sprayed cs gas and
the wind blew the
wrong way and caught
half of us in the
face**

As mentioned before, Villa - Blues games were always something special as I suppose all local derbies are but you always think the ones involving your own club are the best. Supporting Villa or Blues is almost always based on a geographical basis i.e. if you were from Kingstanding, Witton, Perry Barr, Sutton you tended to support the Villa. The other side of town were all noses.

I always seem to remember Blues' mob being a lot more serious than us and more into posing than having a laugh like we tended to do. We used to drink in ordinary pubs whose prices were a lot cheaper, like the pubs in Perry Barr or the Cabin in town, whereas Blues used to frequent all the trendy bars like Boogies,

This wasn't a case of kamikaze bravado because we knew that the Blues mob would still be at home ironing their shirts and gelling their curly perms.

Edward's, Kaleidoscope etc., which used to sell poncey overpriced lager. It was quite funny, because some of us used to drink in Edward's on a Friday from 5.30 to 7.30 as the lager was only 50p a pint. This wasn't a case of kamikaze bravado because we knew that the Blues mob would still be at home ironing their shirts and gelling their curly perms. Much of the fighting between Blues and Villa was done on Friday and Saturday nights, in and around the city centre pubs after closing time. The sight of a world

and ball Blues badge or a Villa Villain has helped to keep many a nurse in the A&E wards busy at the weekend. On an interesting note I remember when one main boy died in an accident at work a wreath was sent from the opposing mob, there was some sort of mutual respect and I think that a gesture like that helps to keep everything in perspective.

After the nicking the inevitable court case loomed. The lads I'd shared a cell with were all up on the same day and time as me - the days that Villa and Blues fans were up differed for obvious reasons. We all agreed to wait for each others case to finish as we were going on the traditional post court beer. I was last up so all the lads were sat at the back of the court waiting for me. The usual proceedings followed normally until the prosecutions case was read out. Remember I had only been nicked for swearing. "The defendant stood in the middle of the Walsall Road and shouted "these are the blue nose bastards, let's get into them...". I was in bits as were all the lads at the back who were laughing. They were warned about their behaviour and quietened down until near the end of the case when my finances were read out. They said that I was a married man with two kids. Well that

was it, everyone was in fits of laughter and were all thrown out of the court. This was reflected in my fine - £165 for a mere "threatening words and behaviour". Remember it was thirteen years ago and I was on a Y.T.S. earning £25 a week, so it was around seven weeks pay. All the lads were still laughing when I met up with them at the Cabin a few minutes later (is it any coincidence that Villa's main pub in town was a couple of hundred yards away from the magistrates court).

As soon as we got to New St. station the Blues were waiting for us... They charged; the coppers crapped it and ran, we stood, then charged and ran Blues everywhere...It was still going off on the train platform as we were boarding our train.

No one would admit it publicly but all Villa fans hate it when Blues get relegated as it means those two local derbies are for a while a thing of the past (a long long past lately). It means that your next local team becomes your focus of attention. The particular season I'm thinking of meant that Coventry away was to be this focus. This outing had been planned a lot better than usual and a good few of the older lads were to come out of retirement for this off.

We had all arranged to meet at the Cabin at 11am, opening time. Three of us met early and had our suspicions that Blues might have planned a little welcoming party for us, so we decided to travel a different way. We didn't want to bump into them coming round a corner so went along a route so that we would see them from a distance. Our suspicions were justified as we could see a good mob of Blues outside our pub. There was about 30 of them and from their size and the faces we spotted we could tell that they were "good lads". Because we had arrived so early we had plenty of time to ring around and get in touch with most of the lads to arrange a different meeting place, the Ben Johnson pub, just on the edge of town. There was loads of us and the atmosphere was great. Nobody could believe the cheek (and retrospectively the bottle) that Blues had been waiting at our pub. It

is apparent now that the coppers must have had intelligence about many of our offs and they knew exactly what was going on, on this particular day. They soon arrived and we thought they were going to escort us to the train station but they took us to the cabin. We couldn't believe our luck being holed up in our favourite pub. Then bi-

Everyone seemed to get a touch that day and because the coppers were in such disarray there were very few arrests

zarrely the police called time and escorted us to the train station to catch the train that we ourselves had arranged to catch, but not before a bit of action took place. As soon as we got to New St. station the Blues were waiting for us, mingling in with the crowds you normally see in a busy train station on a Saturday afternoon. They charged; the coppers crapped it and ran, we stood, then charged and ran Blues everywhere. Everyone seemed to get a touch that day, and because the coppers were in such disarray there were very few arrests. It was still going off on the train platform as we were boarding our train. When the train finally set off

for Coventry we was well chuffed.

The plan when we got to Coventry was to take their seats. There was a couple of scuffles before outside the ground but nothing to speak of really. I always found that football fighting was 99% bottle. We got into the ground and all sat together in a mob of around 60. It wasn't long before Coventry sussed what was happening and started to surround us. We all looked at each other and as if on some prearranged signal we all stood up and roared at the Coventry mob. They shat themselves and couldn't clamber over their seats quick enough. We were still stood there and didn't even bother to chase them, mainly because we were all in bits laughing. We were just escorted into our own end, they must have felt such pricks and it must have taken them years to live that down. I remember sitting in our seats after and one of my mates passing round the cigars, such was life.

This outing had been planned a lot better than usual and a good few of the older lads were to come out of retirement for this off.

Well there you have it a couple of interesting anecdotes for your delectation. This article was not written to glorify or condemn football violence in general, but just to say that that was how it was. This is simply some of our experiences with football when we were younger, none of us are trendy lefty teachers, psychologists or sociologists, just normal Villa fans who despise anything to do

we all stood up and roared at the Coventry mob. They shat themselves and couldn't clamber over their seats quick enough.

with fascism. It is interesting to note that some of the people we have drank with, attended that aforementioned court with have chosen not to chose life, they have chosen fascism. We have set out to show that its definitely not a natural progression from being a football hooligan to becoming a fascist. But far from it, the same parts of the state that you come up against when being a 'lad': the police, the courts, the jails etc. are the

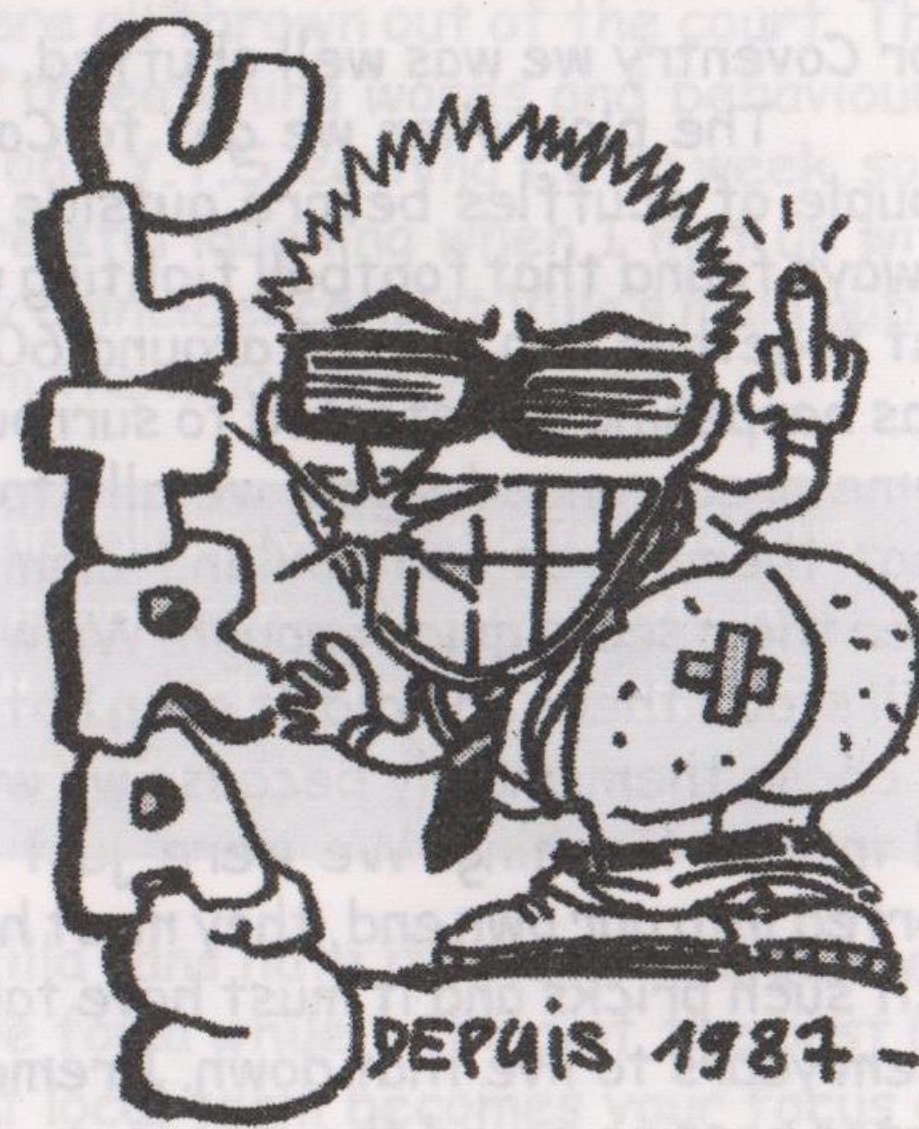
exact institutions that fascism wants to protect and strengthen, and the working class 'lads' would be the lackeys of the state that they have thought against. It's time to choose sides, don't believe the hype that the Villa C18 divs are telling you. We aren't here to lecture you as intellectuals but to speak to you as equals. Some of us at Well Prepared are ex-lads, and aren't talking as outsiders.

It's interesting that the same people who have condemned football hooliganism are the same people who would like you to join the army and kill or be killed in their name, the same people whose hobbies at the weekend include slamming their genitalia in between the door and frame, going out in the country and watching a fox being ripped apart and wiping it's blood on their kids faces or some weird practices involving satsumas, plastic bags and women's undies!

These are the people who the fascists wish to protect. I know whose side I'm on: do you?

Villa, Well Prepared, Working class, Anti Fascist, Anti Loyalist, And Fucking Proud.

ULTRAMARINES BORDEAUX



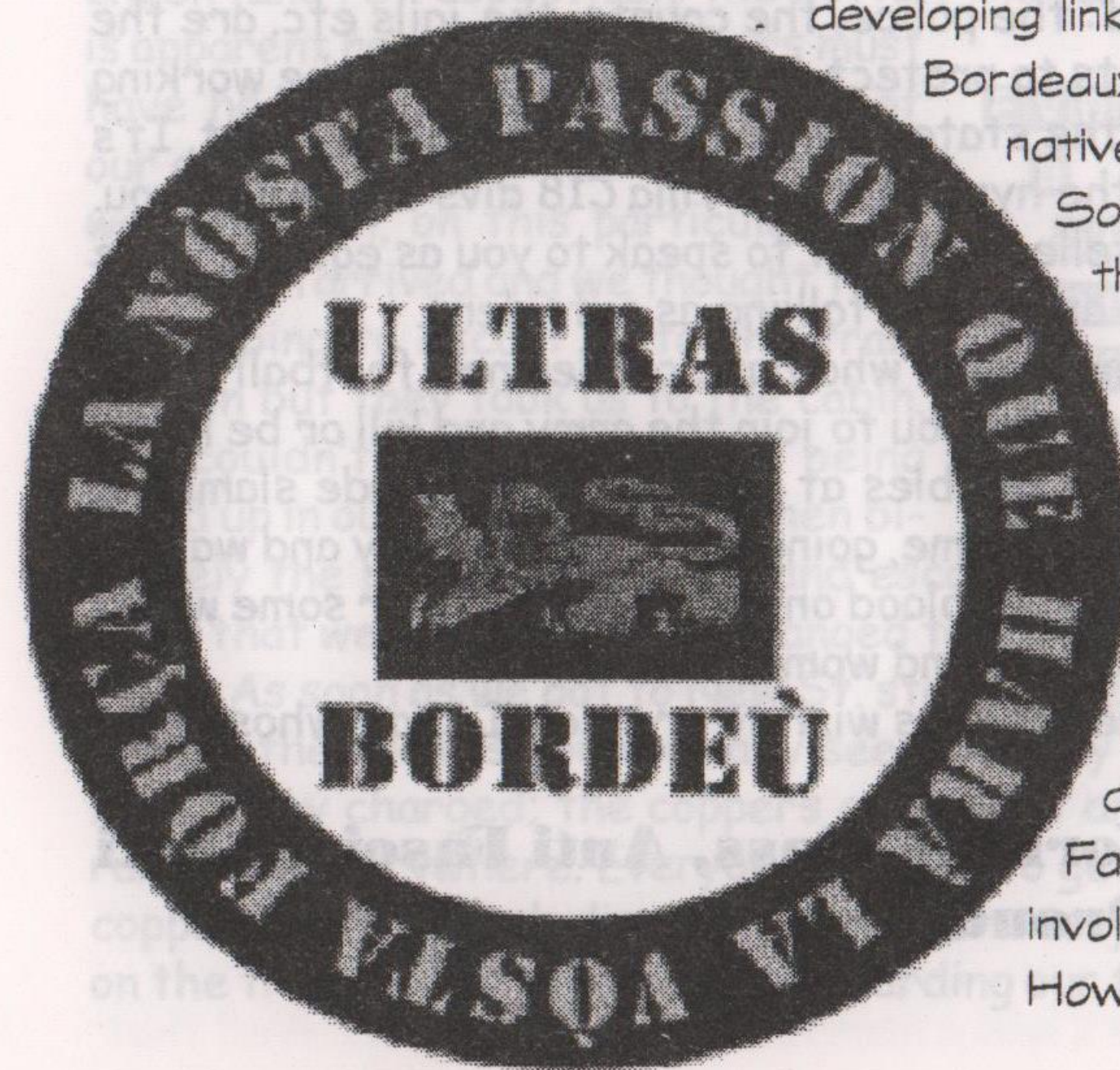
The Collective Club Ultramarines Bordeaux was founded in June 1987, by Bordeaux fans who were impressed by the Italian supporter's organisations known as Ultras. They were attracted by the Ultra's organisational and structural characteristics and the way they expressed support in a more aggressive manner.

In the 10 years since, we have tried to make the Bordeaux fans more active. As in France there isn't a strong football culture, and only a few supporters would travel to away games. So one of our first activities was to organise the away trips of our fans, getting them more involved and to create some choreography on the terraces.

Since this time and after the realisation of these two goals, we decided that we must give a stronger identity to our group. So we began to talk about our regional identity here in the South West of France, Gascogne, and began developing links with the Occitan organisation in

Bordeaux. Who are active in reviving the native Occitan language and culture in South West France and opposing the dominance of the French state.

Politically we have also evolved. Ten years ago there weren't the same problems and our group declared itself to be apolitical, (i.e. we had no politics), but now with the development of Le Penn's Front National (FN), we decided that we must oppose the Far Right ideology and become involved in the fight against fascism. However, in Bordeaux there are not



many problems with the Far Right, as they have less electoral support than in France as a whole, 15% compared to 25% nationally. It is also important to remember that just because 25% of people vote FN doesn't mean that a quarter of people in France are fascist. As there are a lot of protest votes as people are disgusted by our system because there is a lot of corruption. About 2 years ago though, there was a mob of fascists active in Bordeaux, but after we gave them a beating they went away!

We do not encourage fights with the supporters of other teams, but we do get trouble from rival fans, mainly those of Marseille, Nantes, Paris SG, Toulouse and Strasbourg. We always try and take a firm to all the away games, but sometimes our numbers are small. We've got about 400 members incorporating a hard-core of between 50 and 60 who are closely involved.

Our fan club is independent of the club in terms of finance and views. We have a good relationship with the club in general terms. We produce our own fanzine and organise gigs with local bands. Our fan club Ultramarines Bordeaux, may not be the best in Europe but with limited resources we do what we can. Laurent, Ultramarines Bordeaux.



C18...who are ya?

Violent fascist terror group
or media-hyped fantasy fascists

C18, its a name that we've all heard of, touted by the media as some omnipotent fascist terror group, subjects of a few World in Action exposes, we've even got a small contingent of them down at Villa Park. So in this issue of Well Prepared we take a look at exactly who C18 are.

Anti-Fascist Action received an unusual present in January '97 - a letter bomb. It was one of 10 sent to left-wing targets in Britain by a Danish Nazi terror group which has links with the British Nazi group C18. The media covered the story but replaced the identity of the real targets - anti-fascists - with high profile personalities. The spate of letter bombs were supposed to signal that C18 were the real deal, a bunch of committed violent neo-nazis, but like everything else about them it all went pear shaped and ended up in internal feuds and splits within the organisation.

There is speculation as to who set up C18 and why, but despite that, the organisation has operated since 1992. In the early 1990's the British National Party (BNP) launched a high profile campaign in London's East End around the slogan 'Rights For Whites' and AFA soon noticed the emergence of an organised group of fascist stewards. AFA responded to the challenge of the BNP forcefully and the fascists were seen off on several occasions. This new fascist outfit was soon to become the 'dreaded' C18 - Combat Adolf Hitler, (A and H being the 1st and 8th letters of the alphabet).

At first C18 had a working relationship with the BNP, but increasingly began to identify themselves as a separate group. They began circulating 'leaderless resistance' literature encouraging fascists to follow the methods of American Nazi terror group the Order. They believed that a racist attack was worth far more than a racist leaflet, especially when it was publicly claimed by C18 to create the impression of organisation and planning. They hoped to provoke random retaliation on whites from the victims of the attacks, which in turn would start a 'race war'.

It is possible that C 18 was set up by British Intelligence as a 'honeytrap' - to attract and identify the potentially most violent fascists and monitor their links with similar Nazi 'terror' groups around the world. Whatever the reason by the end of 1992 C18 was producing its own propaganda, including magazines with 'hit lists' of their opponents. They did attack a few soft targets, a couple of left wing bookshops and community centres, and were fond of leaving threatening messages on people's answerphones but from the very outset they were promising more than they could deliver.

By 1993 the BNP had withdrawn from the public arena due to physical pressure from AFA preferring instead of a physical presence electoral pursuits, and C18 declared that they are the true face of British National Socialism, emphasising their commitment to physical force and anti-semitism as evidence. Boasting of international meetings, founding an Aryan homeland and launching a radio station, all very grand plans, but would they ever happen! In truth these new standard bearers of street-level fascism were proving almost as elusive. Probably the first possibility of contact between AFA and C18 came at the massive (but pointless) Unity Demo in October 93. C18 were located in a pub waiting for people to disperse from the march, but when approached by AFA they wouldn't leave the pub until the police arrived. This all seemed very familiar - rather than some new terror group. A definite case of: same old shit just different buckets.

In January 1994 they made their most ambitious move to date, trying to put on an Ian Stuart Memorial gig in London. Stuart was lead singer with Skrewdriver and the founder of the Nazi music organisation Blood and Honour. Remembering what happened at the Battle of Waterloo less than 2 years previously, (where a large scale BNP gig was due to take place and was advertised openly across Europe with the meeting place for 100s of boneheads prior to the gig was Waterloo station, these were met and despatched by over 1000 anti-fascists), this was obviously meant to be a show of strength. Unfortunately for them it all went horribly wrong, they lost their original venue in Becontree, got attacked in a pub in Bow by AFA,

finally got some of their people to another pub in Waterloo where they were sniped by AFA, battered by the old bill, and ended up rowing with their German 'comrades' who couldn't believe how bad it all was. And the gig never happened.

The next time C18 hit the headlines was after the trouble at the Ireland v England game in Dublin, February 1995. The media built up C18 into an overnight international conspiracy giving them publicity worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. To claim that an organisation with the dismal track record outlined above was capable of staging a major disturbance to wreck the 'Peace Process' was complete dishonesty and obviously part of a different agenda.

Shortly after Dublin, C18 organised 100 stewards for a UVF march through Central London, and despite AFA's credible record of dealing with the fascists, Searchlight magazine decided that "because of the danger of serious violence Searchlight did not inform anti-fascist groups of the march." The following year, this time with the necessary information in place, AFA was able to successfully confront the Loyalists and their C18 supporters as they assembled for their march.

The damage done to C18's credibility at their failure to protect the London UVF march came just two weeks after another C18 backed UVF march in Bolton went badly wrong. With C18 getting turned over in Wigan a couple of months earlier once again AFA, the front line of anti-fascist resistance, had completely exposed their media created reputation.

C18 have actively built links with the Ulster loyalists, collecting money for their prisoners and putting on a couple of Blood and Honour gigs in the north of

Ireland. Their support has obviously met with some approval, for example a letter last year in the C18-controlled Blood and Honour magazine states, "We the Loyalist prisoners on East Belfast UDA wing H-Block 2, are dedicated to keeping Ulster British and whiteHail the UFF & C18".

On the football front C18 placed a lot of emphasis on recruiting from the football firms, "Getting all the football fans, or firms, mobs, whatever and getting them all behind a Nationalist cause as one, that's when we start to progress" was C18's publicly stated aim. In reality, once again, they have achieved very little.

Obviously encouraged by all the glowing tributes after the Dublin trouble, Euro 96 was being forecast as one long hot summer of fascist violence. Despite the media's build up, either C18 lacked ambition or ability, because they failed to organise any political activity off the back of the European Championship. Because C18 actually do very little they have to keep their supporters onside by inventing inci-

when approached by AFA they (C18), wouldn't leave the pub until the police arrived. This all seemed very familiar - rather than some new 'terror' group.

dents. Man United supporters might be interested to know that according to C18 when United played Chelsea in October 95 "two neighbouring public houses were packed to the roof with neo-Nazi Chelsea supporters ... in view of the promise of Man Utd's lefty rabble showing up. Who true to form didn't." Absolute nonsense! So if its not the media or the State building them

up then C18 have a nice little line in fantasy journalism to keep the myth going.

Probably the key area of their work and it would seem their downfall, has been the successful takeover of the Nazi music organisation Blood and Honour. The B&H founder Ian Stuart died in a car crash in September 93 and almost immediately C18 took control. The music fanzines connected to B&H were brought under their political control and most importantly the finances were taken over. It is now claimed that one time C18 fuhrer Charlie Sargent nicked £80,000 and his right hand man Will Browning pocketed £40,000. Whatever the exact figure there is no doubt that the opportunity to nick large sums of money was high on the agenda for a number of leading figures in C18.

Once B&H had been brought under control, the National Socialist Alliance was created in 1994 to unite a number of small, openly Nazi groups like the KKK, British Movement, B&H, etc. all under C18's guiding hand. At the same time international links were established with like minded groups in Europe and North America, and a virtual C18 monopoly existed in the Nazi music scene. For a short period their political influence and income was considerable, but inevitably their stranglehold didn't last long, and by 1996 the discontent they had created by ripping people off and attacking fellow fascists could no longer be kept under control and erupted into open rebellion. Once the influential Resistance and Nordland magazines came out against C18 the floodgates opened. David Lane member of the American Nazi terror group the Order, now serving life in prison, and cited as an inspiration by C18 said, "The leadership of C18 are obviously Zionist agents or they

are so ignorant and dangerous that they might as well be The BNP then launched a 5 page attack on C18 in their magazine Spearhead, followed by a leaflet widely circulated posing the question, "whether Charlie and Steve Sargent are M15 agents or just poisonous shit stirrers and completely fucking stupid can be argued about".

C18 are in serious disarray having lost control of the Nazi music scene, and the letter bomb fiasco. Ex-C18 leader

"The leadership of C18 are obviously Zionist agents or they are so ignorant and dangerous that they might as well be"

Sargent allegedly originated the bomb plot, getting Danish neo-nazis to construct and send the devices, but the conspirators were under police surveillance from the word go. However Sargent wouldn't be in charge for much longer, as himself, his right hand man Browning and henchman Martin Cross were due to face charges of possessing material designed to incite racial hatred in Dec '96. They devised a plan for a 12 man council to oversee the crumbling C18 empire if they got sent down, but before the trial Sargent and Cross were ousted. Both were expelled from the movement, after claims of Sargent being an informer following the interception of the bombs and the arrest of their Danish comrades. This proved enough to split the organisation with those members remaining loyal to Sargent forming the National Socialist Movement. The whole sorry affair was bought to a close with the murder of Chris Castle, who was acting as an intermediary between the two factions. Castle was stabbed in the back by Cross when meeting with Sargent and Cross. Sargent

and Cross received life sentences for the murder in January this year, with the new C18 fuhrer appearing as the main prosecution witness during the trial identified only as Mr X. Leaving the NSM and C18 hurling abuse and insults at each other, with each claiming the other to be state assets and police informers.

Never one to miss a trick, Nick Griffin, a former NF leader and previous opponent of Tyndall, is now gaining influence in the BNP and openly arguing that the C18 elements should be readmitted, "Woe betide the nationalist movement that imagines it can do without the street activists". Seeing as how the BNP have just embarked on the biggest fascist electoral campaign since the 1970s it would seem logical that they would want protecting on the streets.

The future of C18 remains uncertain. Some might rejoin the BNP but having said that there has always been a physical force element on the extreme-right, whatever it calls itself and sometimes it is diplomatic or tactical to separate the different 'wings' of the movement. Another

"Whether Charlie and Steve Sargent are M15 agents or just poisonous shit stirrers and completely fucking stupid can be argued about."

option is that a more political element might take control of C18 now that the corruption of its leaders has been exposed. So were the New Year letter bombs a sign of things to come or another failed attempt to restore some credibility to the name of C18?

One thing is certain, those who deliberately exaggerate the threat posed by

C18 are hostile to the anti-fascist movement. The media portray C18 as larger than life characters, to be feared, unstoppable, and when they do mention the anti-fascist opposition it is only as victims. As the C18 slogan goes "Let them hate as long as they fear". No mention of AFA's successes against C18. And while the middle classes may find these stories shocking, there are disillusioned working class people, abandoned by Labour who maybe impressed. Certainly the fascists appreciate the stories because they reprint them word for word in their magazines as evidence of their growing influence. As an AFA spokesperson said after the second World In Action C18 spectacular, "Black propaganda that can be exploited by its target is of dubious value, and 9 times out of 10 counterproductive."

Behind all the publicity lies the real purpose of promoting C18, and that is the call for more police and M15 powers to deal with the problem. The successes of militant anti-fascists must be written out of history the fascist threat must be exaggerated, and then the only thing that stands between us and a fully blown 'race war' are the suitably strengthened forces of 'law and order'. And once the State, which is moving rapidly to the Right itself, increases repression against the Extreme Right, how long before that attention is then transferred onto groups elsewhere in society?

The one thing that is clear is that C18 is back to its old tricks again of producing empty rhetoric with little to back it up, as their 'comic' Strikeforce says: "Do we live like cowards or go down fighting like white men." I'm sure Charlie Sargent is going down in prison. C18 definitely a case of don't believe the hype.

RASH PREDICTIONS

It's obvious that we're destined for glory this season, but what can we expect from the opposition.

BIG CHEESE'S

Aside from ourselves this really comes down to including another two, Arsenal and Man U. There's little to choose between the two of them, but I'd favour Man U to come out on top. I can't see Arsenal playing to the same level of intensity that drove them to the championship last season, and the desire to outdo the Man U in the Champions League may prove more of a distraction than Wenger likes to admit, and their aging defence may start showing a few cracks. While, United are looking stronger than last time, the return of Keane should give them a more 'competitive' edge to their play and Stam and Blomqvist look good additions.

COULD HAVE BEEN A CONTENDER

We'll have a chasing pack of four clubs, looking menacing but never really threatening. Liverpool are talented but are still no nearer to recreating their consistency and dominance they once took for granted. Their dodgy defending will cost them dear, and the two coaches system won't last long into the season. The big spending foreign legion that is Chelsea look a tremendous squad on paper, but will they be able to play together as a team? I think not. The squad system in operation at the club won't fit well with the egos there, and Zola won't be the only one moaning soon as internal squabbling will come to dominate their season. This season will give us a truer picture of Vialli's managerial abilities and I wouldn't be surprised to find out he's shit. Bringing up the rear of this category are Newcastle and Blackburn. Dalglish had just about purged the side of Keegan's influences, flowing attacking football, to be replaced by a more dour, workmanlike style. Gullit should be able to make them nearly men again. Roy Hodgson should be able to sustain some of Blackburn's early season form of last campaign for the duration of this one.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Next up a batch of teams who'll be having an uneventful season, safely nestled into a position of mid-table respectability. Topping this bunch should be West Ham, if they manage to keep Wright and Hartson unsuspected for more than half the season. Followed by Leeds, employing the George Graham patented 9-1-1 system of football. Rounding of the uneventfuls will be Derby, Leicester, Everton and Spurs.

SKIN OF THEIR TEETH

Struggling to keep playing with the big boys will be the fate of Coventry. Who after reaching the dizzy heights mid-table mediocrity, will suffer a bout of vertigo, ending up hoping for results to go their way at the end of the season, destined to survive due to the fact that there will be teams worse than themselves. Keeping them company should be Wimbledon, Southampton and Middlesbrough, whose collection of has-beens should stay up this time if they remember to turn up for all their games.

FLOGGING A DEAD HORSE

Finally we come to the cannon fodder, destined for the Nationwide League. Charlton will be lucky to get above the bottom six all season and will be going back straight back where they come from, along with Notts Forest. Forest must quite like it in the Nationwide as they seem to be doing their best to get back there, showing no signs of ambition at all, selling Campbell and looking like losing van Hooijdonk and Gemell before a ball is kicked. Lastly we arrive at Sheff Wed who despite rightly ditching BFR for Wilson will still play like a bog o' shite, and have an exodus of decent players.

THE CASE OF SATPAL RAM.

"TRUTH MAKES ME THE ENEMY OF ALL LIARS"

In 1987 Satpal Ram was wrongly convicted of murder and has had to fight his case from behind bars. Despite overwhelming evidence that Satpal acted in self defence he has constantly been turned down for appeal and parole.

There has been a campaign to get Satpal freed ever since he was sent down, and now with an upsurge in interest in his plight, we highlight a case that should have ended years ago but for a racist justice system that is intent on keeping Satpal exactly where he is.

On 16th November 1986, Satpal was eating in the Sky Blue restaurant in Lozells, Birmingham. He was on his own and only two waiters and six men occupied the restaurant. The men were making offensive comments about the music playing and were taunting the waiters. Satpal defended them from where he was sitting in a corner. He asked them to stop and soon found him-

self quickly under attack for his troubles. One of the men put a broken glass in his face, injuring him badly, he was also stabbed in the wrist with the same broken bottle. Satpal was cornered and his only chance of survival was to fight back. This resulted in him stabbing one of the attackers. Using a small knife he was carrying that he used for work. It was the only way he could defend himself,

from the onslaught that was threatening his life. In the chaos that followed everyone left the restaurant and no one was arrested. Satpal gave himself up to the Police, explaining that he had been attacked and that he had acted in self defence. He soon found himself arrested and charged with murder. The man he stabbed had refused hospital treatment and returned home where he died from his injuries.

At his trial Satpal was advised not to claim self defence but to accept manslaughter. The trial was to become a farce. Satpal's witnesses who spoke Bengali were not given translators and the jury didn't understand them. His barristers had given him such bad advice that he was soon serving time. At the time the judge, Lord Chief Justice Lane, advised a ten year sentence, but this seems to have been forgotten as he enters

".....I have been the victim of two racist attacks. The first occurred back in November 1986 when I had to defend my life against an assailant who stabbed me with a broken glass, after subjecting me to a torrent of racial abuse. The second has been a sustained attack by the British State"

Satpal Ram.

twelve years behind bars. He applied to the court of appeal in 1989 but his case was turned down. In 1997 he applied for parole on licence but even though he had served his time it was rejected. The parole board had this to say:

"Although Mr. Ram accepts that he caused the death of his victim, he maintains that his actions did not amount to murder. His behaviour while in custody has been unsatisfactory...."

Parole board 1997

"Although Mr. Ram accepts that he caused the death of his victim, he maintains that his actions did not amount to murder. His behaviour while in custody has been unsatisfactory....He has not undertaken any offence related work". What they are in effect saying is that because Satpal has fought his case all the way and not accepted what they say he should do, he pays the price and they refuse to believe him.

Since being in jail Satpal has constantly been tormented. He has been "ghosted", moved from prison to prison, a total of 54 times. He has been in isolation countless times and has been treated well below any level of humanity. Satpal

wrote to Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, recently and this is how he describes his experience:

"I have endured years of mental cruelty, I am often held in total isolation in solitary confinement, having to endure prolonged periods of deprivation, psychological abuse, constant intimidation, starvation diets and physical torture. On numerous occasions I have been shack-

led in a body belt and thrown into strip cells, having to sleep on the floor, cold and naked for days on end. The guards often display sadistic tendencies and specialise in humiliation and degradation, often enforcing their own rules by terrorising those within their grasp"

When visited lately, Satpal still had the bruise of his latest beating when not for the first time he had struggled for his life. This attack by prison officers who pushed him into a cell and beat him constantly after he complained about having to stop an educational course to start work. This is how Satpal puts it:

".....I have been the victim of two racist attacks. The first occurred back in November 1986 when I had to defend my life against an assailant who stabbed me with a broken glass, after subjecting me to a torrent of racial abuse. The second has been a sustained attack by the British State"

We fully support Satpal in his fight for freedom and hope that by highlighting his case others will do what they can to help. We urge everyone to write to Satpal or his support group the Free Satpal Ram Campaign. Anyone interested in writing should write to our usual address and we will forward any letters to the Free Satpal Ram Campaign, to begin with, please include a return address. There has been support lately from Asian Dub Foundation who along with Primal Scream released a record, "Free Satpal Ram" which raised funds for his defence.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" - Martin Luther King.



KICKING A PIGS BLADDER

WITH BOB ARSE, HE'S 83, HE'LL HAVE YOU KNOW.

THE 29TH AUGUST 1925: VILLA vs BURNLEY

This issue I cast my mind back to the 'Roaring Twenties' and the opening match of the 1925/26 season, and Villa certainly got off to a roaring start, as a crowd of 43,000 watched them demolish a lack lustre Burnley side 10-0. For this season the F.A. had altered the offside law; where previously three defenders were needed goal-side of an attacking player the new law stipulated just two. The change was instigated in an attempt to produce more goals, and this is certainly what happened at Villa Park that day, as Burnley struggled to come to terms with a vibrant Villa attack and the new law.

Villa went on the offensive right from the word go, as a slick passing manoeuvre resulted in the opening goal. Len Capewell kicked-off, and the ball travelled quickly upfield, from Walker to Dorrell, back to Walker who slipped the ball through to Capewell who launched a thunderbolt of an unstoppable shot from 20 yards that flew past Dawson in the Burnley goal. Capewell,



Len Capewell

who must rank as one of Villa's all time top sharp shooters, was capable of unleashing venomous shots with either foot, as Burnley had just found out. 1-0 Villa after only 20 seconds of play, and a taste of things to come for Burnley.

To their credit Burnley attempted to come back straight away forcing Cyril Spiers, between the Villa uprights, to make two saves in as many minutes as they came forward in vain in search of an equaliser. On ten minutes Villa went two up as Capewell netted from

close range after good work from Dicky York. Billy Walker was beginning to dictate play and was at the heart of Villa's moves. Walker who had an illustrious 15 season career at Villa master minded Villa's attack from his inside-left position. He was renowned for his trademark deceptive body swerve, which more often than not would have opposition defenders literally falling over. It was Walker who netted the games third goal with a powerful shot from the edge of the area.

Then after Burnley had made what was rapidly becoming an increasingly rare attack testing Spiers again, the Villa keeper launched a long kick downfield which was pounced upon by Capewell who raced through to score Villa's fourth and complete his hat-trick after only 30 minutes. As this goal was scored Stephenson and the Burnley captain, and centre-half, Hill collided head-on in centre field leaving both men lying prostrate on the pitch. Hill was taken back to the dressing rooms and needed three stitches in a deep head wound, leaving Burnley reduced to ten men. While Stephenson was patched up and returned, rather unsteadily, to the fray with blood still streaming down his face. That concluded the action for the first half.

In the second half Burnley rearranged their beleaguered defence and played with only two half backs. This did them no good though as Villa were to totally dominate the following 45 minutes playing some mesmerising football running the Burnley side ragged. Five minutes after the restart Walker interchanged with Capewell and banged in number five. Eight minutes later and York took a long pass from Talbot in his stride and calmly slotted in the sixth. This was followed in the 64th minute by Walker completing his hat-trick, by thumping home the seventh goal after

Dorrell had done all the hard work. Capewell then weighed in with his fourth and Villa's eighth on 70 minutes, and the doddering figure of Stephenson, his head still swathed in bandages from the first half collision, drifted in to snatch the ninth on 80 minutes. The final goal of the game came seven minutes from time and was scored by Capewell with a magnificent strike from 12 yards out, after Walker and Stephenson had created the space. This goal capped an outstanding performance from Capewell, who bagged an impressive tally of five goals that day. Scoring was something that Capewell certainly had a talent for, in the six seasons that he lead Villa's attack he notched up 93 goals in only 146 appearances.



Billy Walker

The whole Villa team was on top form that day as they preceded to give Burnley an embarrassing lesson in how the beautiful game should be played. In fact Villa were so on top they created enough good chances to have run up a cricket score. Unfortunately they couldn't sustain such breathtaking form for the rest of the season, they only picked up three points in their next four games, and went on to finish in a respectful sixth place in the first division and reached the fifth round of the Cup, losing in a replay to Arsenal.

CLASSIC VILLA MATCHES OF THE PAST.

ASTON VILLA 10 BURNLEY 0

The Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks has been instigated by Celtic supporters as a reaction to numerous attacks upon them, carried out in the Bridgeton Cross and Dalmarnock areas of Glasgow. These areas of the city are travelled through regularly by fans on their way to and from Celtic's home games. The mo-

CAMPAIGN AGAINST SECTARIAN ATTACKS

tive for these attacks is purely sectarian, as the victims are Celtic fans they are seen as Catholics and therefore legitimate targets in the warped minds of the bigoted perpetrators of the attacks. It is an issue which has been ignored by the club and authorities.

In 1995 a young Celtic fan, Mark Scott, was brutally murdered outside the Windsor Bar in Bridgeton Cross, while on his way home after a game. His murderer, Jason Campbell, came up behind the young boy and slashed his throat. The case only achieved national press coverage after Campbell whilst serving time for the murder was requested to be transferred to the Maze prison in the north of Ireland, by the Ulster Volunteer Force on the grounds that he was one of their members. The fact that membership was only bestowed upon him after he was convicted was not mentioned. The transfer and proposed treatment of Campbell as a political prisoner, was blocked by a large public outcry led by Celtic supporters.

In November last year, barely yards from where Mark Scott was murdered an identical attack took place. The victim was another Celtic fan travelling

home, Sean O'Conner. This was a planned copycat attack, as the assailant was waiting in the doorway of a bookmakers looking for a target. The assailant ran out from the doorway and slashed Sean across the neck, then made his getaway by diving into a waiting car. Leaving the victim with a gaping six inch wound on his neck, nar-

rowly missing a major artery. A clear case of attempted murder in anyone's book, and just because he was a Celtic supporter.

In between these two attacks a further 38 attacks have been reported to the police, all in the same area of Glasgow. This leaves you asking how many attacks have gone unreported? It is obvious to anyone who looks at the evidence that random sectarian attacks are being planned and carried out on a regular basis by loyalist bigots operating in the Bridgeton Cross and Dalmarnock areas.

What then has been the response of the club officials and police to this onslaught of attacks. The answer is a predictable nothing. Neither have seen fit to issue warnings to fans about public safety concerns, or to provide extra security arrangements on match days. After the murder of Mark Scott there was a discussion among the Celtic board as to whether it would be in the club's interests to attend the funeral, concerned with the effect of the murder on the club's public image. The police have provided no visible increase in numbers in the targeted areas on match day, nor any urgent attention has been given to investigating the

other 38 reported attacks. In fact the club and police don't even publicly acknowledge that there is a problem.

Against this background of inactivity and denial, highlighting the problem and beginning the fightback has been the sole preserve of the fans. To this end they started the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks, producing an initial leaflet that was distributed widely, publicising the attacks and asking for information about any incidents. The appeal for information about the perpetrators was to build up a dossier of attacks, reported and unreported; and to establish whether there is a pattern to them and the level of organisation involved. A further reason as to the need for this information to be provided by fans, and especially by victims of the attacks, to an independent body is that the police now seem to be denying the number of sectarian attacks they had previously admitted.

After the initial leaflet a second one was produced calling a public meeting. The meeting went ahead, and proved to be a great success, as the campaign was attracting a ground swell of support from Celtic fans. Attendance at the meeting was around 100, from the meeting a broad

based committee was elected and a clear set of objectives was mapped out for the campaign, with plans also being made for a public demonstration in Bridgeton Cross.

The response from the media to the campaign has been predictable, attempting to portray the fans as 'terrorists', 'vigilantes' and 'thugs', operating with a hidden agenda of orchestrating tit for tat attacks. A clear attempt to try and turn victims into aggressors, as the fans trying to do something about this problem have to be discredited as they are uncovering issues such as police incompetence and the contempt clubs have for their supporters. The campaign has a clearly stated set of objectives. There is no hidden agenda, and has stated that if the sectarian attacks ceased tomorrow then the campaign would cease the day after. It is a single issue campaign open to all Celtic fans.

The campaign is still ongoing and proving massively successful, even in the face of open hostility from the club, police and media. The actions of Celtic fans on this issue should be applauded, supported and should serve as an example to fans everywhere.

The Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks calls for:

Celtic FC to provide stewards along London Road, in order to advise fans of, and direct fans towards the safest routes to and from the stadium.

The right of Celtic fans to walk to and from matches, free of harassment and the threat of attack from loyalist bigots.

The right of fans under attack to physically defend themselves.

Two new train stations to be established closer to Celtic Park. The first and most important, should be opened between the existing stations of Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and another opened near the Forge Shopping Centre between the stations of Bellgrove and Carntyne as part of the stadium plan.

wot no loyalists

PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

PART 2

Those of you who read our first issue, will remember us telling you about two of Villa's firm being both fascists and loyalists: namely Neil Keilty and Tony Burke. We have already mentioned the links between Loyalism and fascism and how they go hand in hand and that increasingly fascists are using anti-Irish sentiments as a recruitment tactic.

It was with great interest that us at Well Prepared read the so called 'Mirror Investigation' entitled '20 thugs that are out to wreck the World Cup'. It was the usual piece of sensationalist journalism that we get around the time of large scale football events, remember Euro '96, completely blowing out of all proportion the abilities of a group of individuals to cause mayhem at the World Cup. Aside from having little bearing on reality and wrongly inflating certain egos, articles of this kind do have a more sinister aspect. By building up out of all proportion a perceived threat, means in the next breath the call can go out for a strengthening of police powers concerning football, to deal with these maniacs. Playing their part fully were the FSA, who commented, "We would argue strongly for an additional police power..".

The real aim of articles like this is to ensure the continued gentrification of the game through attempting to criminalise normal working class football fans in the eyes of the general public. Remember the talk of arresting anybody travelling to the World Cup without a ticket, effectively trying to isolate us from our game. I'm sure the fact that the World Cup wasn't 'wrecked'

will be put down to the suitable strengthened forces of law and order. What will be next to become a criminal activity: the singing of songs with swearing in or standing up during a match. It is a trend that we need to fight back against, before its too late, and the muppets who revel in being portrayed as the 'Villans' of the piece. Just ask yourself how long it will be before any new powers extend further than the football field, into wider society.

The article in question included mug shots of Neil Keilty and Tony Burke, they were also afforded a little write up- but us anti-fascists who have known them for a while would like to put the record straight on a number of inaccuracies.

To say that Burke is a key organiser of violence is laughable, if this includes kicking a few SWP members and looking for soft targets in the city centre after Villa games, well that must take some organising!!

A little story is worth relating. Some anti-fascists were doing some scouting looking for Blood and Honour fascists in the city centre, which unfortunately did not come to fruition. Anyhow they ended up in a pub which began to fill up with Blues fans. To cut a long story short Villa's 'main firm' were coming of the train after playing Coventry, so the anti-fascists decided to stick around and see what developed. Sure enough Villa's 'main firm' emerged with Burke at the head and his fascist/ loyalist boys tagging along. Now this 'main firm' were ran stupid by the noses although the odds were 3-1 in their favour. All the known faces were

fascist/ loyalist activists or sympathisers and as for the others as the saying goes if you lie down with dogs you get fleas: or in their case if you run, (away), with fascists you get slaps!!

As for Keilty's write up according to the Mirror the police say that Villa's firm is among the two worst on the international hooligan front!! Laugh I nearly cried.

It says Keilty was jailed for attacking a pub in an Irish area of London. This much is true, but the background is somewhat more interesting: Anti-Fascist Action had information that fascists were due to attack the annual 'Bloody Sunday Commemoration' in London, although having no policy on Ireland, being a purely anti-fascist organisation AFA saw this rightly as another chance to come to grips with fascists and explain to them the error in their political thinking. AFA ended up in an Irish pub in the Kilburn area of north London, after the march. When known fascist Mark Todd, (aka Roland), was spotted talking to the police outside the pub, obviously scouting for his new friends in London, (as he had none in Brum!!). He was told in no uncertain terms to get out of the area, and was only saved from a more meaningful discussion with the pavement by the fact that the place was crawling with police. So Roland ran off to his fascist handlers and reported how many anti-fascists he'd spotted, so we waited for a good few hours and rather unsurprisingly nothing happened.

What then did the master race do? Waited for all of us to go home, then in their usual brave way decided to have a go at smashing up the pub and beating some Irish pensioners!! Included in this fine Aryan fighting machine was that specimen Keilty, wreck the World Cup, I don't think the world was shiteing itself during the com-

petition, although 90 year old french people may be breathing a sigh of relief now its all over, given his track record.

According to the Mirror exclusive Keilty heads a 30 strong mob of Villa jobs. Another story worth relating about this illustrious leader of men, concerns the time that he and his motley crew were due to hold a fascist paper sale in Stourbridge. Before this spectacle could commence they were met by an AFA welcoming party, from which they turned tail and ran. Hard man Keilty was lucky as he escaped serious injury by running into a building society ending up behind the security screen shiteing it crying for the police to be called.

So there you have it don't believe the hype of the Mirror. We at Well Prepared know the facts, as we have seen, (the backs of), them at first hand!!

So when you hear another prick saying there is no connection between Loyalism and fascism, you know the facts.

Burke's house was turned over after NF comrades were done for loyalist gunrunning. He was also chased off an Irish march a few years ago after he was seen taking photos of marchers to pass on to his loyalist comrades. Keilty is in to smashing up Irish pubs and beating up old age pensioners.

We have photos of both of them selling NF newspapers at a loyalist parade in Belfast alongside Terry Blackham who was done for loyalist gunrunning.

We'd like to end by asking that if there is no connection between Loyalism and fascism, then why does a leader of the UFF, Sam McCrory, in the maze prison have a white power tattoo on his arm. McCrory and another UFF leader Johnny Adair were both in a nazi Oi band called offensive weapon.

BOARD STUPID

So does the buck stop with Brian Little for the failings of last season, was he the sole architect of our fall from grace at the top of the Premiership, and will the recovery started under John Gregory continue unhindered, signalling our rise to the global domination of football. Or does the malaise that affected us this season stem in part from deeper within the club and in places higher up than the manager's chair.

Doug Ellis, we are told, is a man who doesn't tolerate failure. Whoever thought up that little pearl of wisdom obviously can't tell their arse from their elbow, (must make having a shit, fun). From what I can tell I'd have thought he positively encouraged it. Since the second coming of Doug we've had a veritable procession of managers, achieving little or no success, two League Cups.

What has caused the failure of all these managers? Could it be that they were all incompetent and should have never been appointed, or is it that they weren't given the support necessary to make their vision for Villa a reality. Whatever the reason, ultimately the responsibility rests with one man, the man who appoints managers and holds the purse strings: Doug Ellis.

With regard to players, we have been continually playing catch-up with other clubs when it comes to player prices and wage demands, because our Doug thinks these prices are too high and will destroy football. Granted, it's not a prerequisite of success that you have to buy big name players, but when you have to you've got to be prepared to pay the going rate. As for players' wages I'd rather see the money generated by the game going to the players than

lining the pockets of chairmen and majority shareholders.

As usual in the close season we were linked with numerous 'top players', yet never quite managed to land one of them. Having a chairman on record several times as saying he opposes large wage demands from players can't be much help for a manager. We're told that there's copious amounts of cash available: last season £15m was allegedly made available for transfers after the flotation of the club with a further £10m promised when we reached the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup. This year season ticket prices have gone up by 22%, (just a bit out of line with inflation). Has all this cash and extra revenue been converted into players? No, and it's never likely to with Doug at the helm, because football comes in a poor second to attempting commercial success, money will be held back to help fund expansion plans, more ground space allocated for corporate hospitality and a hotel.

Turn your attention away from the playing field and the picture isn't particularly rosy. After club sponsors AST pulled out at the end of last season it took most of the close season to come up with a replacement in the form of LDV. The

Its football Jim, but not as we know it

I hate the World Cup, and it's not just because the French won it playing with a 5 man midfield and one striker who couldn't shoot straight against a Brazil side that was more like 'watching Barnsley'. It's supposed to be a showcase for the sport and a celebration of the beautiful game, but instead has come to represent the commercialisation that is rife in the game. How many official sponsors can one competition have? And the clamour of annoying advertising desperately trying for a tenuous football link began to really grate. The sponsorship deal between Nike, the Brazilian team and Ronaldo, allegedly dictates that whenever Brazil play so must Ronaldo. So who has final say over team selection the coach or the sponsor?

The ticketing procedures for France '98 came in for a lot of criticism, but this was mainly misdirected away from the real villains of the piece, the corporate freeloaders. Roughly 30% of all tickets were divided between the major sponsors and private business for corporate hospitality events. While the media and football authorities attacked the French public for hogging all the tickets. The ticketing arrangements were made public 2 years in advance, yet the failed attempt by our football authorities to secure more tickets, was left to the last minute. Why? We can only assume that they were quite happy with the arrangements. After all, ours and the various other FA's could get free tickets for themselves and any 'dignitaries' wanting to tag along, with no problem.

AST deal was relatively small compared to the sums clubs can demand nowadays, and the LDV one is no great improvement. Supposedly because of the delay in finding a sponsor the new replica home kits won't be going on sale now until October.

After managing to secure a UEFA Cup place again, the club has been unable to secure a lucrative TV deal to have the matches televised live. Finally, the club's expansion plans are going to have to be curtailed, due mainly to the fact that Doug Ellis is viewed as a pariah by the council and local residents. All this doesn't strike me as a record of a man who doesn't tolerate failure.

Doug Ellis's ambitions seem only to extend as far as having secure finances and a team of nearly men, and seems to be more inter-

ested in building up a leisure company than a football club that is consistently challenging for honours. When Doug 'Villa man through and through' Ellis was a director at Small Heath he said it taught him how not to run a football club. Maybe somebody needs to go back to school, preferably back in Small Heath.

When Brian Little resigned he did so in the belief that it was in the best interests of Aston Villa. Doug Ellis you do not have the same level of ambition that the fans of this club demand. Brian Little took the honourable option. Why don't you take his lead Doug Ellis and follow suit.

As supporters we need to start making our voices heard. After all we are Aston Villa: and the time has come to sack the board.

During the actual tournament itself I got sick of being told by various pundits that this was some of the best football I'd ever witnessed. I'm afraid I don't think so, my most overriding memories of the tournament were the incessant diving and play acting of the players and the constant whinging to get opponents booked. The standard of refereeing was pretty lousy, with erratic and inconsistent decisions. Two teams missed out on a place in the second round due to abysmal decisions and who knows how many games were unduly influenced by dodgy sending-offs. Certainly not all of it can be put down to FIFA's obligatory tinkering with the rules prior to the competition.

The agenda that FIFA are working to with the recent rule changes is open to speculation. However to continue to make football appealing to the commercial interests the game needs to be sanitised, as top players are now assets in their own right with lucrative sponsorship deals. These corporate assets need to be protected in order to remain playing, thereby earning their keep, and keeping the gravy train moving. Exactly what we'll be watching in a few years time could be almost unrecognisable, it would not be totally unthinkable to see football become a non-contact sport. I'm sure outlawing the tackle from behind in the days of Ron 'Chopper' Harris, would have been unthinkable, yet it has been done nowadays without even a murmur of protest. A parallel can be drawn from two largely American sports, whose fortunes in recent years have differed widely. While Basketball grew to immense proportions being a nice friendly non-contact sport appealing to sponsors and commercial interests, ice hockey's popularity plummeted due to the level of violence on the ice from the players. The aggressive game gets little TV coverage and no large interest from big business. Which way will the football authorities steer the game?

The domestic game in this country is heading in a distressing direction. As the Premiership basks in glory from unrelenting media hype, the Football League continues to atrophy. The football frontier used to be between the old 2nd and 3rd divisions, now in all reality it rests between the Premiership and the 1st division. The 1st division consists of a few Premier wannabes desperately trying to make it to the promised land where the pitches are paved with gold, while the rest are just trying to avoid the drop into football obscurity of the lower divisions. That prospect is nowhere near as frightening as the loss of Premiership status, for an 'established' club. Remember the panic of Spurs and Everton fans last season, when relegation threatened. Eventually when the most 'chic' clubs are in the top flight, promotion will become a thing of the past, access to the big boys will be by invitation only, and of course the submission of an approved business plan, (that is, of course, if a European Super League isn't in operation by then). Further down the pecking order the picture isn't any brighter, Doncaster and Brighton are unfortunately not going to be isolated incidents. The logical conclusion for the lower divisions is looking more like semipro status and regionalisation.

Football has undergone many upheavals in recent years and has many more to come. What these changes represent is the slow and steady erosion of the history and traditions of football. The one thing that is certain through all these changes is that football is unequivocally part of working class culture. Its modern guise may be pandering to the middle classes and big business may run the show now, but it is fuelled by the passion of working class people. At every level from the street corner to the international stadia it is watched and played by our class. Make the game unpalatable to us and the whole edifice of modern football will come crashing down like a house of cards.

WANKER OF THE SEASON

The winner of the first, 'Wanker of the Season' award was: Savo Milosevic, no surprise really. Savo has to go down as the biggest wanker ever to pull on the claret and blue, who not content with spitting on the fans and bad mouthing the club, had the audacity to refuse to play and go on strike over the way he was treated! A total wanker.

First of this issue's nominations is Jack Straw the Home Secretary. Who refused to allow the Hillsborough investigation to proceed any further despite the overwhelming weight of evidence supporting the victims families claims. New Labour, same old cover-ups, still selling out the working class.

Next up we have our friends from the North: those wankers Hall and Sheppard, who have recently made an unwelcome return. So all Newcastle women are dogs and the men are thick bastards, who you delight in ripping off. Thanks for making it public knowledge what us fans already knew about the wankers who are running our game.

Final nomination of this issue goes to David bloody Unsworth, a complete mercenary wanker without the slightest idea of geography. Why did you sully our club with your presence, when you knew your beloved Everton wanted you all along?

Start nominating individuals for next issue, it can be anyone in football related matters which you think is justified. All you have to do to nominate someone is write in with a short piece explaining why they are such a wanker. The one which we think is the most deserving at the end of the season will receive the award, and the person who nominated them will get some sort of prize. Send any entries to the usual address, with the envelopes marked WOTS.

COMPETITION

Well Prepared has a nice hefty book to give away this issue: Villa Park 100 Years, by Simon Inglis. All you have to do is answer the questions below and send your answers on a postcard to: Well Prepared, P.O. Box 3311, Birmingham, B13 0RZ. The first correct entry drawn out of the bag wins, closing date 30th November 1998.

1. What year was the segregation of fans bought in at Villa Park?
2. In 1985 Villa Park hosted the first ever British Superbowl. Name the two teams that took part?

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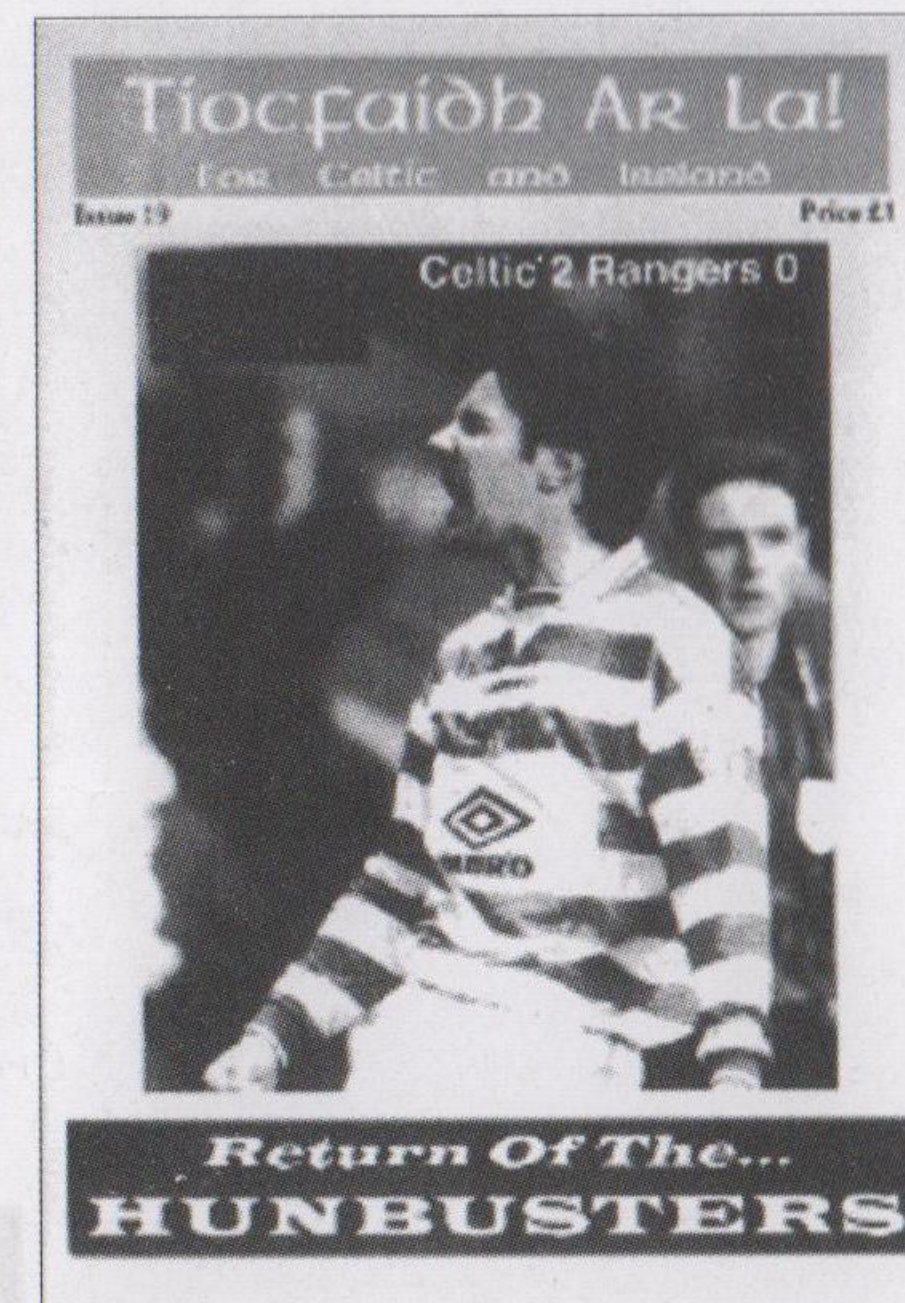
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