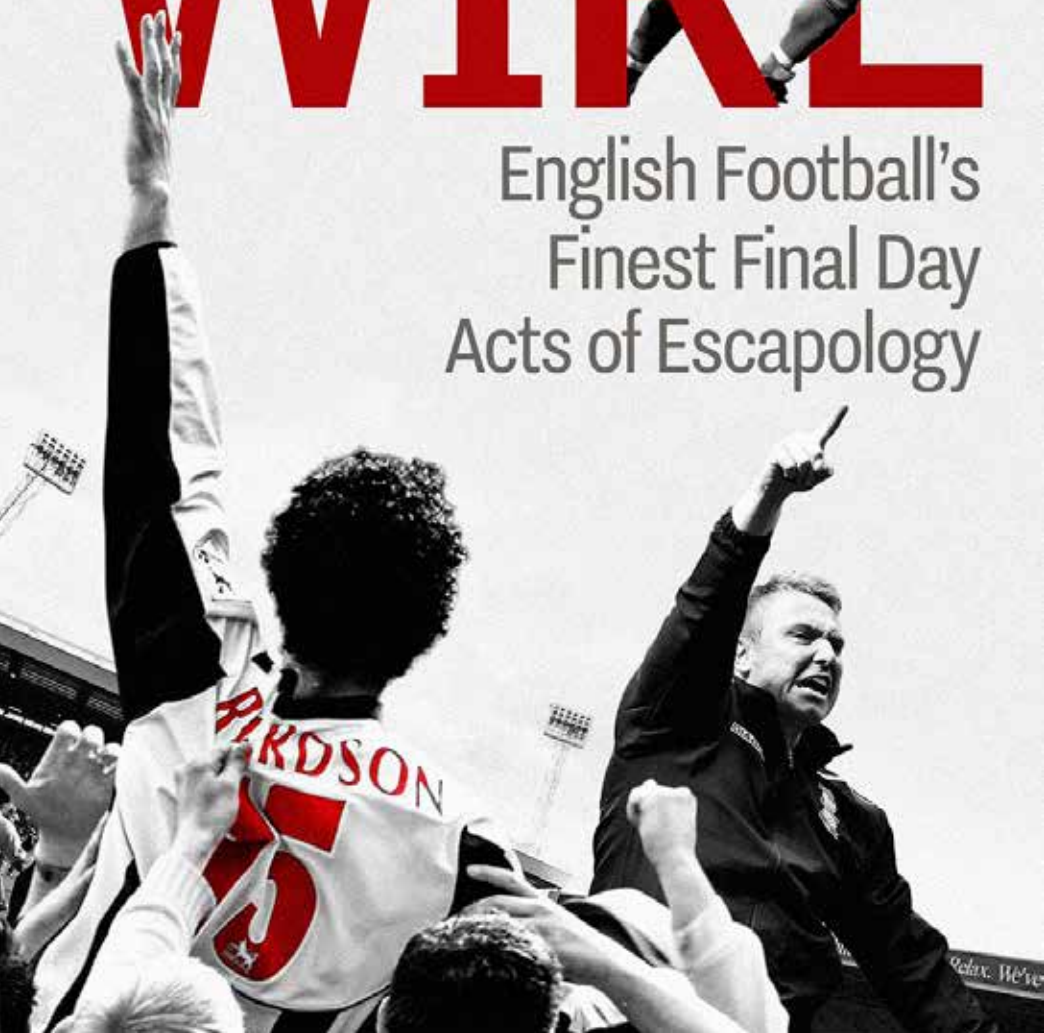


Tom Brogan

GOING TO THE

WIRED

English Football's
Finest Final Day
Acts of Escapology



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Alfie Sat on the Ball

Tottenham Hotspur 1975

Tottenham Hotspur 4	Leeds United 2
Knowles (5, 64 pen)	Jordan (70)
Chivers (50)	Lorimer (81)
Conn (79)	

First Division

Monday, 28 April 1975, 7.30pm

White Hart Lane, London

Referee: Ken Burns (Stourbridge)

Attendance: 49,886

Tottenham Hotspur: Pat Jennings, Joe Kinnear, Cyril Knowles, Phil Beal, Keith Osgood, Terry Naylor, Alfie Conn, Steve Perryman, Martin Chivers, Chris Jones, John Pratt

Leeds United: David Stewart, Paul Reaney, Trevor Cherry, Billy Bremner, Paul Madeley (Carl Harris 45), Norman Hunter, Peter Lorimer, Frank Gray, Joe Jordan, Terry Yorath, Eddie Gray

TOTTENHAM'S SEASON began in the shadow of the 'Riot in Rotterdam'. At the end of May 1974, Tottenham fans had fought with Feyenoord supporters at the second leg of the UEFA Cup Final. The Dutch side had won 2-0 on the night to take the trophy 4-2 on aggregate. Police said 70 arrests were made, and around 200 people were injured.

The events had a lasting impact on Spurs manager Bill Nicholson, whose daughter Jean was caught up in events on the ferry over. At half-time, instead of going straight into the dressing room to motivate his team, who were one goal down, Nicholson went to the police room to make an appeal over the public address system for calm but was ignored. 'I was angry that English fans had tried to smash up part of our opponents' fine stadium,' Nicholson wrote in his autobiography. 'I saw it as a national disgrace.'

When Nicholson arrived to speak to his players, he screwed up his coat and threw it in the corner of the dressing room. John Pratt remembered him coming in. 'He just said, "They are tearing the place to pieces." He stormed out and we never saw him again.'

In 1986, Nicholson recalled, 'I still cannot forget the scenes of the seats spinning down the stands. It was fortunate a lot more people did not get hurt.'

UEFA banned Tottenham from playing their next two European matches at home, decreeing they would have to play at least 180 miles from White Hart Lane.¹ Feyenoord were fined 25,000 Swiss francs for taking insufficient precautions to keep spectators under control.

The game was also Tottenham's first loss in a major cup final. 'I knew after the defeat in Rotterdam that the team needed someone else to lift it,' Nicholson wrote. 'In the past I could have made a couple of signings which would stimulate the club. Now it was a great deal harder to sign quality players.' Nicholson had looked at signing a trio of players from Queens Park Rangers – England captain Gerry Francis, Republic of Ireland striker Don Givens and the gifted Stan Bowles. None would arrive,

¹ Tottenham's next European match was against Ajax in September 1981, but the ban on playing at White Hart Lane had been lifted in 1979.

while club legend Alan Gilzean had retired from the professional game.

Before the season began, the only new face was Alfie Conn, who was signed north of the border from Rangers. 'It was right out of the blue,' Conn told *Spurs Monthly* in 2002, 'but I'd had some problems at Ibrox. I'd already spoken to Manchester United and everything was agreed with Tommy Docherty. So obviously that's where I thought I was going. Rangers were ready to go on tour to Sweden when I was called into the manager's office and told that I was going down to meet a club. I thought it was United but when I got to Glasgow Airport I found that I was booked on a flight to London. I was with Willie Waddell who travelled down with me and next thing I was at Spurs. According to Bill Nicholson at the time they'd actually been watching me for three years. We'd played down at Tottenham in a friendly and I must have made a wee bit of an impression.' Conn had been part of the Rangers team that had lost 2-0 to Tottenham at White Hart Lane in August 1970. He had also played at Ibrox a year later when Rangers beat Spurs 1-0.

Tottenham started the season poorly and couldn't put together a string of results to dig themselves out of the bottom half of the table. Their league campaign began with three 1-0 defeats, to Ipswich Town, Manchester City and Carlisle United.

On Wednesday, 28 August, Manchester City visited White Hart Lane, in an odd quirk of the fixture list, ensuring the clubs played their two league matches against each other before August was out. Colin Bell put City ahead after 52 minutes, with Martin Peters equalising. In the last minute, transfer-listed Martin Chivers played a back pass that forced Phil Beal to concede a corner. Mike Summerbee took the kick, and Tony Booth headed the winner.

It was their worst start to a season in 62 years, when, in 1912, they also lost their first four league games. Nicholson had also been involved in disputes with his own players, including Chivers, and several had asked for transfers. Nicholson knew that while the team needed new faces, it also needed a new manager.

The following day, an announcement was made that Nicholson had resigned. He had actually told chairman Sidney Wale of his decision in the afternoon before the City match.

Nicholson was 55 and, having been Tottenham's manager since October 1958, he was the league's longest-serving manager. At a press conference where he sat beside Wale, he outlined some of his reasons. Nicholson had become disillusioned with modern football. He alleged that players now requested under-the-counter payments during transfer talks, 'It is now becoming the accepted thing around London for a player to ask for £7,000, sometimes £10,000 tax-free.'

At the time, Tottenham's wage bill was viewed by the press as 'staggering', paying two players in the squad an annual salary of £15,000.

'Money took over,' Nicholson said in 1986 of the '70s. 'It became such an influence, people became frightened of losing. There were no free attacking matches, and the game was spoiled as a spectacle. Couple that with hooliganism, and the game has never recovered.'

Nicholson said he would stay on as manager until a successor was appointed.

Former player Dave Mackay, then Derby County manager, was the favourite to take over. Another former Tottenham player, Sir Alf Ramsey, was also linked with the post. Queens Park Rangers boss Gordon Jago was another thought to be in the running.

'I resigned because I sensed I needed a long rest,' Nicholson wrote in his autobiography. 'I had no more to offer. It was really nothing to do with Martin Chivers or anyone else.' However, Nicholson felt that when a new manager was appointed, he would be staying on at White Hart Lane in an advisory capacity.

Nicholson interviewed Danny Blanchflower and Johnny Giles for the job, and told the board he would like to submit his reports on them. Sidney Wale and the directors were outraged that Nicholson had interviewed candidates without their knowledge. Nicholson pointed out to Wale that he had never asked his permission to do anything for the good of the club previously.

Terry Neill, the former Arsenal player, then player-manager of Hull City and Northern Ireland, phoned Nicholson. Neill asked him what the standing was on a new manager at Spurs. Nicholson said that the directors were only accepting written applications, and if Neill wanted the job, he should get one in quickly.

On the morning of 13 September 1974, 32-year-old Neill was announced as the board's choice. 'I'm as surprised as you are to find myself at Tottenham,' he said at the press conference. Nicholson knew then that he would not have an advisory role at the club. There was a suggestion that the board didn't want a 'Matt Busby situation' where Busby's presence at Old Trafford loomed over his immediate successor at Manchester United.

Nicholson and his coach, Eddie Baily, left the club. The board refused Nicholson a testimonial, saying three players were already due for one. He was handed £10,000, while Baily's pay-off amounted to £4,000. They both signed on at the Labour Exchange the following Monday. Nicholson didn't return to White Hart Lane for two years, while Baily,

who had played for the club in the 1940s and '50s, didn't return for seven years.

Neill, who had made 241 league appearances for Arsenal from 1959 to 1970, installed Wilf Dixon as his assistant. Dixon had been Neill's assistant at Hull and, before that, had assisted Harry Catterick at Everton.

The arrival of the new manager made some players understandably fearful of their future. 'Until then, everyone had known Bill and had known they were wanted,' John Pratt told Julie Welch for her book, *The Biography of Tottenham Hotspur*. 'I was only ever on a one-year contract in 16 years at White Hart Lane. Suddenly we didn't know what sort of players the new manager was looking for and if we were going to be in a job any longer. It was an unsettling time.' That wasn't the case for Steve Perryman, who said that, early on, Neill put his hand on his shoulder after a training session and told him, 'Just to let you know, you're going nowhere.'

Only 12,823 turned up for the 1-1 league draw with Carlisle in October; the attendance was Tottenham's smallest postwar crowd. A few days later, Arsenal were defeated 2-0 thanks to goals from Chivers and Perryman. Neill then made his first signing when 24-year-old striker John Duncan arrived from Dundee for £150,000.

December to March proved to be a difficult period for Spurs as they registered only two wins in the league ahead of the Good Friday match with Wolves. Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest, then in the Second Division, knocked them out of the FA Cup after a replay in January.

Mike England, who had joined in 1966, retired, while World Cup winner Martin Peters moved to Norwich after five years at White Hart Lane. There was a suggestion that Peters had told Neill he could do a better job of managing

the side than the Northern Irishman. Peters had been club captain, and succeeding him was Perryman.

After five defeats in a row, Wolves were defeated 3-0 on 28 March, sparking a mini-revival. The following day, with only one change to the team, John Pratt coming in for Alfie Conn, QPR were defeated 1-0 at Loftus Road.

Bottom-of-the-table Luton Town were beaten 2-1 on 5 April, but Tottenham still found themselves third from bottom. Luton and Carlisle were four points behind; Carlisle, though, had played one game more and only had three matches left. Chelsea sat above Spurs by one point, while Arsenal, albeit with two games in hand, were only two points ahead.

The run ended with a 3-2 defeat to Burnley, who were seventh in the table. Luton, 3-0 winners over Leicester, were now level with Spurs on points, while Carlisle were practically doomed to the drop after a 2-0 defeat to Liverpool.

Spurs had the perfect opportunity to haul themselves to safety when, on 19 April, relegation rivals Chelsea visited White Hart Lane.

At the end of the 1914/15 season, Chelsea and Tottenham were relegated. It was the last time two London clubs departed the First Division.²

With 10,000 fans locked out of the ground, the 50,998 inside made for the biggest attendance in the country that day. Trouble broke out on the terraces before kick-off. Police waded in, and fans from both sides battled with officers. Officers dragged supporters by their legs around the gravel track surrounding the pitch. Fans flooded on to the playing surface, not all intent on causing bother; many

² Chelsea, though, didn't play in the Second Division as when football resumed after the First World War they were re-elected to an enlarged First Division for the 1919/20 season.

were simply escaping the mayhem on the terracing. Pat Jennings, however, was attacked, being kicked on the leg. He retaliated, and his assailant limped off.

‘The match might not have started,’ wrote Ken Montgomery in the *Sunday Mirror*, ‘but for that magnificent referee, Wolverhampton butcher Jack Taylor – living right up to his reputation as the world’s number one.’

‘About ten minutes before the match was due to kick off I was sitting in the dressing room talking to the linesmen when there was a knock on the door,’ Taylor recalled in his autobiography. ‘An alarmed Spurs official told me, “You’ve got problems. The pitch is covered with people. There’s hundreds of them and we can’t do a thing about it.”’

Taylor went up into the directors’ box ‘and was immediately horrified, for I could not see the pitch for people’. Spectators in the stand shouted at him to do something. ‘The television cameras picked up some quite frightening moments of violence in the crowd, but I saw none of that and never became aware of it until afterwards,’ he said. Taylor asked the Spurs officials to make an announcement over the public address system. He asked them to express that there could be severe repercussions if the pitch were not cleared, later admitting, ‘I ... felt it unwise to issue an ultimatum.’ Taylor had just returned from a brief period refereeing in South Africa where, coincidentally, he had to control an on-pitch riot between fans of Hellenic and Kaizer Chiefs.

‘There was so much noise that I doubt whether many of the people on the pitch caught the announcement fully and it certainly did not get any response,’ Taylor recalled. Taylor left the directors’ box then turned to his two linesmen ‘and said on the spur of the moment, “Come on. Let’s go out.”’

Taylor said he felt that although ‘some of the youths in the crowd were skipping about and acting the fool’, he was

sure that most had gone on to the pitch to avoid the trouble on the terracing.

The referee now began to move among the people on the pitch. 'Some of the loudmouths started to come round and chant things at me, but no one was aggressive or made any attempt to molest me,' he said.

Taylor approached one of the bigger fans on the pitch, who seemed to be bragging that he was in charge. Taylor challenged him to prove it by leading his boys off the pitch so the game could go ahead. He said, 'As the two linesmen and I stood in the middle of the field a gap slowly opened up around us and bit by bit the pitch reappeared as the supporters retreated to the terraces. We never manhandled anyone and I certainly did not do anything terribly heroic, but somehow the fact that the referee had gone out there seemed to register with them.'

In an entertaining game, Spurs achieved a 2-0 win with goals from Perryman and Conn. That took them to 19th in the table and one place above the drop zone. 'There's no way we will go down now,' Perryman told Ken Montgomery.

However, their penultimate match of the season was away to rivals Arsenal. Brian Kidd put the Gunners in front on 15 minutes after Osgood had failed to clear a bouncing cross. Conn had a glorious chance to equalise when Geoff Barnett, making his first appearance of the season in Arsenal's goal, dropped the ball. Conn was so startled by the unexpected opportunity that he struck his chance wide of the open goal.

In the dressing room, the players scrambled to find out the results of their relegation rivals. In their final games of the season, Chelsea and Luton both managed 1-1 draws, with Everton and Manchester City respectively. A point wasn't enough for Chelsea and it confirmed they would play Second

Division football the following season along with Carlisle. Tottenham were now in 21st place, and it was between them and Luton for that last relegation spot. Terry Neill spoke afterwards of 'picking up the players from the floor'.

Only in the 1973/74 season did the First Division introduce a three-up, three-down system of promotion and relegation. Before that, only two teams would go down from the top flight. It was the first change to promotion and relegation in the top two divisions since 1898.

Coming up from the Second Division were champions Manchester United alongside runners-up Aston Villa and third-placed Norwich City.

Tottenham's last game was at home to Leeds United the following Monday night. With a superior goal difference over Luton, a point was all that was required.

Forty years earlier, Tottenham were in a similar situation, rooted to the bottom of the league for a month; they needed a draw with Leeds at Elland Road in their final match to stay up. Leeds won 4-3, and Spurs went down to the Second Division, where they would stay until 1950.

One of the appointed linesmen for Monday night, David Bone, decided to stand down as he was from Luton. 'I would be in an impossible position,' he said to the *Daily Mirror*. 'Just imagine what Tottenham fans would think if I had the job of giving offside when they thought they had scored.'

Luton director Eric Morecambe, at the time one of the most popular television personalities in the country, said, 'I shall be hoping and praying that Leeds do me a very big favour for the second time in my life.' In 1967 Morecambe had been driving through the city when he took ill. 'I was rushed to the Leeds United hospital with a heart attack. They saved me just in time. All I ask is that Leeds United save me again and make an old man happy,' he recalled.

‘We are tense now,’ Neill said. ‘I’m feeling it, and the anticipation of what might happen is hitting us all. The players are shattered, physically shattered. We have lived with tension for some weeks now, and we shall just have to go on living with it for a few more days. At least there are no more ifs or buts – it is up to us now.’

After the defeat to Arsenal, Neill went to club secretary Ken Friar’s office in Highbury and called the West Lodge Park Hotel in Hertfordshire. He decided that he would base his Tottenham side there the night before the Leeds game. His thinking was that instead of pottering around their houses worrying their families, they could get together and worry collectively.

The next thing Neill thought to do was to invite along Romark, a stage hypnotist. Neill was friends with Romark from his time at Hull City, where the performer told the manager that he could improve his team through the power of positive thinking. Romark visited the team at their hotel before an away match at Bristol City. He got the players to lock their fingers behind their heads, then asked the players to believe that they were interlocking steel bars. Most of the players, when he asked them to unlock their fingers, found they couldn’t do so.

Romark’s name was originally Ronald Goldman before he changed it to Ronald Markham. He learned hypnosis after renting a flat from a German psychiatrist. Struggling to pay his rent, Markham struck a bargain with his landlord, who, through his lack of English, couldn’t hypnotise patients. Markham got on board as his assistant, living rent-free and learning hypnosis along the way.

A draper in Newcastle, he went bankrupt in 1956 with a debt of £8,852. Driving in an 18ft Cadillac while selling jewellery around markets to make a living, he totted up 26

motoring convictions. By 1963, he ran an auction gallery at New Bridge Street called the Oxford Salesrooms, where people came from all over the region to buy all sorts of goods at all kinds of knockdown prices. Comedian Bob Monkhouse referred to him as ‘The Lord High Auctioneer of junk in the north-east of England’. In the spring of 1968, the business collapsed with debts of £72,000.

Markham’s next move was to become a business partner to Monkhouse, the pair setting up a nightclub called Change Is, which was opened in Newcastle’s Bath Lane in February 1969. The name came from the idea that the club would be something quite different each week. Change Is featured moving floors – they had 15 permutations – a hallucinogenic light show, and the decor was mainly projections on curved walls which turned the place into jungles, deserts or ocean liners.

Monkhouse ploughed over £130,000 into the venture. ‘Whatever spell he had cast on me began to wear off after the first year,’ Monkhouse wrote in his autobiography. It all came to a head in the autumn of 1969 when Monkhouse called the bank to check that funds he had deposited into the company account for running capital for the last quarter had arrived. They had, but they had then subsequently been lifted by Markham, who had vanished. Monkhouse had to pay £32,000 just to close the club down and pay off their debts.

Romark, who was also running a hypnotherapy clinic in Newcastle, now decided to become an entertainer. He toured South Africa and the United States. In South Africa, as part of an argument with heart specialist Professor Christian Barnard, Romark hung himself on stage for four minutes, until he was apparently dead, and then resuscitated himself.

Romark's show, where he billed himself as 'The World's Most Remarkable Brain in Durban', became the longest-running one-man stage entertainment in the history of South African show business.

Romark moved into television with his eponymous show, which aired on BBC One for 13 weeks beginning on Sunday, 30 December 1973.

Harry Harris recalled Neill explaining his decision to bring Romark down in his book, *Down Memory Lane*. 'I decided to ring Ron Markham and invited him to help ease the tension,' Neill said. 'I was half inclined to think that this smacked of gimmickry and might have a detrimental effect on the players; we had, after all, lost the match to Bristol City the year before, but we didn't have anything to lose, and if Ron handled it properly it would be a diversion from all the pressures.' Neill introduced Romark to his players. 'There's no magic but he may have a few interesting things to say to you,' Neill said.

In his 2009 book *Big Chiv!*, Martin Chivers recalled Romark telling him he had seen Tuesday morning's headlines – 'Chivers Back With a Goal'.

'Do you believe all this?' Chivers asked Neill. 'I'm not even playing am I?' 'I'm 50/50 at the moment and I'll let you know tomorrow morning,' Neill replied.

The players sat around a big table for the evening's meal. An album of Romark's achievements was passed around. 'He had hanged himself and lived,' wrote Chivers. 'He had escaped from impossible chains and was also a hypnotist. The quiet sniggers were becoming louder as it was passed around.'

During the meal, Romark introduced himself and began speaking to individual players. 'We did not realise at the time that this was his way of selecting his stooges for his

performance later,' wrote Chivers. 'Ron's jocular approach and party tricks made them feel better,' Neill said.

After putting on a show for the players, Romark told Neill he wanted to see them individually before bed. 'It was obvious that he was going to try to hypnotise each of us,' Chivers recalled. 'Phil Beal point-blank refused.' Neill's memory was that only Pat Jennings and John Pratt were too sceptical to go in to see him, 'They were determined to succeed or fail without outside influence.'

'I wasn't curious,' Jennings said. 'I was more frightened of what he might do to me. I was confident in my own ability. But the other lads went, and they had a laugh.'

Chivers did entertain Romark, 'He talked quietly, saying, "All I want you to do tonight before you go to sleep is to think about your best games for Spurs and especially your goals."'

It was Chivers's birthday that day, and champagne and cake were brought into the hotel to celebrate. 'The team that was under the most severe pressure was laughing and drinking and seemed to have no worries,' recalled Neill.

'I don't know whether he did any good,' Steve Perryman wrote of Romark in his 1985 autobiography, 'but some of his techniques seemed similar to those we had when a sports psychologist came in under Keith Burkinshaw [in the 1980s], and we were surprisingly relaxed.'

'As Ron left the hotel,' Neill said, 'he said to me, "No problems. You are assured of the right result." Certainly, he helped to prevent the players from wasting nervous energy. They were relaxed, and their confidence was restored.'

Romark's work with English football teams wasn't a first. In April 1949, Richard Payne, then the most prominent stage hypnotist in the United Kingdom, worked with Hinckley Athletic in the Birmingham Combination

Championship. He put on a show with the team at the Working Men's Club Hall in Hinckley to raise funds to improve the team's ground. He then conducted experiments with the players before their 2-1 loss to Bedworth Town. 'They played better football than normally,' Payne said after the match. 'I consider the experiment a success. I'd like to try again – if the team will let me.' The publicity reached Russian and American newspapers and wasn't entirely favourable. Hinckley Athletic's chairman, Bert Jeffcote, told the *Hinckley Times*, 'I am very worried about what has been said and its effect on the club.'

Later, in 1949, saw the first prominent use of hypnosis in sports when the St Louis Browns baseball team hired Dr David F. Tracy after he had offered his services. Tracy focused on autosuggestion and showed players a technique where they could talk to themselves to feel more confident. His ideas, commonplace now, were considered odd and gimmicky.

In January 1950, Tracy gave a speech at Carnegie Hall. 'Maybe some of you folks think I'm crazy,' he said. 'I think we're going to revolutionise sports – not only baseball, but golf, basketball and all others where the individual is under constant tension.'

The Browns ended the season with a 58-96 record, finishing next to last in the American league. It was the same place they had finished the previous season, although this year they had won five more games. Tracy said he left his role as he didn't have the cooperation he wanted from manager Zack Taylor. He did, though, go on to work with the New York Rangers in the National Hockey League.

'We'll be bothered all right,' Leeds manager Jimmy Armfield told Frank McGee of the *Daily Mirror* when he suggested some people had inferred that they weren't

bothered about the result. 'One thing I have learned about my team is the pride they take in their performance. They want to win every game, and those fools who say we have no incentive to beat Tottenham forget that my players will be competing for a first-team place against Bayern Munich in the final.'

Leeds were without David Harvey, Johnny Giles, Duncan McKenzie, Allan Clarke and Gordon McQueen. It had been a busy week for the Elland Road side. The previous Wednesday, the 23rd, they had drawn with Barcelona at the Camp Nou to qualify for the European Cup Final, then on the Saturday they had drawn 1-1 away at Wolves. Their meeting with Bayern Munich in Paris was a month off, so there's no indication that game was on the minds of the Leeds players, nine of whom played in that semi-final with Barcelona.

At White Hart Lane, Neill went to his office and poured himself a drink. 'I couldn't prevent whatever was going to happen,' he told Harris, 'so there was little point worrying about something I had no further control over.'

Martin Chivers had been with Spurs since signing from Southampton in January 1968. His last start for the club was in the 3-0 defeat to Leicester City on 22 February. His only other appearance since was as a substitute in the 2-1 win over Luton on 5 April. Neill named him in the starting line-up.

It was Tottenham who made their mark on the game first. After only five minutes, Alfie Conn was kicked into the air around 23 yards from the Leeds goal. Left-back Cyril Knowles came up to take the free kick. He hammered a left-footed shot wide of what the *Daily Telegraph* called 'a slovenly assembled Leeds wall'. David Stewart, in goal, got fingertips to the ball but couldn't stop it crashing into the net for 1-0.

Knowles was celebrated by the Tottenham fans with the song 'Nice One Cyril'. The phrase was an advertising slogan for Wonderloaf Bread in 1972, where one baker congratulated another on his loaf. It was created by Peter Mayle, the creative director of the BBDO agency, who later wrote the bestselling book *A Year in Provence*.

Knowles made further surging runs down the flank and put in numerous crosses, two of which Chris Jones headed over the bar.

It was five minutes into the second half before Tottenham increased their lead, following another free kick five or so yards outside the Leeds box. In a training-ground move, Conn ran over the ball and kept on running as Knowles tapped the ball to Perryman, who moved it along to the accelerating Conn. Stewart saved the Scot's shot, but the rebound fell to the onrushing Chivers, who made it 2-0.

Fourteen minutes later, Spurs had a penalty. Perryman burst through into the box to chase a chipped pass when he was pulled to the ground by Trevor Cherry. Knowles stepped up and put his penalty low and to the left as Stewart dived in the opposite direction.

All was good for Spurs now, as long as they didn't do anything to mess it up.

'Being the flash little bastard he was, Alfie started to take the piss out of the Leeds players by sitting on the ball,' recalled Chivers. 'This is the last thing you do to Leeds. We were all shouting at him to stop.'

Perryman recalls, 'Towards the end of the game, with the joy of it all, the release after months of tension, Alfie Conn sat on the ball, which was an outrageous thing to do against Leeds. I said to him after the game, "Do yourself a favour, get in that dressing room and apologise now," because I knew he was playing for the Scottish under-23

team against them in another warm-up game before the European Cup Final, and knowing Leeds I didn't fancy his chances too much.'

'They immediately turned up their game,' wrote Chivers. Peter Lorimer cracked a shot from the edge of the box, which smacked off a post for Joe Jordan to tap in the rebound. 'They had been quite happy to drift through the game until Alfie started winding them up,' Chivers recalled.

'We thought, "Bloody hell, don't take the piss, just get on and play,"' Jennings admitted in the book *Winning Their Spurs*. 'I mean we're coasting a game, and all of a sudden ... you've got a war on your hands.'

'We were 3-0 up,' Conn told *The Scotsman* in 2015. 'Billy Bremner said, "You've just antagonised us." They scored two, but we hung on. Afterwards, I went into their dressing room to apologise.'

Conn made some amends by dribbling into the box and knocking in Tottenham's fourth goal.

Lorimer scored a screamer from 20 yards, bringing down the toilet roll that had been thrown on top of the net. It was 4-2, but Spurs hung on.

The Journal wrote that the players missing from the Leeds side didn't excuse their 'inept' performance: 'Few of those who played last night will be able to hold up their heads when they meet Luton players.'

The Tottenham fans stayed behind for a full half an hour. 'It was almost as if Tottenham had won the First Division instead of just staying in it,' the *Daily Mirror* reported. Perryman concurred in his book. 'I think Leeds were left wondering what the fuss was about,' he added.

'After the game, it was better than any of the cup wins we had,' Jennings later said. 'It was just a carnival atmosphere. I got more satisfaction out of staying up that year than I did

out of any cup wins because you just didn't want to be part of the team that went down.'

'It made me feel that bringing Ron to the hotel had been worthwhile,' Terry Neill told Harry Harris. 'Cyril scored two goals, and after the final whistle everyone at the club was delighted and relieved.'

'That night Terry Neill became the crowd's hero after being the villain for so long,' Perryman wrote. Neill was acutely aware of that, and he wasn't too keen to embrace the fans' change of heart. Neill recalled, 'Shortly after the final whistle, the local police chief came into the dressing room and said, "You will have to come out and make a personal appearance. They won't go home until you do. They are shouting for you." My first reaction was to think how different this was from the early part of the season when they were screaming abuse at me.'

Neill recalled that some fans had spat at him while others had sent abusive letters. 'All this went through my mind as the police chief stood at the door. "Tell them to go and get stuffed," I said. Perhaps in hindsight, that was undiplomatic and ungracious, but at the time, I meant it. I had a cup of tea and went home.'

The Luton manager Harry Haslam said the Leeds players hadn't tried. Haslam stayed in Luton to watch his reserve team in action. 'It's rough. Our season has collapsed in 90 minutes at White Hart Lane,' he added.

Terry Neill wasn't the last football manager to ask for Romark's assistance. He helped out Halifax, Millwall and Southport, among others. Crystal Palace's Malcolm Allison turned to Romark to motivate his side in 1976. A dispute with Allison over payment led to Romark announcing he had placed a curse on Palace. With a *Daily Mirror* photographer in tow, Romark offered to lift the curse on a platform at

Euston station, where Allison and his team had arrived after a defeat by Chester. 'You are nothing but a toad,' Allison said in reply. 'You are a liar seeking nothing but publicity.'

Romark crashed into a police car while driving a Black Maria blindfolded in a bid to promote his show at the Ilford Playhouse in October 1977. The crash landed him in Snaresbrook Crown Court, where he told the judge and jury, 'I can see perfectly well with the blindfold on. I just look under it.' He was fined £100.

In May 1982, Romark, then aged 55, and his third wife Ursula were jailed for swindling his dying mother out of cash, jewellery, silverware and ivory worth around £60,000. Four weeks after being released from prison in October 1982, Romark suffered a stroke and died in the Torquay flat owned by his mother-in-law. When Monkhouse heard of his death, he was working with the magician Paul Daniels. He asked Daniels if he had heard of Romark. 'Oh yes, he was a total fake.' 'Not total, Paul,' Monkhouse replied, 'I haven't smoked a cigarette for 25 years.'

What happened next season? A significant improvement as they finished ninth.

Did they eventually go down? Yes, in 1976/77, Spurs finished 22nd and were relegated to the Second Division.

Where are they now? Spurs have enjoyed an unbroken spell in the top flight since the 1978/79 season. At the time of writing, in the spring of 2024, they were having something of a renaissance under Ange Postecoglou.