



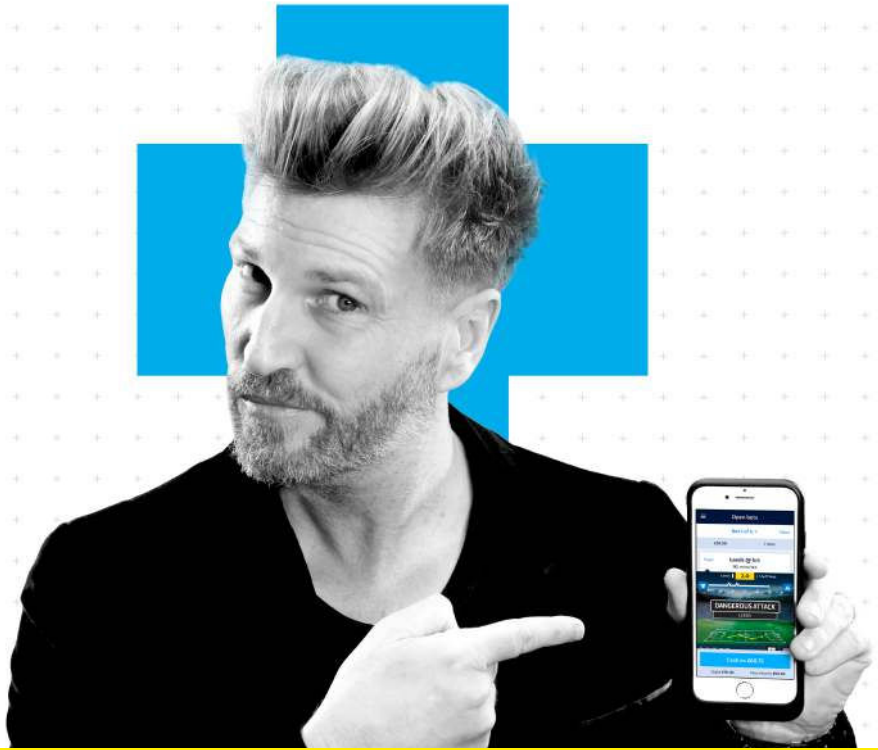
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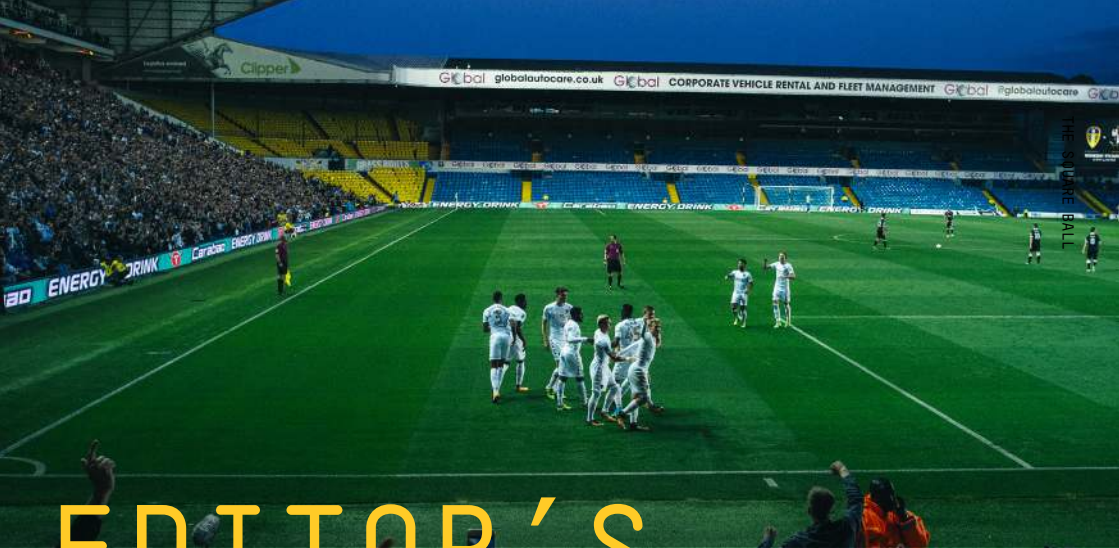
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EDITOR'S NOTE

BY MICHAEL NORMANTON

—
The Football Supporters
Federation Fanzine of the Year
Winners: 2011 & 2014
Finalists: 2012, 2013, 2015 & 2016

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With any lie there are two levels of deception taking place. There's the lie we're being told and the lie we tell ourselves that decides how much of the lie we're being told we choose to believe. After Ridsdale, Bates and GFH a lot of people had decided from the off that Cellino wasn't a good option, but after so much heartache in the past, a Mediterranean charmer proved hard to resist for some. Ultimately, inevitably, we found ourselves at the farmacia with a nasty itch while we checked the Ryanair website for an early flight home. Your dad will pick you up from the airport, of course he will, don't worry about that.

Andrea Radrizzani, so far, seems like the version of Massimo Cellino your parents might actually like. Sure, he's Italian, but he's got (or at least had) a good job, he doesn't swear, he doesn't bring a menagerie of idiot offspring with him and I'm absolutely sure he wouldn't talk about buying whores for the night. He'd bring a nice bottle of wine at Christmas and even put a shirt on when your Nan is coming over. He's alright is Andrea. Thomas Christiansen seems very similar. He looks immaculate in a suit. He smiles at the right times, he works hard, he probably stops for a chat with the Big Issue man (but not in a patronising way, of course).

This is the problem. After a summer of Leeds United acting professionally, buying back the ground, buying some footballers, not having winding up orders served, it feels oddly unsettling. History tells us that vigilance with a hint of skepticism would be the best option, but when you've won your opening game and Elland Road is full, what else is there but mindless optimism? One of these days it will be justified. Or at least that's what we keep choosing to believe. 🍷



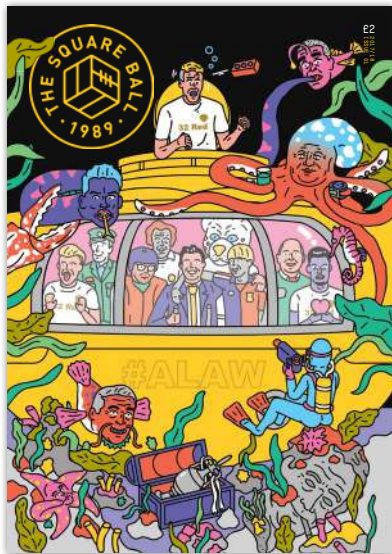
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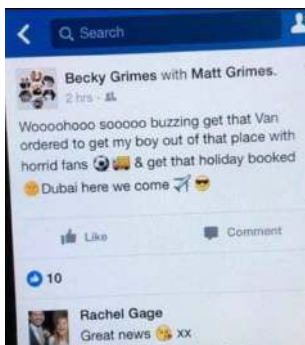
29 APRIL
LEEDS 3 NAAAAARWICH 3

At the Player of the Year Awards later in the evening, Chris Wood picks up both Player and Player's Player of the Year prizes Following a season where he bagged 30 league goals. Souleymane Doukara's resurrection from the near fatal injury that prevented him once playing at Charlton is completed with a Goal of the Season Award for his thunderbastard against a woeful picket line of Nottingham Forest defenders.

Speaking of the Norwich result and failure to reach the play-offs at the Awards, Garry Monk says, "There is a lot of hurt and disappointment in the group today." He adds that "we need to build by adding more strength and quality," and that to be in a position to be fighting for a place in the Premier League "has come a little too soon for the majority of the squad." Ouch.

30 APRIL
Matt Grimes' mum takes to Facebook to say that she is "buzzing" to get her boy out

of Leeds and away from those "horrible fans" and get a holiday booked. Suffice to say those horrible fans then publicly replied in a suitably horrible way to her private thoughts, that she posted on a public forum. Stupid cow.



4 MAY
Ahead of the final game of the season against already-relegated Wigan, Garry Monk says, "we want to finish the season on a high note" and that it is "important" that he, his staff and the players "give something back" to the fans for the "fantastic support" they have given. Let's go out in style then, boys.

7 MAY
WIGAN 1 LEEDS 1

8 MAY
Garry Monk reveals that he had "a brief chat" with Andrea Radrizzani following the Wigan game and admits the pair are "due to sit down in the coming weeks" to discuss "a variety of different matters." Monk also takes a potshot at Charlie Taylor for his refusal to play in the final game of the season, claiming the defender has been "terribly

advised." He adds that it is "unacceptable to refuse to play for Leeds United."

16 MAY
The club announce that with over 90% of season ticket holders renewing for the coming season, this marks the highest level of renewals in over ten years. The most successful season on the pitch in six years also saw the highest average attendance at Elland Road since our relegation from the Premier League. Bigger crowds and better atmospheres are fantastic... but we only moan that the parking is fucking horrendous. Typical Leeds, that.

17 MAY
Leeds announce the list of players who will and won't make the cut for next season, after first confirming the retained list with Shaun Harvey's EFL. Pablo Hernandez has an automatic extension kick-in having completed the required number of games, and Charlie Taylor is offered a two year deal, the club fulfilling its legal obligation in order to claim compensation should he reject it.

Jordan Botaka (remember him?) and Ross Turnbull will not be offered new deals while Kyle Bartley, Hadi Sacko, Alfonso Pedra and Mo Barrow will return to their parent clubs once their loan deals expire.

Matt Grimes' whining mum is told to pack her things, jump in a van and fuck off back to Wales... picking up her son on the way.

19 MAY
The club announce that Chief

Executive Ben Mansford is set to leave Leeds at the end of the month. After joining from Barnsley last summer, Mansford was a “driving force” in the club’s “attempts to re-engage with the community.” Co-owner Massimo Cellino adds — as though signing a leaving card for someone in the office he’s never met — “It has been a positive and enjoyable experience.”



23 MAY

Following months of debate about whether co-owner **Andrea Radrizzani** is here for the long-haul or, as some fans insist, just a mere investor in **Massimo Cellino's Leeds United masterplan**, **Radrizzani has only gone and bought the fucking club.** “I am delighted to have the opportunity to become a custodian of this great football club,” he declares in an excellent opening statement.

In direct contrast to his predecessor the first few hours of his ownership seem very calm with the manager still in a job and Stanningley Cars unaware of any urgent need for a pick-up. “I am aware of my responsibilities as owner,” A-Radz continues, “but this is a long term commitment with a lot of hard work ahead, and we will do all we

can to build a successful team at Elland Road.” Yeah, but has he bought the ground yet?

Massimo Cellino has cleared his desk and will finally find his way to the bank, to pay in Radrizzani's cheque. The Cellino family will also be looking to say a final farewell to Leeds with a party at Terry George's celebrity-filled house. Eduardo will pay off his tab at Burger King, Ercole is looking to buy up old copies of *The Flag*, and Eleonora is planning one last pitchside selfie to say goodbye.



24 MAY

Radrizzani immediately stamps his authority on the club and insists that Leeds can invest in our young players by offering a four year deal to Ronaldo Vieira. Hopefully gone are the days when our vision was blinkered and our owners' pockets filled with short-term gain as our young talent is forced away.

18 year old Vieira commits his future to Leeds, after making made 38 appearances, picking up the Young Player of the Year Award and getting an England call up for the upcoming Toulon Tournament — not a bad first season to be fair.

Vieira is “over the moon” with the deal, and adds, “The season I've had and to sign a new deal is unreal.” And he's still only a teenager. Apparently.

25 MAY

Oh for fucks sake. Hold on tight as the Leeds United rollercoaster is heading for another dip, Garry Monk handing in his resignation. Just a day before a twelve month extension is due to kick-in, the former Swansea boss decides his future lies elsewhere,

New owner Andrea Radrizzani is “saddened” by Monk's departure and an official statement hits back by saying, “No individual is bigger than our club.” Monk insists, “My intention was always to remain at Leeds,” but despite discussions with the new owner, “ultimately, no agreement could be reached to all move forward together.” Anyone else smell bullshit?

26 MAY

Leeds lose a head coach but gain a new Managing Director, as Angus Kinnear joins the club from West Ham. With three years under his belt at the Hammers — and ten years at Arsenal prior to that — Kinnear replaces Ben Mansford.

While working as head of commercial interests at both clubs, he also oversaw the Gunners' move from Highbury to the Emirates Stadium and the Hammers' move from Upton Park to the Olympic Stadium. Anyone fancy chipping-in to buy up land in Stourton?

30 MAY

While the need for a new manager may be an unwelcome distraction, new owner Radrizzani is wasting no time in filling the back room with new blood. Victor Orta is appointed as Director of Football, moving from a similar role at Middlesbrough, and is “excited” to work at “a great football club like Leeds United.”

Orta comes with a bit of a reputation following rumours that

he divided the dressing room at Boro, having his own favourites and a rumoured rift with former manager Aitor Karanka. That's just what we need, more interference from upstairs — and possibly a hint of why Garry Monk and Andrea Radrizzani couldn't agree on how to "move forward."

1 JUNE

Delia Smith fails to cook up a good deal for Jonny Howson, who rejects a new contract at Norwich and sets hearts fluttering that the Morley lad could be coming home. Reports suggest Howson is looking to return north with his young family and Norwich will be willing to listen to offers. Although, bizarrely, the same press reports state that little Jonny is now 29 years old. How/when the fuck did that happen?



2 JUNE

Hadi Sacko unexpectedly becomes Leeds' first signing, as he pens a three year deal despite the club having no manager or effective backroom staff. The 23 year old signs from Sporting Lisbon and, although the fee is undisclosed, it is rumoured to be around £1.5m.

Sacko is naturally "excited" like the giddy little puppy he is and

looking forward the coming season as "playing at Elland Road is very special."



Meanwhile, Italian Serie A side Bologna are the latest silly bollocks showing an interest in Giuseppe Bellusci after Empoli's relegation to Serie B ended their plan to take him on loan for a further season. According to his agent there are six sides looking at Bellusci, and all impressed with what they see. Typical Leeds, just like we found the only Arabs with no money, we found the shit Giuseppe Bellusci twin.

6 JUNE

New owner Andrea Radrizzani says he "understands the frustration of the fans" as the club look to replace Garry Monk. He adds that he will be conducting interviews this week but it is "important that we make the right decision for the club." The betting is wide open, with the usual suspects all being listed and a straight swap with Boro for Garry Monk and Aitor Karanka being the favourite guess.

Unfortunately, as Dave Hockaday has just taken up a brand new role as Chief Traffic Controlling Operative (Schools Division) on the Tewksbury Road in Swindon, he has ruled himself out.

7 JUNE

Hot on the heels of the recent Michael Jackson and George Michael Tribute act nights in the Pavilion, the club announce yet another drug-related pop star dead celebrity night with Pure Whitney — a "spectacular" tribute to Whitney Houston. Sadly there are no song title puns from the official site on this occasion but a Pete Doherty Tribute band is sat in the wings with a gig contract itching to be signed.

8 JUNE

In news that is as unexpected as a women-hating, nuclear-oblivion inducing, right-wing fodder tweet from Donald Trump, Garry Monk joins Middlesbrough as manager. In true Mrs Merton style, it begs the question of just what Garry sees in multi-millionaire owner Steve Gibson, who has spent over £200m on his beloved Boro?

Monk, who is targeting a return to the Premier League at the first attempt, says Boro "ticked all the boxes," which presumably includes access to a blank cheque book, copyright on the words 'the group' and a free supply of £1 wet-look hair gel. Oh, and a gas mask. If he thinks Middlesbrough are a bigger club than Leeds, then Monk must have his head in the clouds.



9 JUNE

U23s coach Jason Blunt has “elected to leave the club” at the end of the month having accepted a job at a “major new project in Cornwall.” [insert David Haigh gag here].

12 JUNE

Former Leeds CEO Ben Mansford has agreed to join Israeli side Maccabi Tel Aviv in a similar role, and is expected to start work by the end of this month. After leaving Leeds only two weeks ago, the former Barnsley Chief Executive moved quickly to secure another position at Israel’s most successful club side.

15 JUNE

With no leaks or rumours emerging from the club, former Barcelona striker Thomas Christiansen is announced as the new manager. He’s not so far off the footballing radar as Christiansen has some pedigree — but unless Radrizaani lumped a wad on the 44 year old Dane, it seems the only winners in the betting for the new Leeds manager were the bookies.

New Leeds MD Angus Kinnear is “delighted” with the appointment and says that the search for a new manager was both “thorough and extensive.” Christiansen joins from Cypriot side APOEL and won their first division in 2015/16 and last season reached the last 16 of the Europa League.

16 JUNE

Putting aside former postman Shaun Harvey’s inability to land a sponsor for the League Cup last season, he heads out to Bangkok for the big launch of the new cup sponsor and the first round draw. However low-rent Red Bull wannabes Carabao may well decide against plunging hard-earned profits into the League’s coffers

as Shaun manages to fuck up the launch in spectacular style.

The live feed from Asia fails, leaving an on screen graphic with the cup draw showing Charlton to be playing at home to Cheltenham Town and also away to Exeter City. This was compounded with unseeded teams AFC Wimbledon and Swindon Town playing each other, when they should have respectively played seeded Brentford and Norwich. The upshot was that Leeds finally ended up with a home tie against Michael Brown’s Port Vale.

The EFL featuring Shaun Harvey later apologised for the almighty PR disaster, admitting to “external third party technical issues” and “human error” — presumably Bangkok’s traditional way of dishing out the balls.

23 JUNE

Thomas Christiansen makes his first signing as Polish midfielder Mateusz Klich signs on a three year deal. Moving from Dutch Eredivisie side FC Twente, 27 year old Klich says, “I am very happy to sign for such a huge club and be playing in the famous white shirt.”

He also adds that he is aware that Leeds has a large Polish community and hopes him being here “will bring more Polish fans to watch Leeds.”



With concerns over Harrogate Town’s 3G pitch, Leeds officials

decide to move the previously announced friendly on July 5th to a behind-closed-doors game at Thorp Arch. The club apologise “for any inconvenience this may cause” but the medical team advised that Liam Cooper wouldn’t want to make an absolute tit of himself again on a low-grade plastic pitch.

24 JUNE

Leeds United finally have a women’s football side to call their own, as Leeds Ladies become part of the club again. In news that will leave Massimo Cellino crying into his Ken Bates’ Guide to Women in Football book, MD Angus Kinnear says “we are pleased to welcome Leeds United Ladies back into our family.”

The side will play at Garforth’s Wheatley Park Stadium and Kinnear confirms that two fixtures per season will be played at Elland Road.

25 JUNE

Pre-season details are finally confirmed and the squad will be Austria-bound in July following local friendlies at Guiseley and North Ferriby. Fans will have a European adventure as Leeds have lined-up games against Borussia Monchengladbach plus a further game against unknown quantity TBC.

The games are book-ended with a behind-closed-doors game with Harrogate Town and a home friendly with Oxford United — a game arranged as part of the deal that brought Kemar Roofe to Leeds. For those fans with a banning order who can’t travel abroad, the Leeds United Neil Warnock Appreciation Society have arranged their annual trip to camp on his farm in Cornwall, for a cider and sunburn extravaganza.

26 JUNE

The players report back for pre-season training and Thomas Christiansen says he is “happy with the squad” and that they have all “tried to prove they are worthy to stay at the club and fight for a place in the first eleven.” No, not you Peppe.

In other news, former keeper Paddy Kenny’s body has been located in a ditch at Thorp Arch, where he appears to have choked on a growler.



10

27 JUNE

Leeds sign Spanish midfielder Madger Gomes following his release from Liverpool. The 23 year old pens a three year deal and will link up with the depleted U23 squad, with a view to training with the first team.

28 JUNE

A matter of weeks after taking control of Leeds United, new owner Andrea Radrizzani manages to do what Massimo Cellino promised and failed to do in three years, by buying back Elland Road. The deal, which he describes as “a top priority,” is through his own company but will not charge rent to the club — funds that can then be channelled “towards the Academy, the playing

squad and improvements to the stadium.”

Radrizzani is also in discussions with Leeds City Council to develop land around Elland Road which he has labelled ‘Elland Road 2020’ — including plans for a new city centre training facility. Sadly, there is no word as yet on plans for a hotel and nightclub within the ‘Elland Road 2020’ Project.

29 JUNE

The club announce “a number of exciting changes to LUTV” including free access to non-matchday content and a live streaming service for overseas fans to watch all home and away games. The slight fly in the ointment is that any games chosen by Sky for live broadcast won’t be covered within the live streaming deal, which will limit available games.

The plus side is that even with LUTV being a bit, well, shit, there will be a live stream available for most games. Despite the stream only being available to fans outside the UK and Ireland, the internet being the internet, means the stream will no doubt find its way back home. Erm, nothing.

Simon Grayson is named as the new manager of Sunderland and takes his loyal assistant Glynn Snodin with him from Preston, vowing to return them to the Premier League. Having just reported losses of £110m, promotion with Sunderland could be a tad optimistic, as his Mackem Warchest may be as empty as the one Ken Bates handed to him during his time at Leeds.

30 JUNE

In a signing that is likely to see Rob Green or Marco Silvestri move on, Leeds confirm that Werder Bremen goalkeeper

Felix Wiedwald has joined the club. The 26 year old German signs a three year deal from the Bundesliga side for an undisclosed fee.

Leeds’ trip to Hull City on 27th January has been brought forward to a 12.30pm kickoff on the advice of the lovely folk at Humberside Police. Presumably as there is a pre-planned celebration at 3pm to end Hull’s year as European City of Culture. Yep, that’s probably it.

**2 JULY**

Following his recent confirmation that he won’t be joining Garry Monk at Middlesbrough, Pep Clotet is announced as the new manager at League One side Oxford United. The 40 year old was the “unanimous choice” according to Chairman Darryl Eales and, despite rumours of a rift with Monk, was very popular among the players at Elland Road.

3 JULY

And so it starts... our trip to Sunderland is switched to a 5.30pm kick off as your friendly purveyors of fixture changes, Sky Sports, select the game for TV. Sky are now also perplexed after Brighton’s promotion to the Premier League, as they are still

keen to make Leeds fans travel the length of the country on a Friday night to play the Seagulls.

Hot on the heels of Humberside Police's red pen through the fixture list, South Yorkshire Police feel compelled to move our trip to Barnsley to a 12.15pm kick off. Following disturbances at the corresponding fixture at Oakwell last season South Yorkshire Police – renowned for being a soft touch where policing is concerned – now feel a heavy-handed approach will be a better tactic.



For no other reason than it will now be an absolute ball-ache for Leeds fans to make the trip, Fulham switch our scheduled Easter Monday game to Tuesday 3rd April. Rumours that Tom Cairney had this written into his new improved Fulham contract in the summer prove unfounded. Probably.

4 JULY

If staying up all night with Luke Murphy is your thing, then you'll have to do so in Burton, as Nigel Clough's Brewers have agreed a deal to take him on loan for the coming season. Clearly not part of Thomas Christiansen's plans, Murphy has two years left on his renegotiated deal signed with Massimo Cellino in 2015, so will have to work hard to convince hard-to-impress Nigel Clough to see-out his Leeds contract..

Another season-long loan sees

defender Lewie Coyle head-out to Fleetwood Town, where he will team up with ex-Leeds boss Uwe Rosler. Coyle, who has just signed a new improved three year deal with Leeds, will hopefully gain first team experience at a side where former Fishermen loanee Charlie Taylor helped them clinch promotion to League One. Whatever happened to him?

5 JULY

FFS... another fixture change as Sky choose the Forest away game for broadcast. A new kick off time of 5.30pm will mean longer drinking time against a rival side with some history, which the Nottinghamshire Constabulary seem to have no problem with. That, or they have absolutely no say when Sky switch a game for TV.

6 JULY

Burnley complete the signing of Charlie Taylor, although a fee will now be set at a tribunal where Leeds' valuation of more than £5m is expected to be met. After fourteen years at Leeds, Taylor feels it was “the right time” to move on, pretty much like it was the right time to sit on his arse and not travel to Wigan for the final game last season.



As Taylor departs, Thomas Christiansen makes another signing as Newcastle's Vurnon Anita signs a three year deal.

The 28 year old former Ajax midfielder is “thrilled” to be joining Leeds and admits he was “impressed” with Leeds last season and, in his first ever visit to Elland Road, he thought the supporters were “amazing.”

In other news, midfielder Toumani 'Dave' Diagouraga decides to stay and fight for his place at Leeds. The former Brentford man signed by Steve Evans has been linked with a series of loan moves but, after playing as a centre half in the fixture against Harrogate Town, possibly sees himself as the new Kyle Bartley.

7 JULY

The clash with Bolton on Saturday 31st March has been brought forward a day to Good Friday, although no reason has been given by the club. The kick off time remains at 3pm and now gives the squad a full three days rest before the away trip to Fulham – now also rearranged – on Tuesday 3rd April.

Following complaints that some supporters have failed to receive their 25% 2016/17 season ticket refund, the club issue a statement to resolve outstanding queries. They give anyone who qualified and supplied their bank details a seven day window to contact the ticket office to investigate their claim. Highly illegally, they also advise that the club will not enter into discussions or investigate any claims received after the seven day period. The Financial Conduct Authority could well have some thoughts on that.

8 JULY

GUISELEY 1 LEEDS 5

10 JULY

Samuel Saiz becomes the fourth new signing under Thomas Christiansen on a four year deal

from Spanish outfit SD Huesca. Director of Football Victor Orta praises Leeds fans for influencing Saiz's decision to move to Leeds, after he was "overwhelmed" by messages on social media.

The former Atletico Madrid playmaker "turned down a host of other clubs," according to Orta, after receiving "hundreds of encouraging messages" to move to Yorkshire. Just don't be shit, pal — or social media won't feel very encouraging for long,

11 JULY

Italian Serie A striker Caleb Ekuban signs from Chievo Verona on an untypical four year deal but very typical "undisclosed" fee. The 23 year old "pacy forward" spent last season on loan at Albanian side FK Partizani, featuring in the Champions League and Europa League. That said, Albania is not renowned for being a hotbed of football, which after witnessing Edgar Cani firsthand is something we can vouch for.



12 JULY

"Due to overwhelming demand," the club announce that season tickets are now available in "the famous cheese wedge." MD Angus Kinnear says this is a "great testament to the fantastic loyalty of our support" as season tickets

become available in the South East corner for the first time in over twenty years.

13 JULY

Another signing, another four year deal and yet another undisclosed fee as Macedonian international Ezgjan Alioski joins the club. A signing from Swiss side FC Lugano, Alioski scored 17 goals in 36 appearances becoming their highest scorer, and the third highest scorer in the league.



14 JULY

The friendly with FC Ingolstadt 07 set for this Sunday has been cancelled at short notice by local authorities in Austria. The club are "very disappointed" with the decision and apologise to fans for the inconvenience.

18 JULY

In words we thought we'd never actually read, an official statement reads, "we can confirm that Giuseppe Bellusci's contract with Leeds United has been terminated by mutual consent." It means Leeds have paid him off for the final year of his Cellino-inspired contract, but as we pissed away a £1.6m fee and wages that combined totalled more than Sam Byram, Lewis Cook and Charlie Taylor were paid, it's money well spent.

19 JULY

Everton youngster Matthew Pennington joins Leeds on a season-long loan. The highly rated 22 year old defender has League One experience with Tranmere, Coventry and Walsall, returning to Goodison Park to make a handful of Premier League starts — including scoring his debut goal in the most recent Merseyside derby.

The trip to Sheffield Wednesday has been moved to a 12.15 kick off on Sunday 1st October thanks to Sky — who switched the fixture before South Yorkshire Police had chance to throw their weight around. Within hours, South Yorkshire Police then bring forward the Sheffield United game at Bramall Lane on 10th February to a 12.15pm kick off. Normal service is resumed.

20 JULY

LEEDS 1 BORUSSIA M. 1

21 JULY

Marco Silvestri seals a deal with Serie A side Hellas Verona after Leeds accept "an undisclosed offer" for the keeper. He is paraded in front of his new fans holding a shirt with the number 17 squad number — proving that even with a public spat with Massimo Cellino, old Pringle-hands does have a sense of humour if nothing else.



24 JULY**LEEDS 2 SD EIBAR 4****25 JULY**

Leeds and Burnley agree a fee for Charlie Taylor which avoids the needs for a tribunal to agree compensation. Neither club is willing to disclose the fee, not that you'd understand razor blade swallowing Sean Dyche if he told you anyway. Nor would you argue with him, if he shat in your dinner and then walked off with Taylor over his shoulder.

**27 JULY**

All under 16s who are accompanied by an adult will give free admission to the the Oxford friendly at Elland Road. In news that would see Ken Bates spinning in his Monaco grave, the club offer free kids tickets to entice a future generation of Leeds fans to watch the team. Anyone who has already purchased a kids ticket can exchange it for a £6 voucher in the club shop.

28 JULY

The club also announce a brand new Leeds United App, that will allow you to "take the roar from Elland Road crowd everywhere you go." Providing instant access to all the latest news, including video content featuring highlights and interviews, the App can also

be used to live stream the Oxford friendly game at Elland Road, for just £1.99.

29 JULY**LEEDS 2 OXFORD 0**

Following the game, the club issue a statement to apologise to all fans who subscribed to the live streaming and "experienced technical difficulties." The 'difficulties' were viewing the game on any device, for which the club will embarrassingly offer full refunds.

The issue has been identified and will not reoccur for the start of the season, claims the statement, as the work experience lad has been told how to switch the machine off and then back on again.

**31 JULY**

The East Stand Upper will be open for the first home game of the season against Preston as the ticket office has seen "phenomenal demand" for the game. Tickets are limited for most parts of the ground and the fixture looks to be heading for a sell out.

1 AUGUST

Dutch defender / midfielder Ouasim Bouy signs a four year deal on a free transfer from Juventus. The 24 year old joined the Italians after leaving the Ajax Academy in 2012, although spent most of his time on loan at a host of European clubs. To make him

feel at home, Leeds immediately ship him out to Spanish side Cultural y Deportivo Leonesa.

4 AUGUST

Kalvin Phillips signs a new extended contract, keeping the player from "the famous Leeds United Academy" tied to the club until 2021. The midfielder says signing the new deal is "an honour" and with 40 appearances under his belt last season, the 21 year old is looking forward to "help get the club back where it belongs."

Tyler Denton also signs a new extended contract, keeping him tied to the club until 2020. It makes a refreshing change to see our young players being assured that the club values their talent, rather than offering them peanuts and calling them greedy bastards.

**6 AUGUST**

The Boro fans are a little less chippy following an opening day defeat at Wolves. No doubt 'the group' are still too busy bonding – and probably still counting their cut from their big-money deals – to worry about losing on the first day. The fans still believe in Monk, however, for now anyway. So much so, they spark a series of shithouse photoshops – and they're so pleased with their work, they feel



3-2 BOLTON WANDERERS

6TH AUGUST, MACRON STADIUM

Ah, there's nothing like that seeing our lads in all black running out for the traditional late Sunday afternoon kick-off at the Macron Bowl to get the new season started. Having to wait until everybody else had a go was frustrating on Saturday, but Phillips made the wait worthwhile: two goals, and a contract-worthy performance; Wood eased those will he/won't he score worries with the other goal. Not everything went our way: Berardi dislocated his shoulder in mysterious circumstances, Pennington did his ankle, and Bolton scored two. But Leeds United played well, scored three in the first half, and won the game. Give us the title now.

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the need to add a watermark to protect their copyright. Arise Lord Bantshire of Smogsville.



7 AUGUST

Young Manchester United defender Cameron Borthwick-Jackson signs for Leeds on a season-long loan. There are

mixed responses as older Leeds fans remember one Gordon Strachan while younger fans have Scott Wootton fresh in their minds.

This is countered by the amount of piss being boiled from Scum fans who are now raging that he has moved across the Pennines to Leeds — for which we welcome Cameron into our fold.



8 AUGUST

In news that will melt the heart of the hardest of Leeds fans, Gaetano Berardi signs a new three year deal with the club. The 28 year old signs while grimacing through the pain barrier, after dislocating his shoulder in the win at Bolton on Sunday. Well, maybe not grimacing — more like laughing — after asking Pontus Jansson to punch him in the shoulder, just for fun.



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HEROES & VILLAINS



PEP CLOTET

ANDREW
HUGHES
HERO
OF
THE
MONTH

Over the summer plenty of candidates have put themselves forward for the first hero of the new season award. Andrea Radrizzani, for buying back Elland Road and making the advertising hoardings look proper snazzy. Angus Kinnear, for his starring role in Caleb Ekuban's signing-on video. Thomas Christiansen, for being such a handsome devil, and silencing all the 'Hockaday Two?' haters with a flick of his hair and a 'Played for Johan Cruyff, mate.'

But we're giving it to the man to whom circumstances meant we never got to properly say goodbye. While Team Monk slithered off to Middlesbrough, Pep Clotet took his own noble path. While rumours that he'd be taking charge of our Academy were sadly wide of the mark, there can't be a single Leeds fans who doesn't wish this genial, bearish, kind-looking Mötörhead fan all the best at Oxford United.

We nearly rescinded this when he turned up to our preseason friendly wearing matching beige jumper and chinos over a blue shirt and gold tie, but it's always tough deciding what to wear to a game on Saturday afternoon when you're going to a metal club on Saturday night. Thanks for everything Pep, we're only sorry it didn't last longer.

KEN
BATES
VILLAIN
OF
THE
MONTH



GARRY MONK

Look, we'll be over it soon, okay? In fact we're over it now. But we couldn't let the events of the summer pass without going back to our final Hero of last season, wrenching the award back off him, and ramming it down his ginger bastard throat. We even gave it to him in spite of three defeats, a draw and only one win in the preceding games — that's how nice we were being. Monk may have had good reasons for leaving — not fancying the Victor Orta revolution, getting millions to spend on strikers at Boro — but the fact remains, we loved Monk for all his faults, cut him plenty of slack despite the way the season ended, and hoped he would stick around to build something big. And he fucked it off to go live next to a chemical works. Fuck Garry Monk.

PROPAGANDA



MONKBOT 3000

“There are a lot of elements to be put right and that’s not an easy task. It’s a new group with work to be done, there’s a new manager with new ideas, off back of the season that we’ve just had. It’s important to get a good competitive squad that can do well in this league because it’s a such a long season. We’re not thinking of anything else other than being ready for that first game against Wolves. A new manager and ideas, all of those ingredients put together with a squad that needs to gel so it shows you how difficult it is – and also playing in this league. We are very clear – there’s no carrying away here. Everyone can say that we are going to be one of the favourites to go up, and all that, and that’s fine. Everyone can say that but I think from within there’s understanding of the work that needs to be done and what’s ahead of us. So we are very focused on that, all the players are focused on that and the club is as well.”

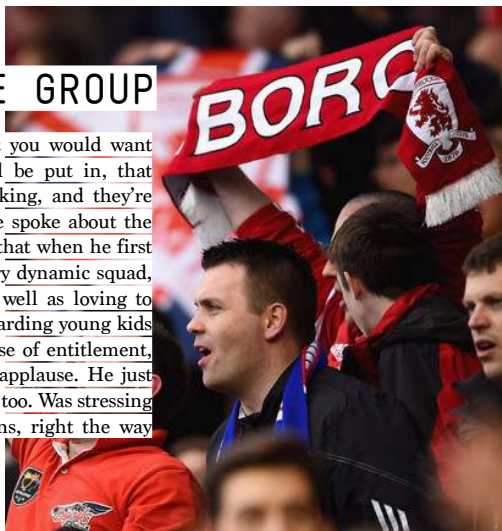
– Blah, blah, blah, blah. How did we as a group put up with the focus on the project for so long? Was it because we were always so focused on the next game?

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TOGETHERNESS IN THE GROUP

“I really enjoyed it. Garry Monk said exactly what you would want to hear from a gaffer, how much hard work will be put in, that himself and his staff are all honest and hard working, and they’re demanding that and getting it from the players. He spoke about the team being ‘dynamic’ on several occasions, and said that when he first met Gibbo he presented a vision for a young, hungry dynamic squad, to buy young players who will give everything, as well as loving to work with young players. He gave a great speech regarding young kids these days thinking they’ve made it and have a sense of entitlement, which was great and was rightly given a round of applause. He just spoke well throughout, and had a laugh about things too. Was stressing throughout the need for togetherness, from the fans, right the way throughout the club.”

– aaaaaand the Boro fans are falling for it.





MAKE-A-WISH

“Personally, walking out at Leeds United as a manager will be a step I have wanted to do for quite a long time.”

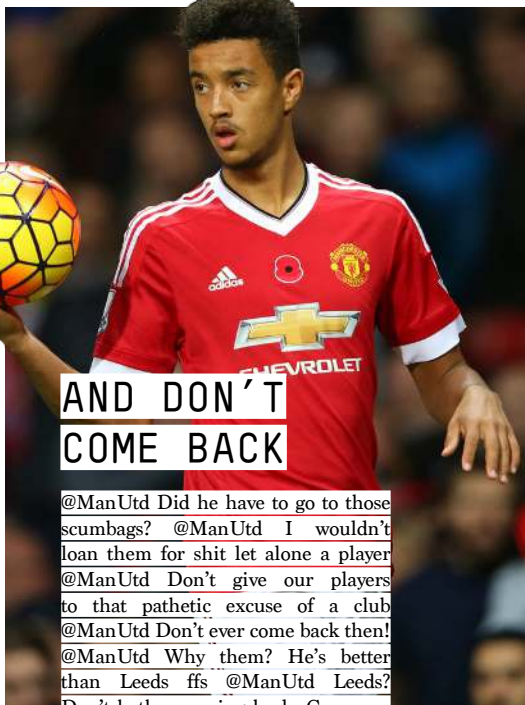
– **Hope you enjoyed it, because it's never happening in the league, Brownh.**



CRAZY

“Call me crazy, because to buy Brescia I did a madness. But it was a matter of heart. This is a club that has always been a friend, and I am thrilled to take on new challenges. I arrive to kick seriously. And football, if it allows, I can do it...”

– **Massimo Cellino, suggesting that 'due diligence, idiot' isn't something he learned from Leeds.**



AND DON'T COME BACK

@ManUtd Did he have to go to those scumbags? @ManUtd I wouldn't loan them for shit let alone a player @ManUtd Don't give our players to that pathetic excuse of a club @ManUtd Don't ever come back then! @ManUtd Why them? He's better than Leeds ffs @ManUtd Leeds? Don't bother coming back, Cameron. @ManUtd Of all teams, Leeds? Literally any other Championship club, but fucking Leeds?

– **Scum fans coping well with Cameron Borthwick-Jackson's loan move.**



TO THE BANK TOMORROW

Buying soon the new stadium is fundamental. Without a proper stadium, football can not be a business.”

– **Something else Cellino didn't learn at Leeds. Oh yeah, and Nicola Salerno is going to be Sporting Director. Have fun, Terry!**

LIVING I INTEREST T

20



N ING IMES

WORDS: DYLAN THWAITES

ARTWORK: JOE GAMBLE



am. My head's a bit groggy. The phone rings. I've been expecting it. "Dylan, it's Uwe, Uwe Rosler".

He's in traffic on the M62, headed for the press conference that will announce him as the new manager of Leeds United. He wants to know how to play the fans. I explain that the real issue is about how he plays the owner. A week earlier, Adam Pearson had been revealed as Executive Director in a press conference dominated by Massimo Cellino's eccentricities. It had been painful to watch, and looked like agony for Pearson.

I stressed the importance of excluding Cellino from today's event. The club needed stability, or at least the illusion of stability. I then offered some heartfelt advice that he and his agent strongly rejected. It was probably wise on their part.

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"Cellino is a bully," I announced. "He needs to dominate his

THROUGHOUT 2015, DYLAN THWAITES, THEN CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF LEEDS FANS UNITED, WAS TALKING TO THE CLUB'S THEN OWNER, MASSIMO CELLINO, TRYING TO CONVINCe HIM TO LET THE FANS BUY INTO THE CLUB. THEN, IN OCTOBER, CELLINO AGREED — AND OFFERED LFU THE CHANCE TO BUY THE WHOLE THING. HERE, BY DYLAN THWAITES, IS HOW IT HAPPENED.

employees, but the football manager needs to be a leader. He can't do that when his players see him cowering. There is a clique of Italian players that control the manager because they have the ear of the owner. You've got to establish your independence early if you are to command this clique." I continued pontificating. "Everybody doffs their cap to him, calling him Mr Cellino, The Chairman — even Mr President. If you call him Massimo it shows that you see him as your equal. This is 2015, not 1815!"

The straight, strong Teutonic voice calmly replied. "I will call him Mr Cellino. It is a matter of respect."

A month or so later, during a Leeds Fans Utd (LFU) meeting held over Skype, we decided it was time to make a substantive approach to Cellino. Later I met with LFU Executive Sharon Reid, who had become my Gus Poyet, my Pep Clotet, sometimes my Mick Hennigan — you get the idea. We talked tactics for the big game. We quickly agreed that I would call him Massimo. He would either reject me as impertinent, or we would establish a relationship of equals.

The phone lay on the table. I flicked it to speaker and made the call.

“Massimo, it’s Dylan Thwaites from Leeds Fans Utd, can we have a quick chat? I’m a self-made man and I think we can help you.”

I none too subtly emphasised “Made Man” — I’ve seen *Goodfellas* and I know the Mafiosi codes. The offer to help him was also carefully calibrated. I suspected, correctly, that he enjoys taking more than giving.

“Ahhhh yes, Dylan”, he replied, his heavy accent, slur and dissonant fast-slow tempo immediately apparent. “Umbers talk about you. Yes, you come to my office for coffee any time.”

My mind went back to the strange “secret” (Umbers’ word) meeting I’d had in February with Andrew Umbers, the then Chairman of Leeds United — Cellino was serving a ban. We had talked candidly and in great detail, but at that stage LFU hadn’t been launched. LFU had held an initial fans’ meeting to see if there was any groundswell in favour of fan ownership; with a couple of hundred in the room and three times that watching online, it looked positive. But at the time of the “secret” Umbers meeting we

didn’t have anything substantive.

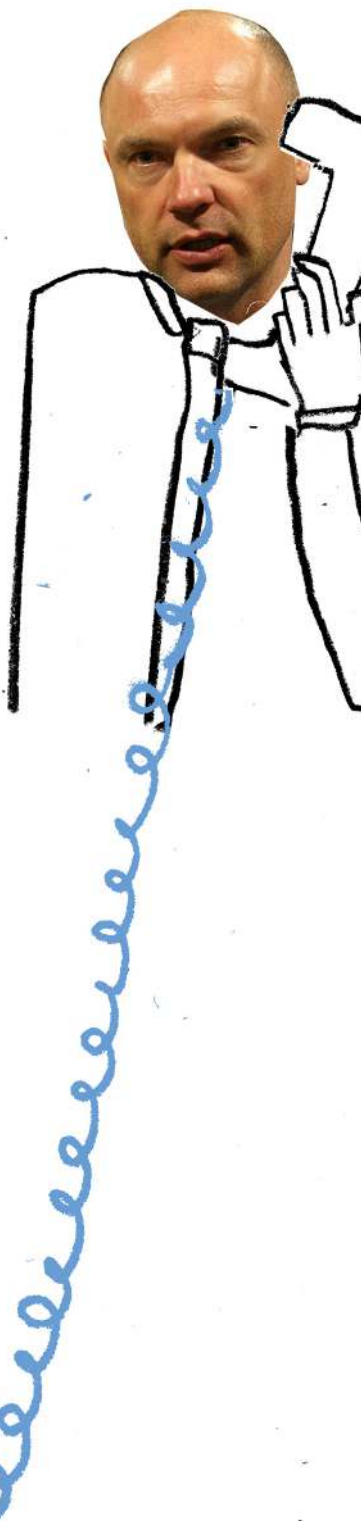
Umbers had left our meeting to go to his first press interview with Adam Pope, of the BBC, and had immediately broken his own confidentiality clause, blurting, “I’ve just come from a meeting with Dylan Thwaites, who represents thousands of fans.” This perfect endorsement of our privileged access helped launch LFU, but better still, it now got me in the door with Cellino. He started to see me as some kind of Capo of the Ultras. I didn’t disabuse him of this ill-fitting notion.

Arriving at Elland Road I am placed inside a peculiar glass walled office in the centre of the astro-turfed Executive floor. I feel like a David Blaine exhibit. After twenty minutes, a pretty Italian woman with secretary-chic glasses invites me into Massimo’s inner sanctum. I enter an enormous smoky office with a settee and, at one end, sitting behind a massive, paper strewn desk, a hunched study in indifference, the Chairman. He doesn’t look up from his papers.

“Bollocks to this, I’m not playing your power games, buddy.” That’s what I think. What I say is: “Massimo, really good to meet you at last. You look snowed under!”

The tone is perfect, but I kick myself for saying “snow.” I’m in the inner sanctum of Elland Road, where not long ago hidden cameras had monitored the board room table for alleged cocaine use, and I can’t afford for Cellino to think I’m taking the piss. I regain focus just as his eyes rise from the papers. It’s make or break. Will he coldly ask to be called “Mr President”?

“Dylan, my friend. Sit down, you wanna coffee?”



"Yeah, double espresso please"

"You crazy motherfucker!"

The meeting continues in a staccato pattern that I feel is designed to disorientate me. One moment an intimate and scurrilous anecdote is shared, the next

an uncontrolled rant, tables constantly turning like in some haunted mansion. Now, he's my best friend, seconds later he suspects me of treachery, though I've said virtually nothing. I quickly re-evaluate. There is a definite method in this apparent madness. I realise that he's probing for a weakness, from an angle. Do I preen at his compliments? Do I cover at his raised voice? At one stage he seems so outraged that there is no doubt that the whole of the executive floor can hear his tirade. I smile broader and broader as he explodes with apoplexy — I'm gambling that this is an act. I think I'm right. I lean back, arms behind my head, until he runs out of steam. Time to step in.

"Brilliant," I exclaim, reflecting his energy back at him. "You give a fuck about Leeds United. We can work together."

He smiles, but quickly hides it with a long draw on his cigarette. He feigns to look at his papers, then a short, almost shy, glance up. "You want more coffee?"

Decision made, we are in the door.

Over the next few weeks I am a regular in the smoky office. Cellino clearly likes the company and having someone to bounce ideas off. He is surrounded by

"yes" men, and he desperately wants honest opinion. Of course, if he hears too much honest opinion, he'll revert to the comfort of his yes men. My objective is to be truthful, helpful, influential and professional. Only on one occasion do I let my guard down, and for that I blame Giuseppe Bellusci.

Cellino loves Bellusci; in Cellino's mind, Bellusci is our most talented player. At LFU, we had heard that Cellino personally briefed Bellusci to withdraw the players from Redfearn's squad before the game at Charlton in 2015; indeed our intelligence network had tipped off a paparazzi to expect a visitor to Cellino's flat that night. The pap had been called away at 5pm, otherwise his photos could have given the 'sicknote six' story some considerable legs. As it stood we had no evidence, just suspicions: nevertheless, I didn't like or rate Bellusci.

I'd heard a great story, although again I couldn't evidence it — I was told that Bellusci had targeted one of the young lads in training. But the young lad cracked him back repeatedly, and Bellusci stormed off in a sulk, his tail between his legs.

Massimo, off on one of his rants, declared, "The hardest player at Leeds United is Giuseppe Bellusci." I unintentionally spluttered, and Massimo's eyes tightened. "You laugh? If you in a bar, you want Bellusci by your side."

I desperately tried to control my

mouth, but it was already speaking. "I'd choose Calvin Phillips. I heard he battered Bellusci in training."

Cellino blinked, recalibrated. "That is not true. That did not happen."

True or not, before the alleged Bellusci incident Phillips had started three of Rosler's first four games. Then he was dropped, and didn't return to the starting line up for over a year.

The need for constant vigilance when dealing with the Chairman was amply demonstrated on one occasion, when my life as a double agent was nearly exposed.

As mentioned previously, I'd had some contact with Uwe Rosler from the start of his tenure at Leeds. I didn't mention it to Cellino, who I'm sure would have seen it as divided loyalty. Similarly, I didn't mention to Uwe that I was now in regular contact with Massimo. We considered confidentiality to be an important factor in getting a deal done. But at times, it was like running two lovers in different parts of town.

It's late September, and I've been with Massimo all morning — well, from mid-morning, when he habitually arrives at Elland Road. As usual the conversation ranges widely, but he keeps returning to Uwe. We'd been thrashed by Middlesbrough, and after about eight games, only have two wins. I personally like Rosler, and stress how important stability is. Massimo agrees, and as he

"DYLAN," UWE ASKS.

"WHAT THE FUCK JUST HAPPENED?"

talks, he gets more ostentatious in demonstrating his agreement. Suddenly he picks up the phone. "You see I ring Phil Hay [Yorkshire Evening Post Journalist] and tell him I back Rosler." I cringe. The last thing Uwe needs is the Chairman's public vote of confidence.

"Phil, I tell you this guy Rosler is a professional," Massimo says into the phone. He gives me a pantomime wink, then returns to the speaker. "I like him best of all the coaches I have at Leeds." He goes on, over-acting entirely for my benefit. "If I had the choice again, I would still choose Rosler."

Hay asks him about rumours that Lee Erwin is going out on loan. Massimo gurns at me and points both hands at the phone. "Let me ask you. What is the only thing that you can grow in another man's hands?" On loudspeaker, I can hear Phil's brain trying to calibrate and decrypt the Chairman's intent. Massimo's hand turn palm up, his face a portrait of childlike joy. He explodes in mirth. "Your dick!" He turns to me for approval. I smile warmly and feel sympathy for the journalist.

Bored with this entertainment, Massimo ends the call and invites me for lunch. We pick up Andrea, the furniture salesman-cum-club scout. As we leave the East Stand, I'm shocked to see Uwe Rosler just pulling up in his Audi. But not as shocked as Uwe is to see me emerging with Massimo and Andrea. This has massive potential to go tits up. I gamble on Rosler's intelligence and quick wits. I move towards him, my body masking a cutting gesture with my left hand, my lips and eyes implore him to stay quiet.

My right hand reaches out for a handshake. "Hi Uwe, it's Dylan

"YOU SEE I RING PHIL HAY AND TELL HIM I BACK ROSLER"

Thwaites from Leeds Fans Utd, we met at a fan event in preseason."

"Ah yes, of course," he replies. "Good to see you again."

Cellino asks Rosler to join us, and we have lunch in Billy's Bar. Cellino proceeds to tell him about his call to Phil Hay. He talks about Lee Erwin and runs the "your dick" question past Rosler, who reacts similarly to Phil Hay.

Shortly after the lunch, I'm on the M62 and I get a call from Uwe. "Dylan," he asks. "What the fuck just happened?"

We meet twenty minutes later at Hartshead Moor Service Station and I share with him as much as I can. We both agree that it's better Cellino doesn't know about our connection. Jealousy is a dangerous thing.

A week later Erwin went to Bury on loan. A week after that Rosler was sacked.

"You'll like the fat motherfucker I've picked as the new manager."

I don't think I'll gel with him, which will add complexity we don't need, so I avoid the chance to meet Steve Evans. Sharon meets him, and says he is very pleasant, right up Cellino's arse, and has lovely eyelashes.

It's about this time that Cellino rings me. He's very emotional

and upset. I'm outside Craven Cottage for the Leeds game, an evening kick off. He tells me that he's decided not to come because of an incident in Billy's Bar at lunchtime.

"Some fat fucking middle aged man comes to me when I'm with my family having lunch. He's fucking drunk, wearing a purple t-shirt. It say, Dylan, the most offensive thing in Italian. He maybe not know. He's there in front of my children, they scared. The fat fuck asks me to sign his fucking t-shirt. There is no respect. You fans want to buy the club, and I will sell, but there is no respect. Why should I sell, when the fans treat my family like this?"

I apologise and tell him the fans don't know how hard he works, it's all a misunderstanding, blah blah blah. As I talk, I glance across at a group of middle aged Leeds fans in purple 'Vaffanculo Cellino' t-shirts. This is potentially a real problem. A scenario is developing where fan action persuades him to sell, but in the process, it persuades him to refuse to sell to fans. Somehow I need to turn this around and show that if he engages with LFU we can all work together as one big happy family. I approach one of the group that I know and quiz him about the Billy's Bar incident. It turns out that I know K, the lad who had confronted Cellino. I go over and chat with him, and explain how it is causing a bigger problem than he realises. I come

up with a plan that he reluctantly agrees to.

Later that week I show a still angry Cellino my video of the sheepish, apologetic K removing his purple t-shirt and handing it to me. It calms Massimo down and enhances my reputation as some capo of ultras. I feel a bit shit for manipulating the situation, and know I've upset some hardcore Leeds fans with my approach, but there is a serious risk that the grinding progress we are making will come to a halt.

As we left the stadium, I saw K proudly wearing his T-shirt. We nodded as we passed.

At each meeting I desperately try to move the fan ownership

discussion to centre stage, but progress is slow. Sometimes he just ignores the conversation, other times he presents obstacles; for example, "You need to wait until I sort the Arab motherfuckers out." Or, "This club is worth nothing, I can't take the fans money." Or, "Fans will just waste money buying players." Or, "The motherfuckers Sky are killing the club, look at Italy, soon there will be no fans."

This last argument ends up blowing our quiet, under the radar approach. One day Massimo invites me in, and while I sit in the David Blaine box I can hear him shouting at his latest victim. He is in a rage about something, so I log into the wifi and prepare for a long wait. But seconds later his assistant ushers me in. He is

in the midst of a heated debate with Giorgio Altieri, his personal lawyer and close confidante, and a local guy, who is introduced to me as his local lawyer. Cellino seems to change lawyers like, well, like he changes managers.

I don't want to intrude into personal grief, so after the pleasantries I leave them at his desk and retire to the sofa. The conversation is about Sky and the disproportionate number of fixtures they allocate to Leeds. Cellino has seen the devastating effect of televised games on match attendance in Italy and genuinely fears it will happen at Leeds United. He rants at the Football League, who won't let him see the Sky contract it signed on behalf of the clubs. It seems extraordinary



that the Football League can keep this a secret, and the injustice pushes him into deeper and deeper anger. He's already announced that, as a "punishment" to other clubs for not backing him, he will limit Leeds fans to the minimum 2,000 tickets at all away games. In his view, Leeds fans' attendance money is a gift under his control. The loss of tens of thousands of pounds of revenue will punish the clubs for ganging up on Leeds.

I sit quietly and calculate the cost-benefit of making an intervention. As I feel his exasperation increase and his energy wane, I seize the moment. I stand up, a little bit too dramatically, and blurt, "Massimo."

"WHAT IS THE ONLY THING THAT YOU CAN GROW IN ANOTHER MAN'S HANDS?"

The others are slightly taken aback by my informality and casual address. "The problem with this strategy is that you are creating enemies among the most loyal Leeds fans. You already know that half the Leeds fans love you and half of them hate you. But Sky is a subject where all Leeds fans will back you. When Sky choose us, Leeds loses money, I get that [I actually think his calculations are a bit bogus, but now is not the time], but it's worse for fans. They lose train fares, hotel bookings, days off work — the Norwegians lose flights. It is a fight we can all get behind, but the moment you stop Leeds fans watching Leeds, you are creating a big problem — it feels like the fans are being punished."

He looks up, his body wretched from a hundred cigarettes a day. "Well, what would you do?"

"I'd announce that you are dropping the 2,000 limit with immediate effect, so we can take the full allocation from Huddersfield. Make a statement calling for fans to get behind your argument against Sky. We'll then bring all the fan groups together to understand the issues and figure out how we can all work together on it. We can reach out to the fans of other clubs with similar problems and we can utilise our political and media contacts to start putting some pressure on Sky."

"Okay. We do that!"

And it literally was that simple. I got Sharon in to work with the club's media department, and by 7pm we had a statement out on the club website. Our influence with Cellino was there for everyone to see. We had wanted to keep it quiet until we had something substantive, but here was a concrete example of how just having a fan present in the room could alter a club's direction.

Sharon arranges a meeting for fan groups to address the Sky concerns, which Massimo agrees to host. We have good relations with most of the fan groups and get about a dozen fans to Elland

Road with the Supporters Club, Supporters Trust, Regional Members Clubs and even our quasi-ultras, SS5, represented.

I am in Malta on a family holiday, but have no worries as Sharon is in control. Massimo is due to launch the meeting but I get a call from Sharon. "He's really flaky today," she says. "I'm not sure he's going to attend." He'd heard the fans singing, "Massimo, Time To Go!" at the previous game and it was prickling his ego. Sharon, who by this stage has a good relationship with Cellino, nurtures him and consoles him and tries to focus on the Sky issue. He comes to a conclusion. "I finish, I have enough. I tell the fan groups."

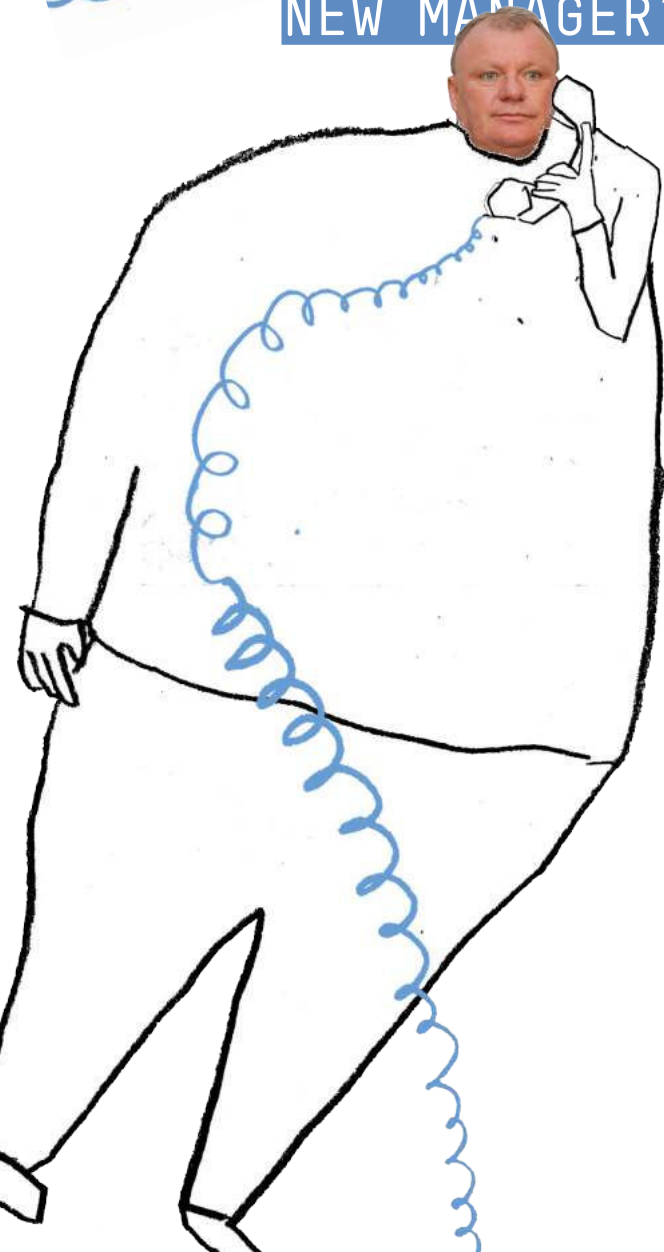
I wasn't there, but I've heard several accounts. Apparently Cellino entered the conference room, and was a little incoherent. He told the fans that he had had enough and was leaving. When he leaves, Sharon sneaks out and calls me. I tell her to stick with Cellino.

Shortly afterwards, I get a whispered call. Sharon has locked herself in the disabled toilet for privacy. "He's just offered to sell the club to us."

Okay. Wow! I flick the sand from my toes and blink up at the Maltese sun. "Okay, tell him yes, we accept." It was Friday afternoon. "I'm back Tuesday. Tell him I'll meet him then with the details of how we'll do it, who we'll partner with, what price range we'll pay and the basis on which we'll pay it. We've got a tough weekend ahead of us."

A few minutes later the disabled toilet is in use again. "Okay, so he will only sell to us, not anybody else. He doesn't want us to use someone else's money. And he wants us to announce it immediately."

“YOU’LL LIKE THE
FAT MOTHERFUCKER
I’VE PICKED AS THE
NEW MANAGER”



Alarm bells are ringing. There are so many tricks and snares here it looks like a game of Mousetrap. He knows we only have £500,000 in the bank, and we’ll need about £40m. If we bottle out, he’ll be able to say, “I offered it to the fans but they couldn’t raise the money”. If we take the bait and fail, we face humiliation and a massive setback to the future of fan ownership. The buccaneer in me takes the decision — we will take the challenge head on and make it work.

The second deception is more nuanced. Why does he want us to announce it? No matter which way I spin it, the reality strikes hard. He is using us as a megaphone to auction the club to all-comers. We are being used as a stalking horse. Again, the buccaneer emerges. A stalking horse is in the race, and we need to be in it to win it.

Sharon returns to Cellino and informs him that, “Yes, we will buy the whole club.”

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“Good, you announce that now,” he says.

“I’ll draft a statement for the Leeds United website,” says Sharon.

“No, it must come from you.”

“Well, we can make it a joint statement.”

“No, it must come from you.”

“Okay, let me figure something out.”

Sharon knows there is no way we can go out on a limb by saying he’s agreed to sell exclusively to us. It is inevitable that he will deny it and make us look foolish. We come up with a ruse. Sharon tells him that the BBC are refusing to run the story without corroboration, so can he quickly talk to Adam Pope, the

BBC reporter, to confirm what we are telling him. Cellino agrees. At that point Sharon makes contact with Pope and briefs him. He does a great interview, posing the specific questions Sharon suggested. Cellino confirms that yes, he is selling the club, and yes, he will only sell to Leeds Fans Utd.

Thirty minutes later, Adam breaks the news on BBC Radio Leeds.

Within the hour, Cellino is in conversation with a new prospective buyer of Leeds United. Of course I didn't know this until some weeks later.

That weekend is hell. I commit to the family holiday from 9am-6pm, and spend ten of the next fifteen hours working with the LFU Executive Board on solving the problems of raising £40m from fans and turning a stalking horse into a thoroughbred.

We quickly realise that the biggest threat is wasting fans' money building a bid. We can only access 10% of the fund, and £50,000 doesn't go very far on an acquisition. And we strongly suspect we are being played. The answer is simple: we will demand exclusivity before spending any money. If Cellino is sincere, then he will have no problems with this. But if we are merely a stalking horse, he cannot exclude others.

Then, in the full knowledge that our work is likely to be pointless, we set to work on creating a

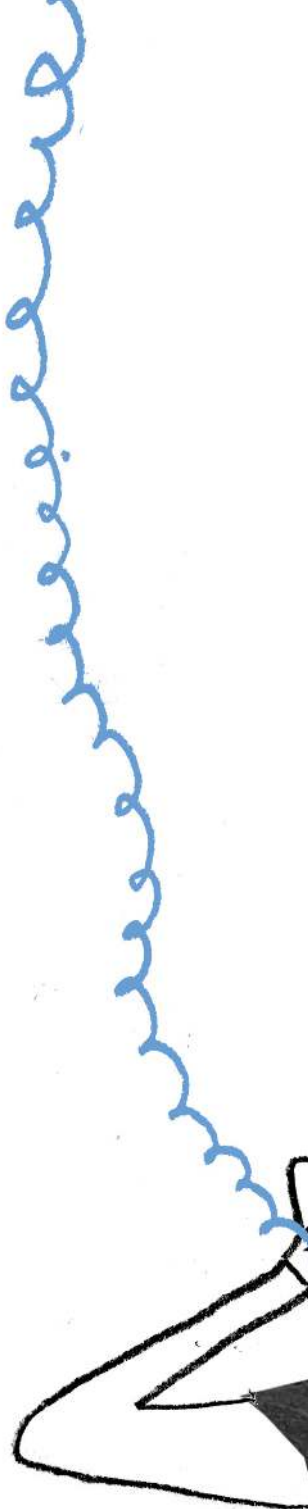
credible plan to raise £40m. We know plenty of groups willing to buy into Leeds United, but it is clear that Cellino does not want us to partner. We package a mixture of loans and bonds that will pay super returns, but only on a return to the Premier League. We are told that this is attractive to both high net worth fans and the City, which is desperate for a return on capital. Once we own the club, we can enshrine the fans' protections we had always sought, and then sell the majority to a well-resourced owner.

Next we work on the launch plan. Sharon's expertise in public relations ensures a spectacular amount of regional, national and international coverage. The objective is three-fold. Firstly, to generate an influx of supporter cash and spark high net worth interest. Secondly, to start to show the depth of financial integrity that makes this a very viable solution for Cellino. Thirdly, to scare off any new bidders that are flushed out of the bushes. If we can develop enough momentum, we can dominate the space, which at the very least puts pressure on other bidders to work with the fans.

We know we are working a long shot, but to have any chance we need to develop momentum, so we decide on the earliest possible launch of Tuesday.

On Monday, we ask for exclusivity from Cellino. We want it before the

**"YOU SHOULD NOT ACT
LIKE CITY PEOPLE.
ACT LIKE FANS"**



CELLINO KNOWS THAT I KNEW HE TRIED TO PLAY US

launch. I talk to Massimo from the departure lounge of Valetta airport. “Dylan, why does Sharon say these things?” he asks. “Hey, who teach her the words, ‘Exclusivity’, ‘Due Diligence’ – who teach her?”

My jaw dropped. I start to explain that Sharon is really quite capable of understanding this all by herself, but realise from his next comment that he is seriously underestimating us. “You are fans. I’m selling to you with no profit for me. You shouldn’t be talking about due diligence. That will take thirty minutes. You are not City people. You should not act like City people. Act like fans.”

Early the following morning we launch, and it goes very well. In the later interviews, I make the point about exclusivity, saying we will start due diligence as soon as we have it. I know this is a make or break demand. I hope we can generate enough momentum to get over this hurdle. But unknown to us at the time, Cellino is already into detailed



talks with a prospective buyer.

At 8am, the next morning I get a text from Altieri, Cellino’s lawyer, saying the deal is off. We immediately announce it to the press. Our brief glimpse of the sun between the clouds has gone.

But we get a glut of potential buyers consulting us first, before they talk to Leeds United. Cellino’s prospective buyer starts to falter, so he comes to us for advice and shares the depth of Cellino’s perfidy. Our gamble had failed, but the chances of fan involvement at Elland Road had improved dramatically.

Of course, Cellino goes on the radio and accuses us of believing fairy tales and acting like kids in a candy shop. It falls largely on deaf ears. Adam Pope had verified exactly what had been offered. Cellino knows that I knew he tried to play us, and that we had had his number all along. A few days later Massimo texted me, to say no hard feelings. He is right, there are no hard feelings.

Some months later, after a long period of no contact, he asks if I have anything to do with Time To Go Massimo (TTGM). I tell him

truthfully that I know a few of the people involved and I’d been asked to contribute, but I chose not to. There is no benefit in telling him that I like what TTGM have done and I think its actions directly led to Massimo eventually selling up. He invites me for coffee “any time.” I don’t take up the offer up. Better to have the memories.

At the end of the season I handed control of LFU over to Sharon. At that stage, LFU sought and obtained a massive vote of confidence from its members to continue seeking fan ownership at Leeds United. Over the following season Andrea Radrizzani gradually assumed total control, and the whole demeanour of the club changed. The stories I tell above seem like ancient myths now, safely so far behind us that we can chuckle knowingly.

Radrizzani seems to be a stable hand at the tiller, and actions such as bringing Leeds Ladies back into the fold are showing empathy and an understanding of our fans. The performance of the team last season and the rebirth of Leeds United Supporters Trust are healthy indicators that we are getting our club back.

It has been a great start from Radrizzani and I hope he will now engage with LFU. He should take the willing investment from the fans and reap the benefits of uniting us all once again. ●

DO FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER?

THE LIVE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS A NEW WAY TO INTRODUCE A NEW MANAGER. BUT WHAT IMPACT DID THAT HAVE ON OUR EARLY IMPRESSIONS? AND HAS PRE-SEASON CHANGED THAT?

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WORDS: FIONA KYLE

ARTWORK: JAMES MASON

It was on a Monday. I spent a whole football-free weekend looking forward to it and speculating about it but, when the Thomas Christiansen press conference finally rolled around, it didn't really live up to my expectations.

Rumours had filled the virtual airwaves in advance. Two new players were to be announced, Jonny Howson had signed, Pep Clotet was going to be put in charge of the academy. None of these came to pass.

The press conference was streamed live on Facebook, a big step for the club. And, while it didn't reach the Carabou Cup draw levels of farce, viewers did sit and look at

empty chairs for ten minutes after the arranged time.

And when people did arrive, it was a group of new people we didn't know. There was not one familiar face. There was no Leeds at the table, so it didn't feel like Leeds. There was Victor Orta, lurching somewhere between businesslike and super villain, and Angus Kinnear, quiet and other. It was slick, it was corporate, it was media trained. There wasn't even a cigarette break.

It was a roasting day, perfect for a little joke about Christiansen bringing the weather from Cyprus with him or similar but no, it was the straightest press conference in the history of Leeds United. It made it hard to warm to any of

these new guys, even Christiansen himself with his warm face and unexpectedly high pitched voice.

But then, I remember saying a few weeks into Monk's reign that I wouldn't much fancy going for a pint with him. Now I definitely wouldn't. But maybe that's not an important quality for a manager to be successful in the EFL Championship.

But I just wanted to feel something. Is that asking too much?

Fast forward just over a month and the picture looks quite different. Although our online streaming capabilities don't seem to have improved a whole lot, Orta's dark presence has receded



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THERE WASN'T EVEN A CIGARETTE BREAK

into the background (although he was present on the pre-season tour in Austria) and Angus Kinnear has been the voice of some great initiatives introduced by the new regime and quick to explain less popular decisions like the ticket prices.

And as for TC himself, well only time will tell. We won't know the real cut of his jib for a few months yet but early impressions are hopeful. He's a nice guy, that much is obvious - but how will that translate to managing in the

Championship? If we lose at home a month into the season without putting up a fight, will he have a go at Adam Pope? Will we have an identity and what will it be? How will the big players like Wood and Jansson respond to this calm, quiet and relatively unknown Danish Spaniard? And what the heck is he going to do with our 15,000 midfielders?

I'm not sure how much we can read into the loss against Eibar or the victory against Oxford - in both games changes made in the

second half freshened things up and made us look a more exciting prospect.

We might have some answers after Bolton, and we should have more by the time he locks horns with our old friend Neil Warnock at the end of September. Hopefully under the new regime we'll get the chance to find out all the answers and he won't remain a Milanic-esque enigma. The feeling of positivity around the club should give Christiansen more of a honeymoon period than his predecessors. In true Leeds United style, so much has happened since that original press conference that it's already just a footnote in the Leeds United history books. Let's hope Christiansen himself amounts to more than that. ●

Hard Habit To Break

For a while it looked like Garry Monk was the man who would break Leeds United's Championship habit. What happened?

WORDS: ANDY P

ARTWORK: GRADY

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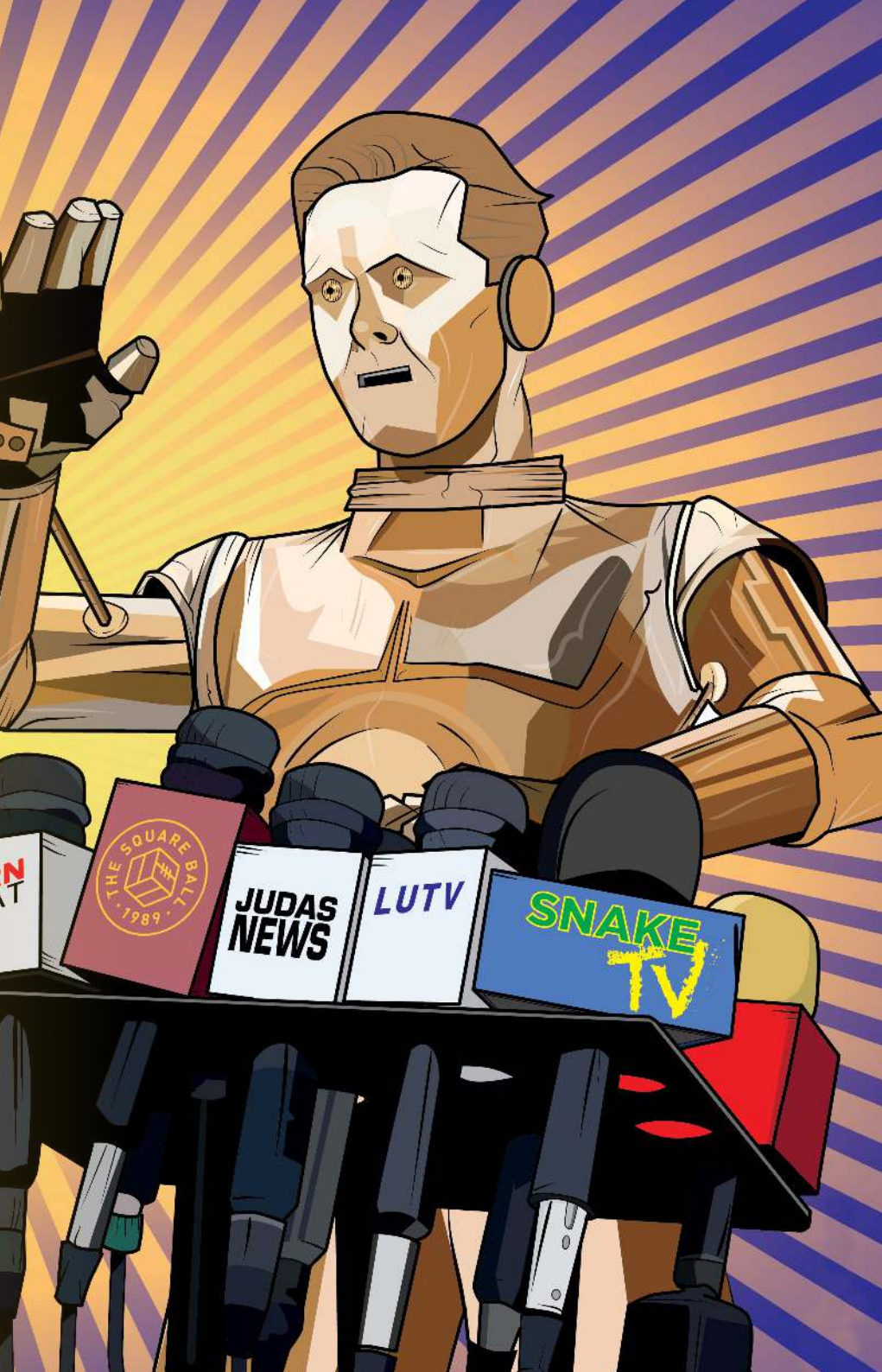
On the surface few things were more twenty-first century Leeds United than the twelve months Garry Monk spent as manager (and let's not forget he was a self declared manager, not a head coach after all).

In some respects the 2016/17 season he presided over was a bleakly familiar tale, as for the second time since escaping the hell of League One United settled for finishing seventh, the ultimate good-but-it's-not-right position, top of the losers' pile, best of the also rans. Worse still, as with the glorious failure of the Grayson-era side that had included the likes of Becchio, Snodgrass, Gradel and Howson, it had also been 'achieved' from a position of mid-campaign

strength that was then frittered profitably away.

In the background, though, things were very different. The roots of the story go back to the end of Steve Evans tenure, in which he went from pies to steamed vegetables and wore a blond rinse, gushing platitudes about Massimo Cellino any time a microphone was within earshot. His Italian dining partner rewarded the Scot's supreme loyalty in typically generous fashion, refusing to tell him he had no intention of offering him a permanent contract while privately touting the job to a series of alternative candidates. Cellino has spoken of his reluctance to deliver bad news, a self-confessed streak of cowardice in his Machiavellian nature that, along with other more obvious flaws, you imagine helped







to discourage Bristol Rover's Darrell Clarke and, more infamously, then MK Dons manager Karl Robinson from being next up in the Elland Road ejector seat.

Featuring more prominently though was one Andrea Radrizzani, a man patiently trying to engage Cellino in talks about becoming a major stakeholder in the debt ridden and loss making venture that was – and is – Leeds United. Having made his fortune in the opaque commercial environment of sports media, at this point the two were ostensibly just good friends, the suitor the latest in a queue that had begun to form, it's claimed, from early 2015. Tellingly, Radrizzani was willing to put in the hard yards, prepared to be visible at games and also happy to embrace Cellino's highly stimulat-

ed and erratic behaviour, comfortable playing the long game while the vendor hedged the final asking price of any deal based on the club's possible future league status.

With the season fast approaching Cellino still had one more perverse throw of the dice left. A journeyman centre half before finding a home and subsequently the captaincy during Swansea's millennial renaissance, Garry Monk had been parachuted into the manager's job at Swansea after the sacking of Michael Laudrup, fought off relegation, and then steered the Welsh outfit to eighth in his first full season in charge. Stymied by, among other things, a lack of control over transfers (we'll come back to that later) the following term his services were dispensed with after an eleven game run

without a win, assistant Pep Clotet and coach James Beattie following him back up the M4.

By most estimations Monk was a candidate of superior pedigree to any that Cellino had previously toyed with. Rumours of lost dressing rooms continued to swirl up from the principality, but brushing off any worries about his predecessor's treatment, the freshly hired Monk was keen on arrival to shift perspectives, repeatedly emphasising the need for focus and concentration on results, simultaneously exuding a calmness and professionalism that was a country mile away from Evans dewy-eyed sycophancy. His first battle was to bring Clotet in as assistant, a process that ate a further two weeks into a pre-season schedule that even to the untrained eye seemed at best functional. At

SOON MONK LOOKED LIKE HE'D BEEN SLEEPING IN A DOORWAY BETTER TO BE BORED THAN MAD

their disposal was a squad — or 'group' as we soon came to know it — that seemed overly full of mid-field players with similar attributes and looked short on goals: former Swans Kyle Bartley, Matt Grimes and Pablo Hernandez also joined over the summer. We'll come back to that later.

Given the lack of adequate preparation the early signs were understandably far from great. The profligate Wood of old was taking much of the crowd's frustration for some average performances and, in giving some back, perhaps showing that any tactical revolution was taking some time to materialise.

By the time United's trip to Cardiff arrived Monk looked like he'd been sleeping in a doorway. Take your pick of the likely pre-match context: 1) Cellino had given him a win-or-bust ultimatum 2) Cellino had been restrained from doing so by Radrizzani's intervention or 3) he'd just had a night on the Jaeger-bombs with Clotet. Whatever actually happened it became encouragingly apparent as the first half wore on that a form of resilience was beginning to emerge in the away side; whenever they looked like buckling, a boot, a head or a lack of composure from the opposition gave them a reprieve, and once in front Leeds never looked like losing. As watershed moments go, it was one of the more satisfying but equally unexpected.

Along with Wood and Green's heroics, credit for any subsequent revival must go both to Bartley's rapidly emerging leadership qualities and also the talismanic Pontus Jansson, hired in a Sliding Doors moment of kismet; when Monk initially enquired of agent Martin Dahlin about the availability of the injury prone Joel Ekstrand, the free agent seemed certain to sign, before the deal was sideswiped after Leeds balked at the medic's

verdict. Credit to Dahlin for not letting a potential customer in recruitment mode leave the show-room without grabbing one of his bargains: Ekstrand went to Rotherham, got injured, got relegated, and was released, while Jansson's rest is history.

A few bumps in the road followed, such as being largely played off the park by relegation threatened Wigan, but two factors gradually emerged that proved to be a platform for improvement. The first was strangely unaccustomed: in the boardroom, peace had ostensibly broken out. The relative stability this offered enabled Monk to be pragmatic; with a centre half pairing as good as any since the Premier League days, a veteran keeper in once-a-decade form and a striker relishing his lone wolf role, United were now playing the contemporary way, soaking up pressure and hitting teams on the break. It wasn't pretty, but given the resources available, Monk's team were punching way above their weight in a league where Brighton, Derby, Newcastle and Wednesday, to name but a few, were gambling spectacularly.

Winning ugly leaves the purist cold, however. Other than a dazzling performance against Derby in January and a blitz of goals against Simon Grayson's Preston, results were by and large being scratched out, but few were complaining. Our greatest managers had been stoic about being aesthetically pleasing to anyone not

in the tent, but as we'd come to know Monk was hardly a Revie or Wilkinson, being by contrast very much the airbrushed, media trained management consultant fully equipped for the meaningless jocularly of football analysis. The Championship's reality presents a stark choice for owners — it stinks of paranoia, it's currency the fear of failure, unemployment never far away for those in it's almost hysterical firing line. Leeds were boring, but they won games against teams who knocked it about, teams who boasted player rotations, teams whose fans got madder each week as this utilitarian side of rejects, kids and old pros climbed the table at their side's expense. Better to be bored, we reckoned, than mad.

Monk's fondness for stringing together clichés in random order became something of a standing joke at press conferences (for us), but his comments on changing the self esteem and momentum of Leeds United hit home. A truism was beginning emerge in his wake: despite calls for unity from a number of fan quarters throughout the Cellino era, the only body really capable of reconciliation was the club itself, and while some of their PR activity still left something to be desired they had now at least the god-given common sense to stop taking our support for granted.

To temper this new found mutual enthusiasm Radrizzani's deal in

January to purchase his 50% stake in the club was by far the biggest it was involved in. As in 2011, with the play offs a near certainty and automatic promotion not impossible, the newly joined at the hip executive duo instead allowed Monk only token reinforcements, Cellino's ministrations — if he was to be believed (always a stretch) — being to openly legitimise a bizarre reluctance to bolster the squad's under-creativity, one that eventually — and inevitably — had dire consequences.

Digression: Whether the line-up at Sutton was Monk's sarcastic commentary on his lack of support in the transfer market or a veiled threat, the justification at the time will never outlive history, a timely reminder for all that turning competitions into sacrificial lambs may be the choice of an interim employee, but results are permanent and being a laughing stock is never okay, despite their protestations about the bigger picture.

By contrast to Monk's fifty shades of beige his counterpart in Kirklees, David Wagner, could never be accused of lacking self confidence, or indeed pettiness. The German's victory dance after Huddersfield's late derby winner was as provocative as it was childlike, and the Leeds manager's response probably wasn't proportionate, an out of character show of peth that, along with the suspension of Jansson for supposedly not giving the desired levels in training, was one of the few signs of pressure/humanity behind his robotic mask.

Wobbles of both performance and lips aside, the combination of defensive heroics and Chris Wood's predatory best were enough to keep Leeds nicely shored up the table: after winning at St. Andrews one Friday in March, going ten points clear of seventh place with a better

goal difference in the process, a berth in the play-off spots at this level for the first time since 1987 seemed inevitable.

Alas, Leeds United have never done inevitable. Gossip began to circulate that Monk and Clotet's relationship was no longer what it was; the Spaniard's cryptic use of Twitter seemed to endorse that, although it was hard to see the cracks from so close by. As the clamour for the club to deal with Monk's contractual situation increased — a deafening silence he brushed off in public — the cohesion that had been such a feature of the side's way of playing disintegrated, a rapid decline papered over at St. James' Park when they should have been on the wrong end of a cricket score, but fully realised at, of all places, Burton Albion, a game when the sacrosanct was uprooted, as even their on-pitch honesty betrayed players who'd thrived on its simplicity for months.


As the situation unfolded there were whispered tales of cliques, of rifts and splits, none of which will probably ever be ratified either way, but it's not hard to see for instance the bombastic Jansson on one side of any dressing room and the ex-Swansea contingent possibly on the other. Maybe, being less controversial, the malaise was due simply to bad luck, but after being largely conceptual during the good times, the impression whenever Leeds went behind was that there was little by way of an alternative option surfaced in anger, the consequence a shattering inability on the part of the coaching team to find that missing sheaf of notes known as a Plan B. A one off, blood and thunder worked: the Norwich game being effectively a dead rubber, the players spent the first half acting as if it was just that before, it's been said, Green took

the half-time team talk himself without Monk, the outcome of which was a too little, too late scrap to an honourable if worthless draw.

At least, we reasoned, the early finish could allow Radrizzani to fully oust Cellino, secure Monk and Clotet's futures and then properly back them in the summer. Or so we thought. Instead there was it seems a bizarre set of overtures made to Wagner's representatives, undertaken, it's alleged, before the play-off final, the result being that had Town lost, the hierarchy at Elland Road were confident they would be successful. It has to be said that a well informed journalist I spoke to reckoned instead that it was an open secret Wagner would join Klopp as his assistant at Anfield had he not taken the minnows into the Premier League, but either way put yourself in Monk's shoes: publically criticised by Radrizzani for the season's breakdown, he now found himself facing counter moves by his current employers as he held out for a three-year contract he clearly felt he deserved.

United's supremo is not a stupid man, and used to getting his way. In recognition of his lack of experience of running a football club Radrizzani began to recruit a team of advisers and go-to men, people like Aspire Academy director Ivan Bravo and Victor Orta, the controversial and pugnacious former director of football at freshly relegated Middlesbrough and a choice with whom plenty of baggage came attached. Taking all this into consideration, when it came to the managerial position, it seems obvious the new owner was hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst.

How the end game played out comes in alternative flavours, de-



A BIZARRE SET OF OVERTURES WERE MADE TO WAGNER

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pending on whom and what you prefer to believe. Whether you think Monk bolted, angry at the one club's decision to activate the one year rolling clause in his contract, or was effectively pushed out of the door by the adoption of a coaching structure that relegated his team to cone carriers, the result is that he's now on Teeside, quarter zip knitwear, hair product and focus on the group intact.

What is, you reckon, true is that taking the job at Leeds was a decision as shrewd as it was low risk for him. If it didn't go well — and Cellino's track record was hardly a secret — then he'd be jettisoned with a settlement and be able unofficially to point to a circus-like working environment that pre-

cluded getting his side getting anywhere near the top six. Anything above half-way up the table would be a symbolic victory; promotion an unlikely dream. Either way, he would emerge with reputation restored and the negotiating chips stacked high, a position of strength from which he could consolidate and energise a hitherto stop-start career.

Ultimately any blame probably lies on more consciences than we'll ever know. The appointment of the previously unknown Thomas Christiansen is a horse for a new course, one that speaks to Radrizani's preferred continental blueprint. Monk himself now has a chairman who owns a club in an

act of philanthropy for a near-destitute region: his generosity has already run to more than £50m in transfer fees and it's probable that he himself is the beneficiary of a top flight package consummate with their Premier League ambitions.

So, we thank Garry Monk for the memories, for re-awakening that thirst for glory that most Leeds fans will tell anybody listening is rightfully ours. The game is rigged, of course, a handicap that as a manager you either accept and back the right horse or risk being just a few thousand clicks on your removal. For us now yesterday's hero is now just somebody else's guy. ●



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THE

DREAMS ARE DIFFERENT NOW TO WHAT
CHARGE, AND BUYING ELLAND ROAD BACK

WORDS: JON HOWE

ING DREAM



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AT THEY WERE WHEN RIDSDALE WAS IN
CK IS PART OF A DREAM COMING TRUE.

PHOTOS: LEE BROWN



t was wonderfully obtuse of Leeds United to announce the re-purchasing of

Elland Road on a day of biblical rain. Not for us the symbolism of a bright new day and the clouds finally parting, with images of happy fans joyously carousing around Billy's statue, but unceasing horizontal stair rods, fists stuffed deep in pockets and an ashen landscape of grim survivalism. It was wholly appropriate of course, as if the gods were punishing Leeds United for making an unholy mess of the last thirteen years and allowing an element of celebration, but also scolding us with caution by making the occasion deeply uncomfortable.

Not that it mattered. It was a landmark day that many thought would never come. It was a day when we will all probably remember 'where we were' when we heard the news. It was a day when Leeds United finally felt 'complete', or at least more complete than it was, and that intangible 'something' that was missing suddenly became very obvious.

There is a scenario that is frequently trotted out when analysing the depth of Leeds United's travails and ineptitude, namely that some younger fans have never supported the club while 'situation x' has been the case. So yes, indeed, some fans have never been to Elland Road while the football club has owned it themselves. Think about that for a minute. I remember when Elland Road was sold to Leeds City Council in September 1985 for £2.5m, and I remember when we bought it back in March 1998 (a deal that took Caspian nearly eighteen months to complete, it should be added). In between those times my Elland Road upbringing completed a full cycle and I went from a boy to a

man, very quickly. I had been attending games for several years beforehand, but between 1985 and 1998 I stood on the Kop for the first time, I attended games without a parent for the first time, I enjoyed countless afternoons being thrown from pillar to post as third-rate journeymen played before NF factions on a grassless bog in Division Two. Oh, and I saw my team win the league.

It's fair to say that nobody was really worrying about who owned the ground when Gordon Strachan lifted the trophy in May 1992 and showed it to all corners of the weather-beaten, haunted and decrepit Elland Road, complete with a very red 'Leeds City Council Welcomes You To Elland Road' sign on the West Stand fascia. Perhaps the most salient point was what happened next. The 'Last Champions' had won the title via a modern miracle; a 'by-the-seat-of-your-pants' culmination of careful stewardship, a serendipitous coming together of the right people at the right time and Bill Fotherby's brassneck. Such a chance occurrence could never





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happen again. Leeds won the title against a backdrop of the council owning the ground, hefty overdrafts and numerous deals done on tick with weary sponsors. As Howard Wilkinson famously said: “You’re trying to look smart in your new suit and not reveal that there wasn’t too much underneath it.”

Such a flimsy financial foundation eventually caught up with Leeds and they couldn’t compete as the Premier League juggernaut took off. By 1998 I was wise enough and world-weary enough to realise how significant it was for the club to own Elland Road. When Caspian took over fans once again saw a change in ambition, progression and outlook. Things happened quickly, not always for the better,

but you could see a plan, that by 1998 was starting to happen on the pitch too.

As new Leeds United owners have taken office, you could set your watch by their giddy proclamations that buying Elland Road back is a top priority, and Andrea Radrizzani was no different. Such bold assertions are naturally met with extreme cynicism and, in this case, a not unreasonable suggestion that re-purchasing the ground was perhaps of lesser importance than strengthening the squad and ensuring any progress made last season was not lost. The key factor here is that it would appear this guy can do both, and having only just mastered the art of online banking and getting my tax returns in on



time, I'll trust Radz to know better than me whether this is the right time for Leeds United to make this significant business decision.

A £1.7m — and rising — annual saving on rent payments would suggest that's a no-brainer, although of course it's far more complex than that. However, this does raise an interesting point: do we trust Radrizzani to have made the right decision? In short, we have to. Ignoring for a minute that he is a self-made multi-millionaire with a string of successful business ventures behind him, he is the guy in charge. So whatever he does, we have to go along with it. We can shout and moan and feel uneasy about it, but he has paid his money and we have to believe what he has done — which let's face it, is buy the ground from one anonymous company on behalf of another, albeit the second one happens to own Leeds United — is right for the club.

It is this concept that always stuck in my throat about Peter Ridsdale's pitiful and wholly unsubstantial claim that we had 'lived the dream' in 2003. Given it was his juvenile sweetshop follies that triggered the whole mess, resulting in the sale of Elland Road to Jacob Adler in 2004, it feels quite apt to revisit his words now. Ridsdale was attempting to share out the blame, he was wanting us to take some responsibility; effectively saying, 'you all enjoyed it, you weren't complaining then, how do you think we financed it?' Meanwhile showing a monstrous disdain for the average football fan who might have the temerity to expect the guardian of their football club to be acting in its own best interests. Of course we have learnt some harsh lessons in that respect since, which leaves us where we are today; really wanting to trust Radrizzani and to believe that spending £20m re-purchasing Elland Road is the right thing to do, but always and

forever having that little seed of doubt.

Life as a Leeds fan has conditioned us to that. But undoubtedly, owning Elland Road has made us whole again. It has put right what was very wrong and it has acted as a very symbolic event if you want to believe Leeds United have finally turned the corner. Quite apart from the revenue injection from the unbundling of a £1.7m rental agreement, the re-purchasing of Elland Road gives you hope. It gives you a vision of a brighter future. It stirs some fire in your belly and it makes you feel that people had better prepare themselves, because Leeds United are coming, and we really do mean it this time. Honest. Something has changed, something that means everything.

If thirteen years without owning our own ground has taught us anything, it should be that our

SOME FANS HAVE NEVER BEEN TO ELLAND ROAD WHILE THE FOOTBALL CLUB HAS OWNED IT

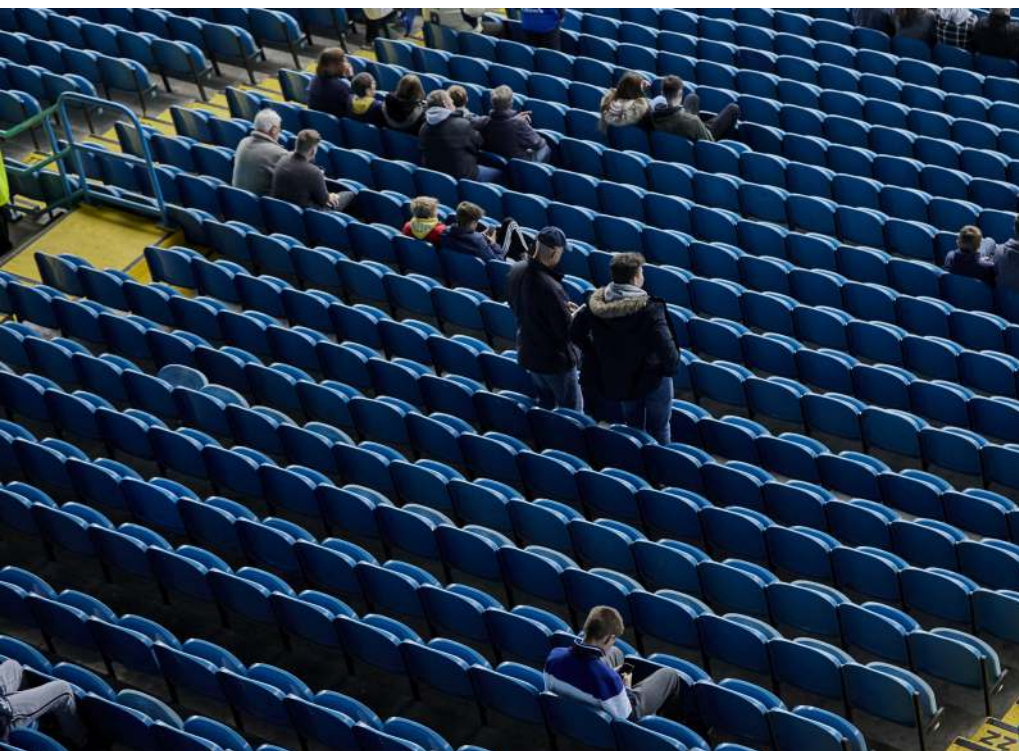
expectations have to change. Football is a very different beast now to what it was in 2004. Stoke City, West Brom, Bournemouth and Swansea City are established Premier League clubs that good footballers want to join. That's a fact that no amount of history can change. It's true that football works in cycles and we're on the right side of a really big one at the minute, and we're heading back to twelve o'clock. But are we living the dream?

For me, the dream is normality. Financial health, keeping our house in order, building relationships with the fans, the sponsors, the council and the business people of Leeds. For me, the dream is controlling your own destiny, not being hamstrung by debentures, lawsuits, mismanagement, debilitating repayments and sub-standard dead wood on big contracts. The dream

is having infrastructure, an ethos and the right people in the right positions, not the local tomcat in charge of the U23s and the players running a tombola to raise funds for their own pre-season tour.

Living the dream might be a return to the Promised Land for many people, and of course that is the ultimate goal, but for now I'm living my own dream. We've reached a base camp, we're through the clouds and we're regrouping on a comfortable plateau. We can see clearly and we can breathe clean air, and we can look up

and see the challenge that awaits us, with no obstructions in the way. We can enjoy the humdrum routine of functionality, regulatory compliance, working to our strengths, developing people and investing in things that grow the business. It might all sound quite boring and mundane when we've got so much to catch up on, but it's a million miles away from where we've been, and that's exactly why we've been there. But a big part of being a normal football club is owning Elland Road again, and let's not beat about the bush, that is absolutely fucking fantastic. ●





CENTRAL INTELLI

THE MIDDLE OF
MIDFIELD WAS A
PROBLEM FOR GARRY
MONK, BUT AT THE
NEW-LOOK LEEDS
UNITED, THE NEW
HEAD COACH HAS
BRAND NEW OPTIONS

WORDS: CALUM ARCHIBALD

ARTWORK: MARK JOHNSON

The Square Ball, and more specifically me, have penned a lot of words discussing

Leeds United's central midfield problems over the past few seasons. The main issue last year was that, despite having a nice variety between O'Kane, Phillips, Bridcutt and Vieira, nobody really knew the best pairing, and we went through the entire season without having a settled or balanced midfield. Unbelievably, the club has actually paid attention to this problem and scouted accordingly, bringing in two new recruits – Mateusz Klich from FC Twente, and Vurnon Anita on a free transfer from Newcastle United.

This, of course, indicates a major change in transfer policy, but the most surprising news of the summer was Ronaldo Vieira's new contract. A four-year contract with no sign of meagre release clauses means that a player who just tasted international success as part of England U20s' World Cup win has actually been tied down for the future. In this brave new world of positive actions and European scouting networks, it appears that Andrea Radrizzani will not allow another season to be sucked into the vacuous abyss by the threadbare squad's cumulative fatigue creeping upon us, a sense of impending doom that only Leeds United fans could know. The familiar sting of disappointment is not one that the new owner intends repeating, and so between him and Director of Football Victor Orta, they have concocted a plan to smash the problematic central midfield berth to pieces by sheer overload of talent.

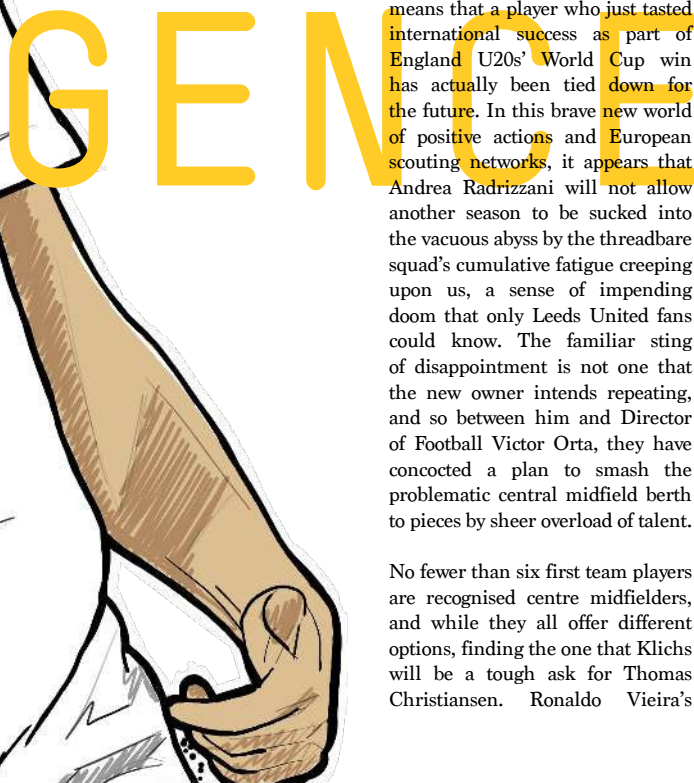
No fewer than six first team players are recognised centre midfielders, and while they all offer different options, finding the one that Klich's will be a tough ask for Thomas Christiansen. Ronaldo Vieira's

youthful exuberance, coupled with extraordinary confidence, makes him one of the most talented players to come through the prestigious doors at Thorp Arch, but with a touch of inexperience there are times when he will need to be rotated. As we saw last season, over-exposing any player can fatigue them both physically and mentally.

Kalvin Phillips comes in for a lot of criticism for a player who in my opinion epitomises so many of the qualities that we revere at Elland Road. His tenacious attitude, high work rate and love for a thunderbastard of a tackle make him a perfect box-to-box midfielder, but at times he has looked inexperienced and a little lost in a midfield that carried the non-existent work rate of the mercurial Pablo Hernandez through the 16/17 season.

Eunan O'Kane offers a neat and tidy passing game that few in the squad seemed to match last season, and his contribution was perhaps best noticed when he wasn't playing rather than when he was. But in a 46 game season plus cup games, he can have a great effect on certain games, at the right times.

The big problem in my eyes is where Liam Bridcutt fits into a new look Leeds United. Having the captain's armband last season only adds to this problem, because in all honesty I struggle to envision a season in which he starts every game and is captain. For me, your captain needs to be a player who is focused, intense, professional and an almost guaranteed starter. Bridcutt enjoyed an extremely productive loan spell under Steve Evans in 15/16, and a ludicrously protracted transfer saga last summer before he joined the club permanently. His form dipped from his initial spell, and like



FINDING THE COMBINATION THAT KLICHS WILL BE A TOUGH ASK FOR CHRISTIANSEN

others he struggled to really nail down a guaranteed first team place. At times his passing ability really let him down, while his tendency to sit very deep in midfield often invited pressure onto the defence when it was unnecessary.

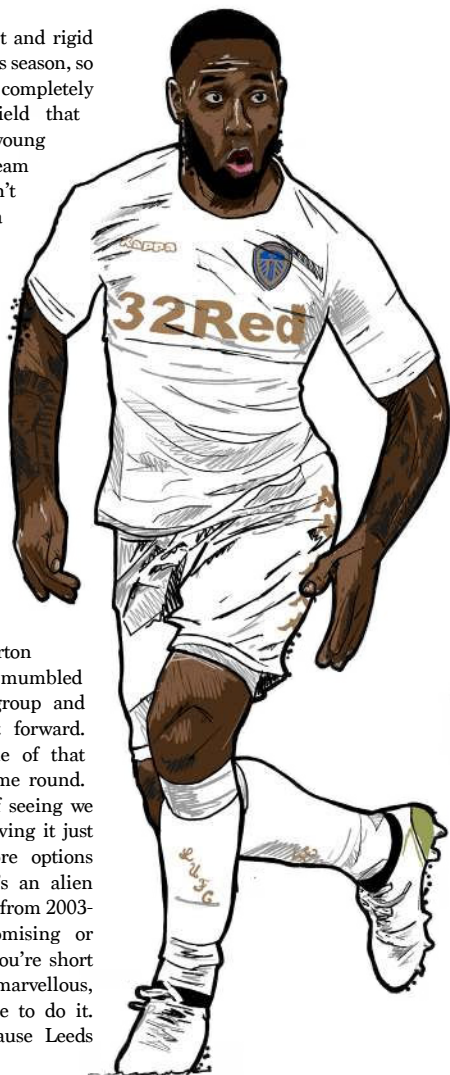
Obviously, six into two doesn't go, and someone will have to miss out, but it's a long season and different options are needed. You'd imagine Klich joined because he wants to start every game, which means he's going to be closer to the front of the queue than others. The same can be said of Anita, who joins with a Championship winners' medal from last season and over 100 appearances in the Premier League to his name. But his versatility means he may be deployed in the full back positions at times as cover, and he may move around as suspensions and injuries pile up.

Personally, I believe we might see one midfielder exiting the club at some point late in the transfer window, whether that be Phillips on loan or Bridcutt permanently. This depends on how Christiansen perceives his options and if he plays with two central midfielders or three, but judging by pre-season, it looks to be a similar formation to last season. If that is the case, more emphasis may be made on the number 10 role contributing more than just in an attacking phase: with more prominence on dropping in to relieve the pressure on the two midfielders who were overrun at times last season. Games such as Fulham away, where they were simply run ragged and looked

nonexistent, are a major reason why this must change because this seemed to happen every time a team played with three in midfield.

That kind of transparent and rigid formation won't slide this season, so the introduction of two completely new faces to a midfield that has two precocious young talents may drive the team forward. It certainly can't hurt to have a plethora of central midfield styles to choose from, and I for one welcome our new amiable overlords.

This may mean that the extra options allow for more significant rotation, which in all honesty would probably save us from the absolutely cataclysmic finale we saw last season as we were slaughtered by Burton Albion and Garry Monk mumbled something about the group and putting their best foot forward. Christ. Let's have none of that self-preservation this time round. I really like the idea of seeing we have a problem and solving it just by chucking loads more options at the Head Coach. It's an alien concept to Leeds United from 2003-2016, but signing promising or talented players when you're short on options is bloody marvellous, and we should continue to do it. Bring on 2017/18, because Leeds are back, baby. ●





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FORGIVEN OR FORGOTTEN

WHILE BELLUSCI WAS BOOED
AWAY FROM GUISELEY, **Kappa**
THEY'RE PUTTING UP POSTERS
OF DOUKARA AT ELLAND ROAD.
WHO CAN PREDICT A LEEDS
FAN'S FORGIVENESS?

WORDS: DAVID GUILLE

THE LAST MAN STANDING FROM THE SICK SIX IS ARGUABLY ITS WORST TRANSGRESSOR

So, how was your summer? I spent most of mine in the company of my three year old daughter who, despite being made to watch Souleymane Doukara's goal against Forest approximately 700 times, seems no closer to showing any interest in football. Which seems unfair as, having had roughly the same amount of exposure to My Little Pony, I'm now more familiar with the cast of a show about singing unicorns than I am with the Leeds United squad. On the plus side, I learned that Friendship is Magic, and am fairly convinced that Rainbow Dash could do a better job up front than Edgar Cani, being quicker, better in the air and generally less of a fucking carthorse.

Cani, of course, was a member of the notorious 'Sick Six', a club whose membership has dwindled to one. As Giuseppe Bellusci tumbled out of the Elland Road doors for the last time, with the imprint of one of Thomas Christiansen's size nines on his arse, a lively online debate began about who Leeds's most hated former player of all time might

be. Bellusci featured prominently, with other Sick Sixers cropping up here and there, although the name of one of them was entirely absent: Doukara.

The last man standing from that notorious club is arguably its worst transgressor, later serving unrepentantly an eight-match ban for biting. Yet it was Bellusci, not Doukara, who was booted from the field against Guiseley. Bellusci's petulance and inherent dislikeability isn't enough of a stand-alone reason to draw that kind of crowd reaction — El Hadji Diouf wrote the book on football pantomime villains but enjoyed a good relationship with our supporters, at least initially.

If this sounds like a plea for clemency for Bellusci, or for some of the vitriol to be directed at Doukara, it's neither. I'm just curious about how much a footballer's worth to the club impacts the speed with which they're forgiven. It's easy to say that Bellusci and Marco Silvestri deserve never to wear the shirt again when Pontus Jansson and Rob Green have left them surplus to requirements. It's similarly

easy to lambast Charlie Taylor for his refusal to play against Wigan, when there is no prospect of him representing the club again. On the list of 'unforgivable' player crimes, refusing to play ranks highly, but things become a little more complicated when the striking player is central to the team's plans. As was Mark Viduka, some fourteen years ago.

Viduka's name brings back glorious memories of four-goal hauls against Liverpool and deft backheels against Champions League opposition. It's a gateway to happier, more innocent times. It's therefore easy to forget his shambolic final season, when he fell out with manager Peter Reid and withdraw his services on the eve of a meeting with Portsmouth. Leeds travelled to Fratton Park without Viduka, and sank without trace, losing 6-1. Facing the prospect of fighting a relegation battle with Cyril Chapuis and Lamine Sakho as his attacking options, Reid resolved his differences with the Australian, and Viduka started the following game and scored nine more league goals before his association with the club was curtailed by a red



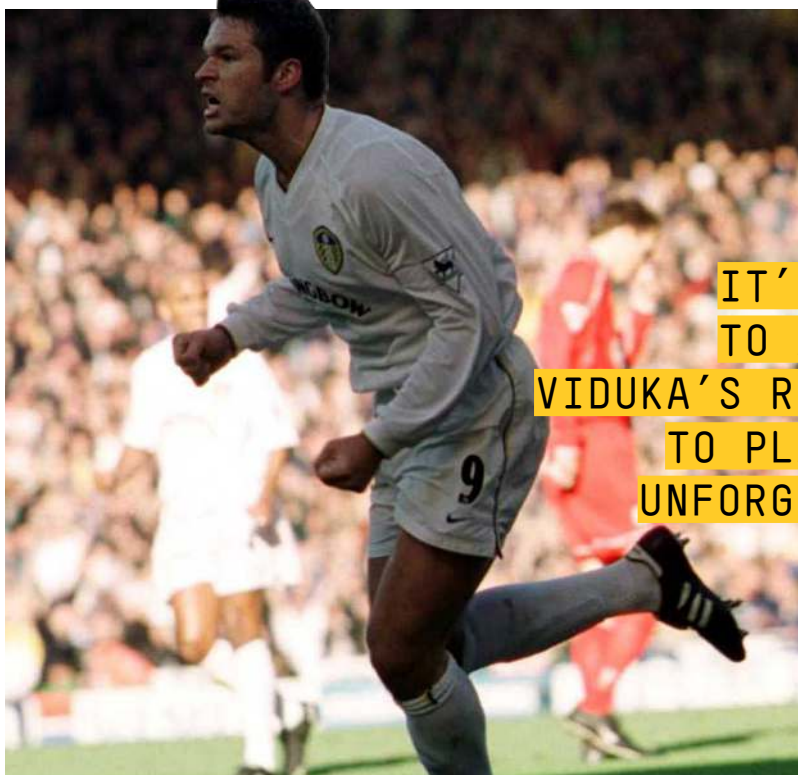
card in the critical relegation decider against Bolton. Fourteen years have given us perspective, and it's fair to ask whether Viduka's refusal to play against Portsmouth was unforgivable, or whether his many achievements in a white shirt have absolved him.

Tony Yeboah's another interesting example. Like Viduka, he was responsible for some of the

greatest sporting moments of my childhood. As I write this, the news has just come through that his goal against Wimbledon has been voted the best goal of the Premier League's early years. Yet, like Viduka, he ended his time at Elland Road acrimoniously, stripping off his shirt in response to being substituted and tossing it aside before storming down the tunnel. If one of the Sick Six had pulled a stunt like that

they'd have been lucky to get out of the stadium alive. Yet Yeboah received a hero's welcome when he returned, years later, to play in Lucas Radebe's testimonial, with most fans deciding that, like most things of the time, it was probably George Graham's fault.

So if a player can be forgiven for refusing to play and for disrespecting the shirt, is there any act that can truly be classed as



IT'S FAIR
TO ASK IF
VIDUKA'S REFUSAL
TO PLAY WAS
UNFORGIVABLE

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unforgivable? A transfer to a hated rival can split the fanbase on this question. Former hero Alan Smith remains loved and loathed in fairly equal measures following his transfer to M*n U*****d, with the passage of time doing little to temper feelings either way. Harry Kewell, meanwhile, remains the only former Leeds player to represent Galatasaray, an act that has seen his unpopularity plumb new depths. Unlike Viduka and Yeboah, Smith and Kewell's past heroics weren't enough to justify the choices they made — in fact, the knowledge that a hated rival would be gaining a decent player made the perceived betrayal all the more painful for the fans. You get the feeling that, had Smith returned to Elland Road, he may have been able to repair at least

some of the damage, although Kewell, his sins compounded by his presence in that fateful UEFA Cup semi-final and the manner in which he and his disreputable agent conducted themselves in arranging his transfer to Liverpool, appears beyond redemption.

Time will tell how the Sick Six are remembered, and it will be interesting to see if Bellusci remains the totemic figure of hate that he has become, or whether, as with Kevin Nicholls (sins: being shit, asking for a transfer to a relegation rival and general cowardice) our feelings turn to indifference. Cani and Del Fabro have reached that stage already, reduced to punchlines of half-hearted jokes about how bad we used to be. I suspect that time

might be kinder to Antenucci and Silvestri, both of whom produced infrequent highlight-reel moments that should last longer in the memory than the former's annoying propensity for being offside and the latter's poor distribution.

As for Doukara, I've given up making predictions about him. I wrote an article last year expressing my amazement that he'd managed to prolong his Leeds career into a third season, and since then he's signed an extension and scored one of the best goals I can recall a Leeds player scoring. Give it another fourteen years and we'll be putting his image on a billboard, together with all the other great number 11s. Oh, hang on... ●

ASPIRATION CULTURE

LEEDS UNITED ARE NOW OWNED BY A MAN WITH HIS FOCUS FIRMLY ON THE FUTURE. BUT OUR PAST HAS TAUGHT US TO BE SURE WE CAN SEE THE FULL PICTURE — FROM THE BVI TO MONACO, FROM SPAIN TO QATAR

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WORDS: MOSCOWHITE



Leeds United, and glitz. The words don't sit easily together, and neither do the concepts.

Is what Andrea Radrizzani and his team have brought to the club this summer glitzy? I'm not sure how else to describe it. It's something beyond 'professional' or 'businesslike', although those are in place. The quiet way Elland Road was repurchased, the conversations with the council about the stadium and new training facilities, the lack of transfer leaks, all suggest the club has moved on from the days of the owner waking up at lunchtime and following his instincts, until his instincts led him to crack open another bottle of Chivas Regal.

In front of all the solid background work, though, there

has been plenty to see. If works run on time, Elland Road will be looking very different at the start of this season to how we left it last. For a start, we didn't expect to see anyone other than Garry Monk in the head coach's seat, and now we have a whole dugout of new people. And possibly, soon, new dugouts.

That brings us to the stadium itself. The buyback was significant, reclaiming Elland Road from the obscurist ownership of Teak Trading in the British Virgin Islands and placing it — hopefully securely — with Radrizzani's company Greenfield Investment Pte was the biggest financial, symbolic and emotional statement a Leeds United owner has made in years. The biggest positive statement, at least.



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RADRIZZANI IS NOT
BACKWARD ABOUT DRAGGING
LEEDS UNITED FORWARD

LINKS TO
CULTURAL
LEONESA
ARE A NEW
ASPECT
OF LEEDS
UNITED



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But in its way, something smaller feels as significant. Walk through the Kop gates, between brick walls that have stood since the 1920s, gates where perhaps you bought this magazine, and you'll see it – or rather, you won't. The old programme cabin, more recently used as a staff signing in point, has been demolished, the ground where it once stood freshly tarmaced.

What was stopping anyone from removing it before? Not much, certainly not since it ceased to sell programmes. Nobody really minded it being there, and I doubt many will be upset to see it gone, except perhaps those who enjoyed buying and selling obscure away in there over the years. It's a change that didn't need making, but now it has been made, you wonder why it wasn't done years ago.

Questions that Radrizzani and co

don't seem to be spending much time wondering about themselves. Gulf Finance House, when they took over from Ken Bates, sold season tickets with the slogan 'The Past is The Past', but they had no sincere plan for Leeds United's future. The future seems to be all Radrizzani is focused on.

Which is not to say he doesn't care about the past. In fact, by looking so singularly to the future, Radrizzani is paying more heed to the club's heritage than GFH ever did. GFH saw the past as something to be left behind and – despite David Haigh's claim that his Beeston roots ran deeper than the well beneath the pitch – something they didn't understand anyway. To Radrizzani, it's the basis upon which the club's future can be built. Or at least branded and marketed.

Experience with GFH, and with modern football in general, force a

cynical frame around many of the changes of the summer. Images of club legends around the stadium are easily achieved and likely to easily please the supporters, and whether it's a sincere reconnection with the past or a quick 'n' easy charm offensive is up for debate. It's probably a lot of both; and the truth is that from a supporter's point of view both are necessary.

Back in January, assessing first impressions of Radrizzani and trying to understand why the hell he was buying Leeds United, I guesstimated that with his business partner Riccardo Silva charging ahead and enjoying life with NASL team Miami FC, his long-standing business interest in sports broadcasting, and recent ascent to president of Baofeng Sport, a business in China seeking to monetise sports internet and virtual reality platforms, Radrizzani was not going to be backward about dragging Leeds United forward.



So it has proved. The new changing rooms have taken the players' facilities from suburban leisure centre to five-star gym; the West Stand now has an entrance worthy of a top city financial firm; the proletarian north-east entrance proudly declares its allegiance to the club, past and present, and digital advertising hoardings are rumoured to be due any moment, perhaps followed by a dugout full of rally car seats, just like you see on the telly.

Just like you see on the telly is a good way of describing this rapid modernisation. Elland Road no longer feels as far out of step with its televised equivalents, not quite as weird to a first time visitor raised on Sky Super Sundays as it might recently have been.

The downside to looking like a football club from off the telly is that all the clubs on the telly look the same now, and our club is

not the same. Our club is Leeds United, and if it has stood out from the crowd in recent years because it has remained stubbornly old school despite the creeping blandnesses of the Readings of this world, that's not been a point of shame: it's been a point of pride. Like taking seven thousand away, Elland Road's wild untellyness has become part of the club's *raison d'être* — and, ironically, part of the reason the club is always on the telly.

Except, bizarrely, on its own TV channel. The one shambles of the summer has, also ironically, been in the one area in which Radrizzani has been most trusted to deliver. Eleven, his sports streaming platform, performs well across Europe, building on the years of work in sports media that built Radrizzani's fortune. Taking charge of LUTV, unveiling new free programming, installing new hosts and opting out of the Football League's iFollow platform for overseas streaming promised the club's media would soon be as slick as a Kappa-Kombat shirt pulled over an otter.

Instead the club could barely get any coverage home from preseason in Austria; first bringing down LUTV and the entire club website for the Borussia Mönchengladbach match, then presenting an empty Facebook page to viewers expecting to watch the Eibar game. Compounding the embarrassment both times was the easy availability of streams on less legit platforms, and the shame was completed, and the opportunity to blame 'local providers' deleted, when the Oxford game at Elland Road didn't make it on air on LUTV — a broadcast fans had battled through a cumbersome signup process and paid two quid each to watch.

We shouldn't make too much of this. Things go wrong, especially

in preseason, when they're being tested. Hadi Sacko has had a year to practice, but he was still struggling to find Chris Wood against Oxford. Equally, though, we shouldn't ignore it. Sacko should be able to square the ball to Wood, and rightly gets complaints when he doesn't; LUTV should be able to show Leeds United games when it says it will, and should be criticised when it doesn't.

That LUTV falls plumb in the lap of Radrizzani's skill set — again, like Sacko — only makes it worse. The cynical frame mentioned above was crafted by the cumulative works of every owner and chairman of Leeds United since, well, since 1996 basically, if not earlier. If we remember our history, as Radrizzani's heritage-heavy branding suggests we should, we should remember all the times we've been conned before, and look for patterns in case of it happening again, no matter how swell times seem. The European Cup final will be impartially refereed, of course. Fabian Delph's transfer fee will definitely be invested in the team. The bank will be visited and the ground bought back tomorrow, trust me. The past is the past, and these smiling men in suits are here to prove it.

The gut feeling about Andrea Radrizzani is that he truly is different, and that the glitz doesn't mask murk; but consistently tuning into a blank picture during preseason gave suspicious lovers of metaphors — me — something to work with. Radrizzani promises ultra hi-def imagery, but so far he has only delivered the digital equivalent of obscuring static; what else are we not seeing, apart from the team playing on the telly?

The links to Cultural Leonesa, a team in the Spanish second tier to whom Leeds have loaned at least

one newly bought player, are a new aspect of Leeds United that has received little light. Given that the links are via Qatar's Aspire Academy, whose Director-General Ivan Bravo is a board member at Leeds and vice-president at Leonesa, it's an area where light could be useful, given wider questions about Aspire's role in Qatar's World Cup bid, its ongoing role in building Qatar's squad for said World Cup in 2022, and the troubling reputation Qatar has in general, encompassing the deaths of migrant workers during World Cup stadium construction and the recent trade blockade by Gulf states accusing Qatar of harbouring terrorists.

Cultural Leonesa are 99% owned by Aspire, and are not the only European club Aspire own. KAS Eupen were bought in 2012 and play in Belgium's top division, and are described by Aspire as a "stress test" for its Academy players: "The club ... functions as a stepping stone for Aspire's local Qatari players as well as 'Aspire Football Dreams' scholarship players." The players on the Dreams programme have been selected, according to the New York Times, from hundreds of thousands of young players scouted across Africa since 2007, the best of them brought to Aspire's training camps in Doha and Senegal and then, via Eupen, given competitive experience and European passports, to facilitate transfers to prestigious European clubs, raising the reputation of Aspire and, by extension, Qatar as a centre of sporting excellence.

According to Transfermarkt.com, Eupen's first team squad of twenty-six currently contains twelve players transferred from Aspire Doha, Aspire Senegal, or Qatari club sides. Observers suggest that some of these players will later be given Qatari citizenship and

assimilated into Qatar's 2022 squad; Aspire firmly deny this, although they do acknowledge that developing players for the Qatari national side is one of their general aims.

Beyond Belgium, Aspire has had formal links with Ecuador's Independiente del Valle since December 2015, since when Sebastian Mendez has been loaned for several months from Independiente to Cultural Leonesa, where he played six minutes in the first team before heading back; and this June Aspire signed a "technical partnership" with Indian Super League side Delhi Dynamos FC, with an emphasis on "knowledge transfer" to improve the Dynamos club. Aspire has already recruited a new head coach on Dynamos' behalf, Ivan Bravo's friend Miguel Angel Portugal.

The extent to which Leeds United is involved with this network isn't clear — there has been no formal announcement of a link to Aspire or to Cultural Leonesa, so we can only read Ivan Bravo's presence at all three. Without that confirmation, it's hard to entirely trust the confirmed deal in which Leeds United signed Ouasim Bouy from Ajax, and loaned him immediately to Leonesa, or deals rumoured to be taking place in the same manner, involving Rodrigo Rios from Cordoba and Tony Villa from Valladolid. At the time of writing the former has moved to Cultural Leonesa, with local reports stating that Leeds "acquired his rights" along the way. Reports are also suggesting that Leeds might trigger Villa's £4m release clause — while others talk of bids around £300,000 — then loan him straight to Leonesa, where he spent last season on loan anyway, making forty appearances and scoring seven goals in the Spanish third tier.



Who would benefit most from that deal isn't clear, whether it's Leeds, acquiring a talented player for the future (Villa is 22), or Leonesa essentially having the star of their promotion campaign bought for them by Leeds United. It has been suggested that Leeds could gain under Financial Fair Play regulations by having young players in their ownership improve in the first team of another club, so that subsequent transfer profit can be added to the FFP balance sheet at Leeds; but that's a risky bet for a low return, especially on a player like Bouy, who is already 24 and has failed to make a significant impression at any of seven clubs he's played for. Rodrigo Rios, whose rights may have been "acquired" by Leeds as he moved to Leonesa, is 27, and his career to date doesn't suggest any reason why his transfer value would increase so dramatically so late in his career as to make a worthwhile dent in FFP.

With Angus Kinnear reasonably pointing out the severe



IVAN BRAVO HAS BARELY BEEN SEEN SO FAR, YET HIS INFLUENCE IS CRUCIAL

disadvantage Leeds United face in the Championship while clubs like Middlesbrough are chucking their parachute payments around, and using that to justify increased ticket prices — the club took in twice as much on the gate in 2015/16 as it made from TV — there falls upon the club a responsibility to ensure that our ticket money is spent very wisely — and spent where we can see the benefit. Linking into a network of clubs could be very fruitful for Leeds, opening up access to new areas of talent. But it hasn't done much good for Charlton Athletic, whose owner Roland Duchâtelet also owns Carl Zeiss Jena, Alcoran, Ujpest and Sint-Truidense in Belgium — where Jordan Botaka has ended up, after a season on loan from Leeds to Charlton. And for its benefit to Leeds to be truly assessed, any link up has to actually, formally exist, with a statement of its intentions and aims, so we can judge its success or otherwise — rather than as an ad-hoc arrangement of transfers and loans being sorted through the contact books of Ivan

Bravo and the Qatari monarchy.

Leonesa's sporting director Oscar Cano explained how they signed Bouy, while also explaining nothing: "It has to do with the relationship between the tentacles that are part of the macro-project in which we are immersed," he said. "But the possibilities of Leeds are different from ours. In this case we have been great beneficiaries of the arrival of Bouy because we could not access a player of his magnitude."

At the moment we have to take the tentacles on trust, and so far, Andrea Radrizzani seems trustworthy — Elland Road, tick, overhauled squad, tick, improved media — well, we can give him time on that. But it's that media we'll be relying on to tell us more about any Aspire Academy links, perhaps by letting us see and hear from Ivan Bravo so we can judge his trustworthiness for ourselves. He's barely been seen so far, and yet his influence over the club is slowly being revealed as crucial.

What's in front of us as we start the season looks good, and we've every reason to be optimistic about the new season, and the seasons ahead. Walking into the ground without having to dodge a sixties portacabin, entering the turnstiles beneath banners of Revie and Bremner, Wilkinson and Strachan, ready to watch Saiz and Klich and find out what Christiansen is made of: it feels good to be here, watching Leeds United at Elland Road, and to feel like things are going our way.

History is important, though, and our history has taught us not to be distracted by glitz: an evening playing carpet bowls beats a night at Majestyk's, anyway. And our history has taught us that it's not what's in front of us that we have to worry about. Elland Road is the only place for us, but what happens in the BVI, Monaco, Dubai, Italy, and now Qatar, Belgium, Spain and Ecuador, can be out of sight until it's already happened. That's when we wish we'd seen the whole picture through the static. ●

WHOSE

PRE -

A PROFESSIONAL,
BUSINESSLIKE,
WELL-RUN

SEASON

FOOTBALL CLUB
ENTERS
PRE-SEASON.

IS IT

WHO WINS?
NOT LEEDS
UNITED MUCH.

ANYWAY?

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WORDS: STEVE YORK

Pre-season at Leeds United is often like an episode of *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, where the formations are made up and the results don't matter. The reality is that we're often so deprived of football by the time our classically shambolic pre-season begins that we're too excited to have any objectivity on the matter.

It's refreshing, then, that despite Andrea Radrizzani's commitment to make Leeds a workable, functioning football club, we've still been able to experience the farcical sequence of events that traditionally typify this time of year. We understandably joked that the ridiculous Hockaday pre-season (that involved the first team standing in a stream, an opposition team not turning up — resulting in a Leeds vs. Leeds friendly — and demolishing a pub-team 16-0) was an indication of the chaos Massimo Cellino brought to Leeds... yet the calm and assured ownership brought by our own



media mogul in Radrizzani has still resulted in a bizarre pre-season.

It started with the first fixture being cancelled due to police pressure (supposedly as a result of the ultras who caused trouble during Leeds' tour in 2015) leaving an impressive number of fans in Austria with little else to do but drink in the sunshine. We then had an impromptu friendly (that neither club formally acknowledged was happening), though opponents Bursaspor elected to stream the game live. After we'd seen Marco Silvestri's concerted effort to hammer nails into his own Leeds United coffin, the stream cut to adverts and never returned (supposedly because UEFA hadn't consented to the broadcast). An enterprising individual then started Periscoping the game, but was threatened with police intervention and violence if he didn't suspend his activities. Only a Leeds pre-season could have a 'cease and desist' order issued with threats of violence on our first game,

though this didn't prevent it from being illegally streamed. Leeds were rubbish anyway so perhaps it's no bad thing.

The following game against Borussia Mönchengladbach was broadcast on LUTV, except it wasn't. Inexplicably, the club hadn't quite understood the online demand for the stream and it collapsed under its own weight. Though official channels were keen to stress that the fault lay with the broadcaster in Austria. The performance was better and a hard-earned 1-1 result perhaps hinted that Leeds were gelling.

The final game in Austria was against Eibar, and Leeds elected to stream this live on Facebook which was more hilarious than it sounds. There's a long-running joke among 'sane' fans (who don't have tattoos of Massimo Cellino adorning their body) that the loudest voices on the Leeds United Facebook groups are an entirely different species.

Often these voices are used to proclaim Marco Silvestri as Italy's future Buffon replacement, or Peppe Bellucci as the thinking man's Leonardo Benucci. This certainly seemed to be the case on the Eibar stream, as fans fervently enquired who players were, though my favourite moments were fans asking for the score (despite it being proudly presented on screen) and others asking which side was Leeds. Leeds were playing in white, by the way. A basic level of familiarity with the players and the understanding that Leeds will aim to play in white by default would allow most fans to make an educated guess, though I sense our PVA-glue eating contingent on Facebook should be excused to some degree for being a few thousand years behind human evolution. Unless, of course, Bianchi was the finest footballer to grace the hallowed turf at Elland Road and we're all too blind to see it.

As for the game with Eibar? We



THE ONLY THING
MISSING WAS BERARDI
TRYING TO MURDER THE
WATER WITH AN OAR

lost. Not the most successful foreign tour, but then it's all about fitness. Or is it all about teamwork? Or is it about results? This really depends who you talk to.

A cheerful reunion with Pep Clot awaited as our last chance to see Leeds play before the pressure of competitive fixtures set in. The club again placed their confidence in LUTV and attempted to learn from past mistakes, implementing a small pay per view charge of just £1.99 (presumably reducing the audience size). Typically, LUTV collapsed and refunds were issued. We won, though, so at least pre-season didn't end without us tasting the sweet flavours of victory. We even got to unrealistically elevate our expectations of new signings like Saiz and Alioski (who I'm resisting labelling as Adryan 2.0: Adryan Harder).

We may not have had the Hockaday-era paddling in the stream technique, but Leeds still managed to submerge the squad in cold fresh water by taking the players white-water rafting. The only thing that was missing from

this exercise was seeing Gaetano Berardi trying to murder the water with an oar, or Marco Silvestri being tossed a life jacket and failing to catch it entirely.

But do results matter? Are Leeds at a disadvantage because we've only managed to topple Oxford or is it really more about getting minutes on the pitch as you integrate players into the club?

The 2016/17 season was Leeds' most successful in recent memory, yet pre-season was not exactly filled with difficult games (though we did win four out of five of them, losing only to Peterborough yet beating Atalanta, a side who would go on to qualify for the Europa League).

The 2015/16 season had some incredibly hard games in Eintracht Frankfurt (loss), Hoffenheim (loss), Everton (win) and Wycombe (win). This seems like a more useful set of fixtures in terms of blooding a squad and making them compete (something you'll struggle to do if you're playing non-league opposition who can't meaningfully beat you on quality). Yet the 2015/16

season was a grim affair we're all still trying to forget.

2014/15 was a miserable year and the pre-season that preceded it was again lacking difficult games (no insult to Swindon and Dundee, nor Mansfield who comfortably beat us) but Leeds did win most of the games. So I think it's fair to say that the results are perhaps not the most important factor. Our promotion season in 2009/10 had a pre-season filled with draws against sides like Newcastle and Blackburn and a win against Burnley.

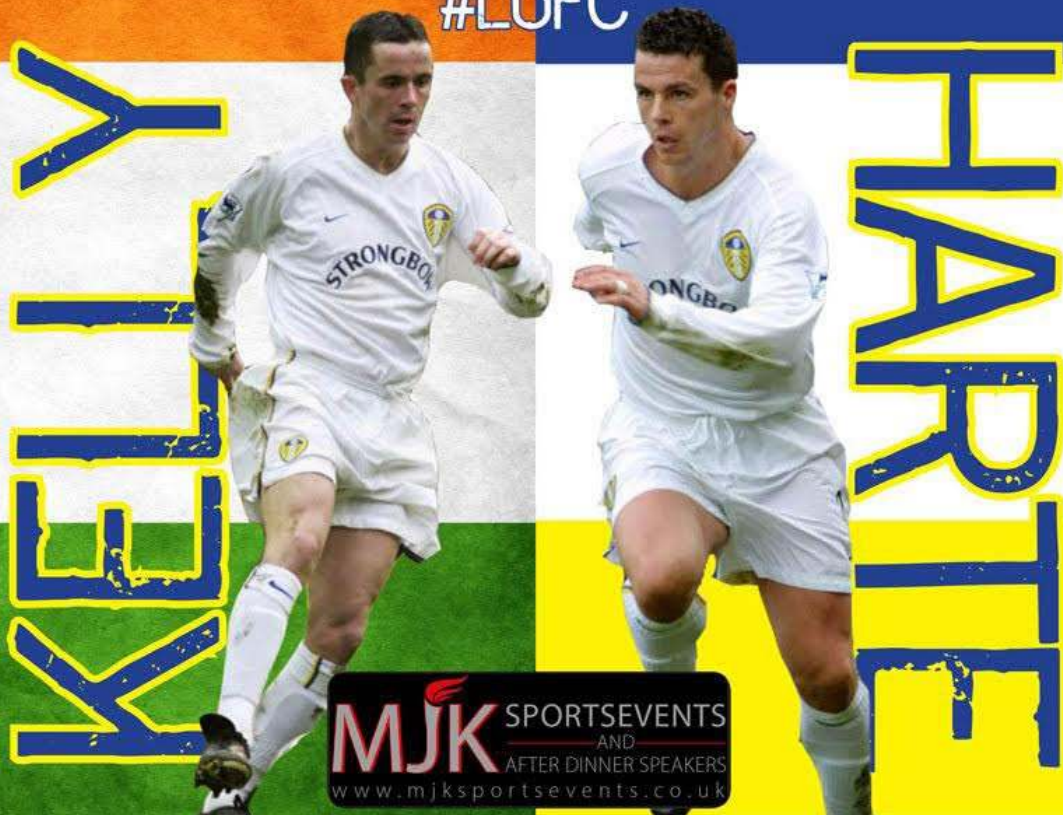
Maybe it is all about fitness. Maybe it isn't. Maybe it's all about ensuring you've got your transfer activity sorted before you play your friendlies, because it's not tremendously helpful to add five first team players when you've finished with your training camp and team bonding exercises. But then what do I know? What I do know is that at the time of writing we rather need a left-back, a centre-back and another forward. But then based on how things have gone, this Radrizzani era could be unlike any other. ●



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ENOUGH TO
KNOW WHAT'S
GOING ON WITH
LEEDS UNITED
SOMETIMES,
BUT HARDER
STILL WHEN
YOU'RE ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF
THE WORLD.

WORDS: RILEY BRETTELL

62

T

his was the time. Finally, everything just seemed to be coming together.

After six years of waking up at 5:30am midweek to listen to the dulcet tones of Thom Kirwin describe the likes of Ipswich and Barnsley playing my beloved Leeds off the park, while Eddie Gray bemoaned Jimmy Kebe's refusal to track back or the lack of composure from Lee Peltier, Leeds were finally going up.

It had taken until now for me to even consider the possibility of promotion (the Leeds pessimism does extend to us fans spread around the world), but the 2-0 victory over Brighton had settled it in my mind.

That time was March 2017.

You probably don't need me to remind you what happened next,

but just in case anyone reading has been a Marcus Antonsson kind of missing since then and thought they were headed for a nice day out to watch Leeds play a goliath like Bournemouth today, I'll give you the tip — Leeds did Leeds and it didn't go to plan after that glorious night.

At least that's how it appeared from the other side of the world.

So, another year in the Championship it is, and after what looks to have been a strangely uneventful and dare I say professional off-season by the club it's very hard to know what to expect this season from 10,530 miles away.

That perception may differ for those of you on the frontlines in the UK, but it's the reality for this 21 year old Leeds tragic living the good life in Melbourne.

While looking into the rear view

mirror to ponder where the hell the months since the Wigan game have gone, the first game of the new season has jumped out and smashed my front windscreen like a Rodolph Austin rocket into the corporate boxes of the south stand.

The Championship is certainly a funny thing from this far away.

New TV deals mean even the Premier League is hard to follow if you're not prepared to pay an arm and a leg for the privilege, so if you expect to get the next flight into Tullamarine and be served with Championship updates think again.

The internet gives us access to any whites news we'll realistically need, but suffice to say waking up to three-thousand tweets and retweets from @Leedsgenuinenewspag3 and the in-the-know JimmyMOTLUFC types can make it hard to know what's what.



IF YOU EXPECT TO FLY INTO TULLAMARINE AND GET CHAMPIONSHIP UPDATES THINK AGAIN

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Free LUTV should help the cause — despite coming five years later than it should have — although the conversation here regarding the prices for match streaming access sound just like those being had around ticketing to Elland Road back in the motherland.

Despite our grievances this is undoubtedly the most exciting time to be a Leeds fan in my time following the club, although given that this period of my life began around the ‘Leeds nil Blackpool five’ stage the bar has been set low.

Everyone’s unsure about what we might get out of Thomas Christiansen and the new boys Saiz, Alioski, Klich and co, but I’m tipping that alongside the heart of the side Gary M*nk forged last season, led by Jansson and Wood (who will be adopted as an Aussie if he keeps going the way he is), Leeds will give us plenty to smile about this coming year.

At best, well, I’m already budgeting for flights and accommodation around May 2018.

At worst it will be an improvement on seeing Neil Warnock respond to conceding a third on the stroke of half-time by pulling Sam Byram off for Danny Pugh, or watching Casper Sloth and Tommaso Bianchi knocking it backwards in the hope Marco Silverstri’s distribution skills will miraculously improve. As they say, always remember where you came from.

Spare a thought this season for those of us scattered around the globe who will be sharing every pass, shot, tackle, goal, near miss, dubious refereeing decision and “SQUARE IT HADI” moment this season.

While you’re clicking through the Elland Road turnstiles at 2:45pm each Saturday after drinking a skin-full of beer, I’ll be readying an ~~illegal stream to save paying for LUTV~~ a perfectly legal stream on my laptop to enjoy at 1am on Sunday — probably also after drinking a skin-full of beer in the preceding hours.

While you’re heading into the ground amid the snow at 7:30pm on a Tuesday night, I’ll be tuning into ~~someone’s Facebook live video from the Kop~~ LUTV’s fantastic stream on my phone on a 6:30am train from Essendon station on a balmy summer morning.

Our circumstances are different, but we’ve all got the same dream. I’m looking forward to going through it all together once again. ●

CHANGES ARE NO GOOD

IT'S BEEN A SUMMER OF BIG CHANGES
AT LEEDS UNITED, WHICH IS GREAT.
BUT WHAT IF THEY DON'T WORK?

WORDS: DAVID FINNEMORE

When you really think about it, optimism in football is such an odd thing. Of the 92 Football League sides starting their season this month, all but a handful of utterly tragic cases are currently full to the brim with a sense of giddiness for what the next 46 games bring with them.

I'm sure at the back of our minds, there's a slight nagging feeling every year that we repress that our confidence is actually misplaced. We need a new number 4... that striker we've signed has pretty poor record... has Giuseppe really gone?

But despite all the positivity that has gone on throughout this summer, the overwhelming feeling I have leading into this season is, 'what if all this nice stuff just doesn't work?' It's a horrendously negative attitude to take, and I'm certainly not in the majority, but for me, there's a question mark over all the changes this summer that just won't go away, in spite of everything rational occurring that should be

removing this doubt entirely.

A lot of things have changed over this summer from last year, so what happens if our Bartley-less defence is as porous as it was during those especially grim days of the perpetually flummoxed Andy O'Brien? What if Felix is indeed preferred to Rob Green and doesn't hit the ground running? What if James Beattie's presence was the only thing that made Chris Wood the prolific striker we fell in love with last year? What if those really exciting new Europeans, Saiz, Klich and Alioski, don't fit in, or worse, split the group as we've seen previously? What if Gaetano Berardi is unable to play at all this season due to being chased through the streets of Leeds by adoring fans whenever he leaves the house, a la The Beatles in Hard Day's Night?

I feel these are all potentials (the final perhaps the most plausible) that could quite easily manifest into the same team that missed out by such a fine margin last year sitting in the bottom half of a division that is, yet again, stronger

than it was the previous year. So, when Christmas comes and we take stock of the first few months of the Radrizzani era proper, what is going to happen if the very worst case scenario occurs and we find ourselves in the relegation places? Is our green new owner strong enough and decisive enough to start again? Is he going to sack the fifty-strong backroom staff that's been assembled in the last few months? Does Orta directly replace Gwyn Williams in the 'yes, I was here the entire time but I'm not actually responsible for this landfill fire' role?

I would love for this doomsday prophecy to be utterly dismissed and ridiculed come May, and it's worth emphasising that this summer really couldn't be more different from the one that followed the previous brush with the play-off places. I think we can all agree that Mateusz Klich is a significant upgrade on Michael Brown at the very least. I guess what I'm really saying is — Swansea, please can we just have our Kyle Bartley back? ●

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66

ARRIVED E DE MARCO

WORDS: FIONA KYLE

ARTWORK: DAN MARSHAM

WHEN MARCO SILVESTRI LEFT THE CLUB IN JULY, HE LEFT A MIXED LEGACY OF WONDER SAVES AND HORROR BLUNDERS, A FAMILY THAT MADE THE CITY THEIR HOME AND A RED MARK ON HIS BACK. IT'S TIME TO REFLECT ON HIS THREE YEARS AT LEEDS.

THERE ARE MISTAKES, AND THEN THERE ARE MISTAKES

Redfearn, who was manager at the time.

Giuseppe Bellusi, who also left the club this summer, became the face of the Sicknote Six and was the outlet for most of the fans' vitriol — the abuse he got at Guiseley in pre-season was hard to watch, however much he might have deserved it. But all six players wear the remnants of the incident like a lipstick stain that will never wash off. And Marco was one of them — for all his dad might have denied it on Facebook. He was young, he was naive, he succumbed to peer pressure and made a bad decision. A mistake.

On the pitch his mistakes are as legendary as his heroics. Silvestri is an excellent shot stopper — no one would deny that. His man-of-the-match winning performance against Middlesbrough at the Riverside that gave Leeds the 1-0 victory back in February 2015 will never be forgotten. If that game had gone on all night, no shot would have got past him — it was one of those performances. More recently, in one of the best nights to grace Elland Road in years, Silvestri managed to save three penalties in the shootout against Norwich in the EFL Cup. He revealed afterwards that he and his wife Sofia had spent time studying the Norwich players' penalty techniques, and it was this knowledge that enabled him to stand tall in the centre of the goal rather than diving either way against Pritchard's strike. He told the media his dream tie

would be Liverpool at Anfield and that's exactly what he got. But this dream became a nightmare for Silvestri, as his hesitation allowed Liverpool to score their first goal as they went on to win 2-0. A mistake.

And it is this hesitance that cropped up again and again in his performances and stops him from being a great goalkeeper. The lack of ability to command his area, to communicate with the defence. Watching Rob Green in goal last season, it was easy to see the difference, how Green yelled at his defence, leaving no room for uncertainty or confusion.

Some of Silvestri's performances that are memorable for the wrong reasons include Ipswich at home in September 2015; his classic spilling manoeuvre that let Hooper score at Hillsborough in January 2016; being sent off at Rotherham in April 2016 — the list goes on. Mistakes, mistakes and more mistakes.

And now he's gone, back to Italy, taking his fans' favourite wife with him. He's swapped the grim beauty of LS11 for the historic city of Verona and the surrounding Italian lakes. It was time for him to leave and I wish him well. In a period of short termism and upheaval he was a constant. I hope this is his happy ending — he didn't look happy during his last season in Leeds. Perhaps his mistakes were coming back to haunt him. Silvestri made many mistakes at Leeds. It's time for him to learn from them somewhere else. ●

R C I



ary Speed once said: "Everybody makes mistakes, but when goalkeepers make

them, it is costly. That's the nature of being a goalkeeper." For proof, just look at Rob Green. Ask supporters about his first season at Leeds United and you're as likely to hear about his mistakes against QPR and Newcastle as his heroics against Sheffield Wednesday or Brighton.

But there are mistakes, and then there are mistakes.

The name Marco Silvestri will always be synonymous with the 'Sicknote Six' — the six players that pulled out of the squad to face Charlton back in April 2015, widely believed to be a move orchestrated to undermine Neil



Thomas Christiansen

PRESEASON PLAN B

THIS PRESEASON, THOMAS CHRISTIANSEN
HAS HAD THE CHANCE TO MAKE THE
PLANS GARRY MONK DIDN'T HAVE

WORDS: DALE HOLT

ARTWORK: REMY WALKER



hat a weird summer!

Around this time we're all usually whinging about the club's transfer activity, wondering who the next gaffer will be, and hoping the owner would quite simply bugger off.

Radz has all this covered, and compared to previous regimes he's more Churchill than Cellino. Likeable. Honest. Driven.

The appointment of Thomas Christiansen came as a surprise, but he impressed me in his first press conference. "This isn't just an opportunity, this is THE opportunity," he said, showing his understanding of our club and what it means to him. And, importantly, he also said he likes his teams to be "adaptable to different situations."

Tactically Leeds were very good for the majority of last season, but when the going got tough in the last eight games, Garry Monk stuck to his ways. We had no plan B; opposing teams had worked us out and we paid the price for it.

This summer we've completed most of our signings early, meaning TC has been able to use the full preseason schedule to establish a plan A, B and C, and the new players all seem to add that bit extra we needed to build on last season.

After a routine victory at Guiseley the squad headed for Austria, the perfect opportunity to bond as a team. When I saw images of the players sat in a river, nightmares of The Hock and Junior Lewis resurfaced. However, unlike that trip, we actually played against some very good sides from La Liga and the Bundesliga, rather than seeing Noel Hunt bag a hat trick against the Dog & Duck.

The cancelled and then arranged friendlies were a farce, and

on ingraining his philosophy on the players, establishing various ways of playing and giving the players a chance to get minutes under their belt. Despite losing 3-0 to Bursaspor, lessons will have been learned. Similarly, the games against Eibar and Oxford provided contrasting playing styles to compete with, and further lessons learned.

The last friendly wasn't the most exciting, but winning the

WHEN I SAW THE PLAYERS SAT IN A RIVER, NIGHTMARES OF THE HOCK RESURFACED

69

using a periscope to see a behind closed doors game isn't what fans travel for. Having said that, a private friendly does bring its positives for the new gaffer.

As a coach, it's very easy to get caught up in the atmosphere and with wanting to please the fans, especially when they've travelled across Europe to support you. Of course you want to win, but that's not really what preseason is about. TC will have focused

week before the season starts is good to build momentum. It also gave everyone the opportunity to show Pep Clotet the appreciation he deserved. What he did for us last season shouldn't be underestimated, and I wish him all the best for the future.

The season is now finally upon us. I don't do predictions, but with all the positivity over this summer, why can't we achieve something big this season? ●

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IN SEARCH OF LOST TEMPS: 100 LOANS

Back in March 2011, TSB published a centre spread by Wayne Gamble of The Beaten Generation, bringing all 54 of the players Leeds United had signed on loan since 2004 together in one handy graphical guide — 54 players who played for Leeds (well, most of them) who weren't even ours.

This summer the loan tracker finally hit 100, meaning Wayne could retire from updating this graphic online, and Rob Conlon could step in, setting down in a few lines — one hundred times — what these players meant for the last thirteen years of Leeds United, for PlanetFootball.com.

This season we're bringing it all back to TSB, ten players an issue, and countless shudders of shivering horror as we remember everything we tried so hard to forget.

WORDS: ROB CONLON

ARTWORK: WAYNE GAMBLE

70



1 STEPHEN CRAIGNEY • Southampton

Craigney was only technically on loan at Leeds for four days before his loan move was made permanent, but it never really happened for him at Elland Road, despite being an actual left-back at a time when we struggled for actual left-backs.

Still, he went on to play in the Premier League, with Blackpool, a theme that will continue throughout this list.



2 BRETT ORMEROD • Southampton

Eight appearances, one goal, a fine after being arrested in Durham, Oster's loan spell was eventually terminated due to what Kevin Blackwell wonderfully described as "shenanigans" at the Christmas party.

Still, he went on to play in the Premier League, with Reading, a theme...



3 JOHN OSTER • Sunderland

I've still not actually forgiven Ormerod for missing a penalty in a 1-0 defeat against Sunderland in one of my early visits to Elland Road, after he had wrestled the ball away from Jermaine Wright, on his way to scoring zero goals in six matches.

Still, he went on to play in the Premier League, with Blackpool, a theme that will continue throughout this list.



Blake scored his final career goal at Leeds during a loan spell that lasted all of two games before he ruptured a hamstring. Two games, one goal. As far as forgettable loan moves go, that's quite alright.



We liked Michael Gray. He was a solution at left-back, he was energetic, I mistakenly thought he was related to Eddie Gray. Sadly, the second time he joined on loan he was part of the side that was relegated to League One, which seems unfair.



Leeds could have signed King on a permanent deal after his loan spell ended, and the striker was keen to stay, but he had failed to score and so was allowed to join Watford.

The following season he finished as the Championship's top scorer and was part of the Watford team that beat Leeds in the play-off final. Extremely Leeds, that.



Not convinced he ever actually existed.



Now we're talking. One of the few genuine success stories of Leeds United's loan signings, Hulse scored two beauties on his debut against Reading and ended his spell with six goals in thirteen appearances before joining on a permanent deal.

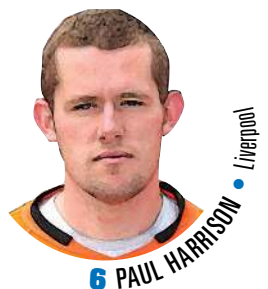
Hulse finished as Leeds' top scorer the following season as the club were beaten in the play-offs, before joining Premier League-bound Sheffield United.



In the chequered past of Leeds United loan deals, Douglas has to be considered a success.

In his first year Leeds reached the play-off final, but the club were relegated the following season after his move was made permanent. The midfielder remained loyal and became captain, when he was involved with two more unsuccessful play-off campaigns.

The late-noughties were tough, alright?



The founding member of the Leeds United Reserve Goalkeeper Signed On Loan Committee. Appearances: Zero.



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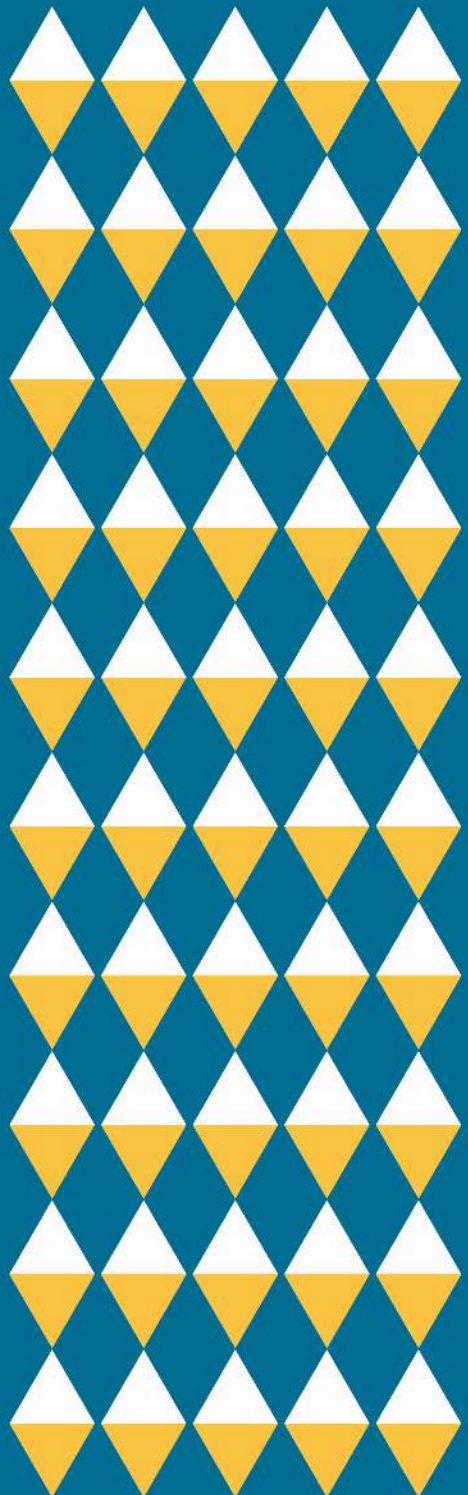
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THE LAST WORD

WORDS: MOSCOWHITE

— Hello, Mr President?

— Who is?

— How are you Mr President? It's me, Terry George.

— Who? Is bad line. Finidi George? Hey, you good player! I have new team now, Brescia, you come play Finidi George.

— No Mr President, Terry George. In Leeds? Remember, I took you for fish and chips that time.

— Verne's friend?

— Well, I mean, I introduced to him, but...

— Terence! Is good to hear your voice. Wait, are you in Italy?

— Ha, no, I wish, I—

— Okay, then is good to hear your voice.

— How is Brescia, Mr President?

— Oh Terence, is terrible. How I do this again? I say after Leeds, no more clubs, no more football, quiet life.

— I remember, Mr President.

— Then I wake up and I buy this furking club the last night. Terence I need to stop drinking.

— Ha, you do like a drink Mr President!

— But I thought Brescia, nice club, be simple, make new stadium is cheap, go in Serie A. But no, is same as Leeds. Every day they want money, pay the wages, pay the electricity, pay the petrol, is

unfair. Why do they always ask me to pay it?

— Um, didn't you buy the club, Mr President?

— Si, but I not buy it to spend money on it, Terence. When is football gonna make money for me? I love this club, this, this what is it, I forget name. Is like Breast, Terence.

— Yes, how is Eleonora?

— Is Brescia! I love this Brescia, I give it everything, I pour my heart and soul into this club so much, it hurts me that I trying so hard for so long —

— Didn't you just buy it last week, Mr President?

— And now they want money? Is joke. Anyway, they joke with me, I joke with them. Next game, they all pay five euro, they have to eat a pizza.

— Well anyway Mr President, I was calling because well, Andrea is here—

— THAT BOY IS LIKE A SON TO ME!

— Yes, and — well, by the way, how are Edoardo and Ercole?

— Who?

— Your actual sons.

— Ah, si. They fine, I don't know. Tell me, how is Andrea?

— Andrea is fine, he—

— He selling lot of furniture now!

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

— Well, no, actually he's selling cocktails. You see, he's got the keys to Fibre, and he says he owns it now.

— Si, I give him Fibre. He never run a bar before, be nice.

— Yes, but Mr President, that's my bar.

— No, is Andrea's bar. He do well, he good looking boy, he get some beautiful women in there! What's a bar without beautiful women, Terence?

— Yes, Mr President, I'm not sure if you ever understood—

— Anyway, I very busy. Say ciao to Andrea, tell him he make me very proud.

— Okay, and will we keep in touch Mr President?

— Why?

— I just thought, maybe—

— You coming to Italy?

— Not right now, but—

— Okay, you don't come to Italy, we speak on phone. You tell me before, you like speaking on the phone.

— Yes, me and Michael Jackson, we used to—

— Okay. Terence, I have football club to run. It's killing me, you're killing me, everything is killing me, I need drink, I have to go.

— Ciao, Mr President. Mr President? Oh, he's gone.



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