

# LETHAL

289 GOALS  
IN 40 GAMES



**PAUL  
MOULDEN**

WITH DAVID CLAYTON

# LETHAL

**340 GOALS**  
...in One Season

The  
Extraordinary  
Life of **PAUL**  
**MOULDEN**

Foreword by Paul Lake



# Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	9
Introduction. . . . .	11
Foreword by Paul Lake . . . . .	13
1. The Apprentice . . . . .	19
2. Unlucky Break . . . . .	31
3. Goals, Goals, Goals . . . . .	34
4. Keeping Count . . . . .	41
5. Raising the Bar . . . . .	56
6. Barry Bennell and Others . . . . .	64
7. Off and Running . . . . .	70
8. Broken Dreams? . . . . .	85
9. 'Name Your Price for Moulden'. . . . .	89
10. The Golden Generation . . . . .	100
11. Going Down . . . . .	113
12. Career Interrupted . . . . .	123
13. Dead Man Walking? . . . . .	135
14. Why Always Me?. . . . .	145
15. Cherry-Picked . . . . .	161
16. The Yard Dog . . . . .	178
17. Brighton Rock . . . . .	190
18. Once Upon a Time in the Midlands . . . . .	202
19. Same Old, Same Old . . . . .	216
20. The Wanderer . . . . .	226
21. Frying by the Seat of My Pants. . . . .	235
22. Second Chance? . . . . .	246
Backwords . . . . .	260

# The Apprentice

MY FIRST appearance of any kind was on 6 September 1967, when I entered the world – probably screaming, but undoubtedly kicking! – as Paul Anthony Joseph Moulden (my middle names after my grandad Joe and dad Tony). I was the youngest of two children my parents would have, my sister Helen having arrived 18 months earlier.

We didn't have much as a family – in financial terms – but we had more than enough to live a fairly humble and happy enough existence, if that makes sense.

We lived in Tonge Fold, a small village about a mile outside the town centre in Bolton. It has the A57 dissecting it and two rivers – the River Tonge and Bradshaw Brook – either side of what was a pretty close-knit community. My grandad Joe lived around the corner, but I never met my grandma, who had died young, leaving him a widower.

I would spend a lot of my time with my grandad growing up, but that wasn't because of childcare issues, as my mum didn't work – it was just down to the fact that I thought the world of him and loved being in his company.

The first memories I have of football are from watching my dad playing semi-pro at a decent level and of me kicking a ball around in front of my grandad's house. My dad was a winger who was about to become an apprentice with Blackburn Rovers, but my grandad, who had let him do all the schoolboy standard football up to that point, told him he needed to get a trade under his belt first.

Joe had been a Japanese prisoner of war and was a roofer back on civvy street, and he insisted my dad needed something he could turn to other than football in case things didn't turn out. Plus, my great aunt said my dad needed an education, too, so they were both worldly-wise and could spot the potential pitfalls of a life in football, which wasn't particularly well paid back then.

So, his apprenticeship at Blackburn became an apprenticeship in a local garage and he actually ended up with no club at all for a time as a result. But it wasn't long before Bury found out he was unattached and offered him the chance to play part-time, with training on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which he accepted. That meant he had games on Saturdays for the Bury A and B teams plus the odd reserve

match here and there. He did well and eventually progressed to the first team and within a few months, he'd played well enough to win a transfer to Peterborough United, who were the up-and-coming team in the Fourth Division at the time with big ambition and a bit of money behind them. On his debut, he played alongside nine internationals, so it was a decent club with a great squad.

By the time I was born, Dad had moved into non-league football and when I was old enough, my grandad took me along to watch him. It was a football-mad household and if you weren't a player, you weren't allowed in. There were footballs all over the house and I fell in love with the game almost as soon as I could walk. I'd be out on the field near our house or on Hind Street where my grandad lived – he'd always lived there and never moved from his humble two-up, two-down terraced house.

In fact, nearby Leverhulme Park was somewhere I spent much of my younger life, whether it was cross-country running, or playing football with mates, my grandad or whatever.

My first experience of organised football was when I was selected for my primary school team at St Osmond's, aged nine. I was only slightly built but could run forever so the coach put me up front. There was a slight issue, though – the actual rules of the game were a mystery to me, and I had no

idea about offside, so I was all over the shop and continually getting caught out. I had all the parents shouting at me from the sidelines, so that night, my dad sat me down and explained it all to me. He got out the Subbuteo pitch and put players in positions and by the time he'd finished, the penny had dropped, and I never looked back.

I hadn't been to watch any games up to that point, but my grandad took me to see Bolton Wanderers versus Everton at Burnden Park on Boxing Day 1976 and we sat in the Main Stand, but neither club were destined to be 'my team'. I have my aunt to thank for that!

After her mum died (she was my dad's sister, for the record), she went away to be a nun for a while in Manchester and I remember she came home one Christmas with a Manchester City shirt with the Umbro diamonds down each arm, just like my hero Peter Barnes. I loved it and my dad suggested I buy the shorts and socks to go with it from the money I'd been given from other people. So, we got on the train and, if memory serves, got off in Darwen and then walked all the way to Maine Road! It was a hell of a hike, and we approached the stadium from behind the Kippax and walked around the front and it was like, 'Jesus Christ! This is Manchester City's ground. Wow!' It was unbelievable.

We went into the souvenir shop, and I was literally like a kid in a sweet shop, just in awe of it all, and I found the shorts

and socks in my size, bought them and that was that – I was a Blue for life. I remember Gerald Sinstadt was doing a six-week feature on City for *Granada Reports* (I think) and on Peter Barnes in particular and I'd watch each episode in my full City kit aged ten, dreaming of one day playing like him. He was class and I always remember him playing for England against Brazil and I thought he looked like he should have been playing for Brazil rather than England.

For me, it was football morning, noon and night and I had a thirst to get better and improve as much as I could, practising, practising, practising. I was lucky to have my grandad as a mentor because he was so forward-thinking and, in many respects, way ahead of his time. As an example, my sister was an academic high achiever, but she used to get nervous around exam times and when she took her 11-plus to apply for a grammar school, she failed because her nerves got the better of her. My grandad told my dad that the only place for Helen was a grammar school where they would educationally challenge her, and so he insisted my dad find another way to get her in. So, he applied for a scholarship for her – which she was awarded – and today Helen is headmistress of a local primary school.

My dad knew that round pegs went in round holes and in me, he'd seen a spark of something, and he nurtured that in a simple but effective way. He set about helping me improve my game by being the best I could be at the basics. He could



see that from my early matches, I was very much right-footed and he knew that in order to have any chance of making it – or at least being as versatile as I could be – I needed to be able to use both feet when playing (rather than using my left just to stand on!). We had three Casey footballs – the heavy leather ones with the laces across the top that were like a rock when they were wet – all size fours, which was one down from the ones adults used.

So, every night in the summer, we used to go on to the field opposite my grandad's house. He made me wear a black galosh on my good foot and my boot on my left. He knew that when it came to shooting practice, if I tried to hit a Casey with my galosh on (which was a bit like a black PE plimsole), I'd likely break my foot! As a result, I'd only shoot with my left and, gradually, I got better and better and it started to show in games, too.

I just loved scoring goals, as most kids do, but it became my passion because, though I practised my all-round game regularly, maybe 90 per cent was focused on my finishing and I quickly learned that if you could score goals, you had currency at school and, in some ways, general life. It made you popular among your peers and also among older kids and I, like all kids, wanted to be liked.

I remember taking part in games at Leverhulme Park with lads who were three, four or even five years older than I was

and more than holding my own. One day, my dad wandered over to watch me and when he saw the size of some of them (I was being marked by a couple of six-footers with beards!) he pulled me out and told me that if I ended up with a broken leg, it would only be me who lost out. I was raw, but already decent in front of goal and could stick it away when I got the chance. He was right, of course, but it was actually a great grounding for me as time moved on.

Saturday mornings had always been about lying in bed and watching *The Banana Splits* and *Here Come the Double Deckers* on TV, while outside I could hear the sound of football boots on concrete, walking across the playground to the pitches in the secondary school near our house. But now, as I progressed, I was one of those lads walking across, making that noise with my studs and it was all just magical and exciting.

Now offside-savvy, I remember a game against Church Road where I scored both goals in a 2-2 draw – they are sort of my first ‘official’ goals that I can recall. They were a big rival at primary school level and afterwards, my team-mates and the parents were like, ‘Wow, you scored two goals against Church Road!’ and it clearly meant something, but for me, they could have been Manchester United or Rochdale – I didn’t have a clue if scoring against them was different from anyone else. But to others, it was pretty special and that stuck in my head. What I was aware of was that feeling of elation

when I saw the ball hit the back of the net. It was like an adrenaline rush that surged through my body – I've never taken drugs in my life, but I imagine that's the feeling users are chasing all the time. An instant and addictive high.

That was in my last year at primary school. Academically, I was struggling a bit, but in all honesty that was mainly because I just wasn't interested. I remember my mum being called in to see the headmaster who told her that my reading and writing was substandard for my age.

I was always in the remedial groups, but what nobody had worked out was why my ability to concentrate was nil and why I was so easily distracted. My auntie Madeleine was a lecturer, and she clocked the problem straight away. She asked me where I sat when I did the remedial work and if, by any chance, it was in the canteen with the large glass windows. I said it was and she asked me which way I faced, and I told her that I always sat facing the window so I could see what was going on outside

She looked at my dad and said, 'That's why he's not bothered, Tony!'

My mum asked if I could bring my army books and comics in to read because of the enthusiasm I had for them at home, where I'd get a regular supply from my cousin. I wasn't interested in the pirate and mystery island books they had in school, but anything to do with soldiers or westerns and I was

all over it. If there was a John Wayne film on, I'd race home from wherever or whatever I was doing to make sure I didn't miss it. My mum would shout me in and my bath would be run, then it was dinner, pyjamas and a war movie or western. It was brilliant.

The school weren't interested in letting me bring my own stuff in to read and so things carried on the way they had been. I suppose they couldn't really accommodate that, or all the kids would be asking why they couldn't read the *Beano* and *Dandy* instead of doing maths!

At Christmas, we had a school day trip to a circus in Blackpool and when I got back, I was full of this and that, brimming with enthusiasm and my aunt asked me if I'd enjoyed it. I told her it was the best thing I'd ever seen, and she just shook her head and said, 'Why are they taking *you* to the circus? You should be the only one still in class because you're not doing your work.'

And she was right, but she was also the only one who could see what was really happening, so as regards learning, I could tell you what was going on and what was happening in school but only because I watched it from the remedial table! Schoolwork? It was the last thing on my mind.

I'd progressed enough by now to play for the Bolton Boys Federation under-12s and was doing well. Whenever I used to go and watch my dad play after school with my grandad,

the older guys who spoke to him asked how I was doing and would always say, 'Can he play a year young?' I didn't understand what they meant, but Joe would always say, 'Aye, he can hold his own.' What they meant was, could I play up a year or two in organised games?

I was doing OK, scoring goals for my team and learning all the time. But everything was about to get put on hold as I had my first real setback.

It came playing for Bolton Boys during a game for the under-12s at ten years old and I suffered what would be my first leg break. It was on Worsley Common, and I was going through on goal when I just got cleaned out by this lad who came from nowhere. Looking back, it would be the first of many similar challenges I was on the end of. Parents watching later said it was one of the worst tackles they'd ever seen, but to me, I was just clattered, and I hadn't seen it coming. I crumpled down on the grass straight after in agony.

Our coach Len ran on. He had this can of 'magic spray' which he proceeded to empty on my injured leg, which was now almost black because I'd snapped my tibia and fibula straight through. As serious as it was at the time, I still piss myself laughing when I look back and remember how Len was quite pleased with himself, saying, 'Bloody hell, it's good stuff this innit?' He thought the spray was bringing the bruising out, so I said, 'Yeah, Len, magic – but it still really hurts.'

Eventually, I was helped off and taken straight to Bolton Royal Infirmary where the X-rays showed both bones had been broken clean through and poor Len couldn't stop apologising, probably because he'd believed I would be able to carry on playing if he put enough of his miracle spray on! It still cracks me up even now. But at the time, after I got back from hospital with my full leg in plaster, reality kicked in that I wouldn't play football again for at least 16 weeks – and that feels like a lifetime for any ten-year-old.

It was the first broken bone I'd ever had, but if there was one thing that made it easier, it was that my team didn't play for around 12 weeks while I was out because continuous heavy rain had waterlogged all the pitches, and that was followed by a long period of freezing weather meaning the sodden pitches had become rock hard and unplayable. My dad told me to be patient and that the games would still be there for me by the time I recovered.

I remember when I finally got my leg out of plaster, I went down to watch the lads train on a Tuesday evening, and I was itching to get back out there with them. On the Saturday, I went down again to training and said I'd go in goals for a bit, just to be involved. Within a few minutes of the session starting, I raced out to clear the ball and collided shin-to-shin with another lad and immediately felt agonising pain.

It was straight back to hospital where it was touch and go whether they put the plaster cast back on because they were worried that one more knock on my shin and I'd be in big trouble. They didn't do anything in the end other than remind me of the consequences, but it was a warning for me, and my dad told me I wasn't to start playing again properly until everything was bang on.

So I waited about another eight weeks until my ankle felt free and my leg was strong again. My dad had given me an exercise regime to strengthen the muscles during the interim which worked as well as any physio plan or advice I'd been given. All in all, I'd had about six months out and towards the end, I was desperate to get back and start scoring goals again.

That's what I lived for.