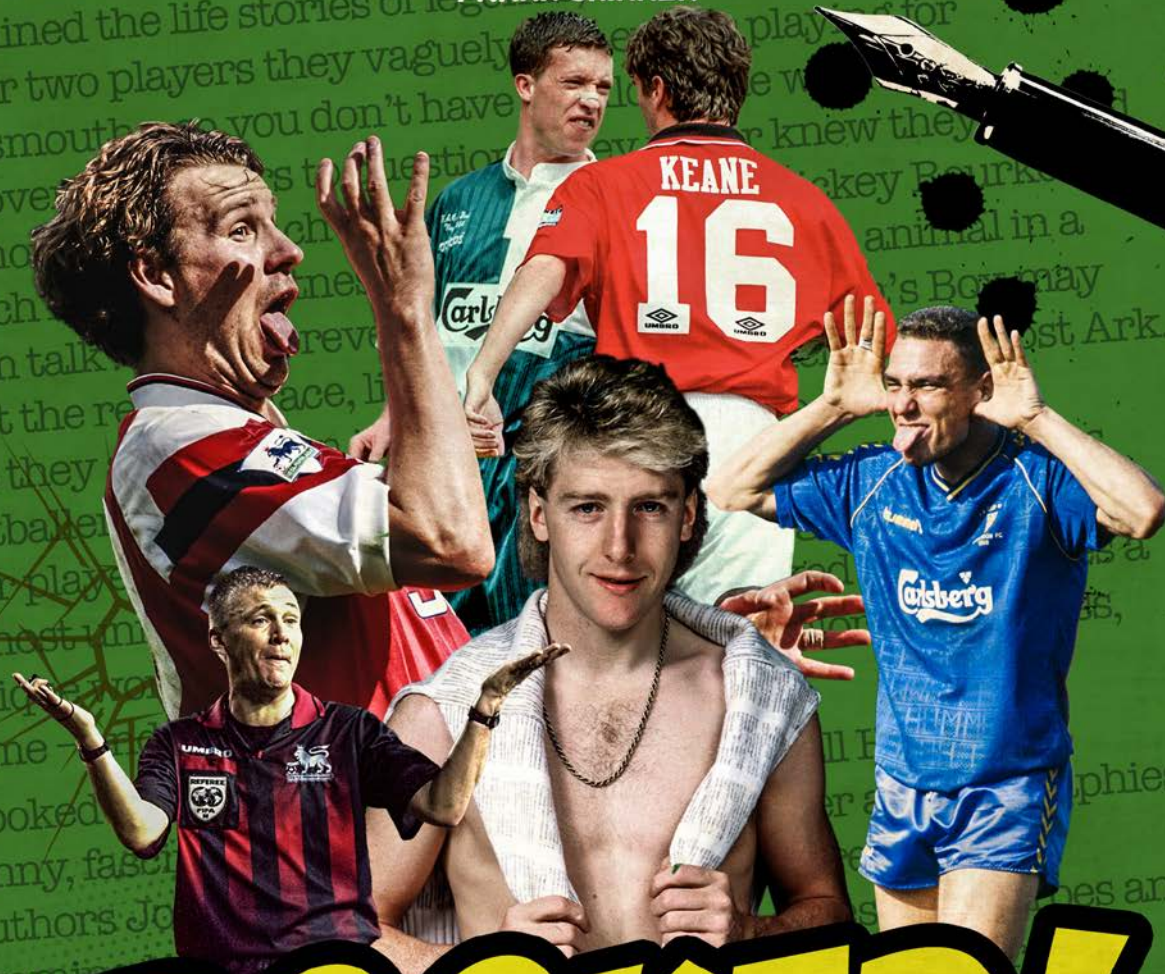


"IT'S LIKE SOME OLD PROSPECTOR PUT EVERY FOOTBALLER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY INTO A BIG PAN, SHOOK IT 'TIL ONLY THE GOLD REMAINED AND THEN POURED IT INTO THIS BOOK."

FRANK SKINNER



BOOKED!

THE GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO OUR FOOTBALL HEROES

JOHN SMITH AND DAN TRELFER



BOOKED!

**THE GOSPEL
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**JOHN SMITH AND DAN TRELFER
FOREWORD BY LEE DIXON**



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Title Contenders

Hoddledybook

As we've established, there are an awful lot of footballer autobiographies. As well as a lot of awful footballer autobiographies. In this crowded market it's important to try to make your book leap from the crowd like Sergio Ramos at a corner and demand attention. A catchy, interesting title can help significantly with that. On the other hand, if you're a footballer, you're already instantly recognisable to anybody who might buy and read it anyway, and you have access to a loyal fanbase that consistently proves itself willing to part with hard-earned money for any old rubbish they are served up (bad performances, third kits, club shop tat etc.), so why bother?

And not bothering is very much the watchword for many players who clearly think that a nice snap and a simple title will do. Hence the plethora of 'My Story', 'My Life in Football' or 'My Autobiography' efforts clogging up the shelves. Surely we can do better than that? We're not saying everyone needs to call their book *Snod This for a Laugh*,¹ but come on. 'My Autobiography' particularly rankles. Of course it's your autobiography if you wrote it about your life. Who else's autobiography is it going to be? Hats off then to those who get it right and call it 'The Autobiography', and hats even further aloft to the ones that call it 'An Autobiography' in the hope of milking their experiences for a sequel or two somewhere down the line.

One such chancer drip-feeding us his every thought is Harry Redknapp. His first book is called *My Autobiography*, the updated version

¹ It's by Ian Snodin. We still think 'In Snod We Trust' or 'A Snod's as Good as a Wink' would've been better. At least they're left open for Glyn Snodin to snap up. You can have those, Glyn.

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is *Always Managing: My Autobiography*, and then he went off-piste with *A Man Walks On To a Pitch* and *It Shouldn't Happen to a Manager*. The latter two consist mainly of dubious anecdotes and best XIs and are thin gruel if we're honest. If the trend continues, Harry will end up with a book called 'Two Nuns in a Bath' containing nothing but shopping lists and Kevin Bond's petrol receipts.

However, at least Redknapp hasn't got a hashtag in his book title. Unlike Rio Ferdinand with his #2Sides. Hashtags is it now? We give it less than five years before we have a footballer titling his book with just emojis. Our money's on Jack Wilshere.

So how can they get it right? It can't be that hard. There's plenty of sensible middle ground in which to operate between 'My Story' and *Fuckin' Hell! It's Paul Cannell* (genuine title), right? You don't need to be all Brian Eno about it and call it *Stillness and Speed* like Dennis Bergkamp, but we do ask that you spend more than the 30 seconds it took Kelly Smith to come up with *Footballer*. Come on, Kelly.

Of course, a play on words around a name or nickname is a solid start. *Drinks All Round* (Kevin Drinkell), *Hell Razor* (Neil Ruddock) and *The School of Hard Knox* (Archie Knox), all deserve a pat on the back, while Phil Thompson (*Stand Up Pinocchio*), Paul Sturrock (*Luggy*) and Andy Morrison (*The Good, the Mad and the Ugly*) probably want more of an arm round the shoulder as they mine their physical failings for titles. It's okay, guys – did Christina Aguilera's 'Beautiful' teach us nothing?

There are one or two travesties out there too. Neville Southall, who in recent years has emerged as a potential leader of a glorious revolution on Twitter,² called his book *The Binman Chronicles*. Nev is doing himself a disservice there, as the greatest keeper in the history of Wales was only ever on the dust for three weeks, but it followed him in the press his whole career.

Leroy Rosenior's excellent *It's Only Banter* is a disturbing first-hand account of horrific racial abuse suffered as a footballer in the 80s – not a compendium of shoes being cut up or nailed to the floor. Rumours that Jimmy Bullard bought it and was sadly disappointed are unconfirmed.

Meanwhile, there's John Wark. Shut your eyes for a moment and picture John Wark. Noble moustache for sure; flowing locks

² Of that 1985/86 Everton squad, the early signs were that it would be Gary Lineker that led us out of the darkness.

TITLE CONTENDERS

occasionally; dynamic running in his pomp; a whiff of my Uncle Stan about him in his playing dotage, perhaps – but for eight out of ten of you he’s wearing an Ipswich shirt, right?

Whether it’s got Fisons on it or not is probably down to your age, but it’s Ipswich right enough. Of course it is. He played more than 500 games for Ipswich in three spells, won the UEFA Cup, was part of that lovely Arnold Muhren/Frans Thijssen³ team under Bobby Robson, and was even the face of the club in that cringeworthy ‘Alive & Kicking’ Sky Premier League advert. We’d go so far as to say he’s the first player we think of when we think of Ipswich (with apologies to Romeo Zondervan).

So what does he call his entertaining book? *Wark On*. He’s playing on ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’, and the copy we read featured him in a Liverpool shirt on the cover. A real kick in the plums for the Tractor Lads, that.

There are those titles that ask more questions than they answer, too. Ashley Cole’s is called *My Defence* with good reason, as he was taking stick from all sides when it was published. Dominic Matteo’s is called *In My Defence*, but nobody’s sure what it is he needs to be so defensive about. The cover gives us few clues, unless he’s nicked that expensive watch he’s flashing.

Mike/Mick Duxbury calls his book *It’s Mick Not Mike*, so it has obviously bothered him for many years that people call him Mike not Mick ... or Mick not Mike, we forget which now. And yet he doesn’t address this issue once within his book. Not once. So now we’re none the wiser. To be honest, he should think himself lucky people don’t call him John Gidman and move on with his stories. Sorry, Mick/Mike.⁴

Duncan McKenzie calls his book *The Last Fancy Dan* but does very little within the pages to justify this. Rodney Marsh, however, uses the phrase ‘loose cannon’ upwards of 40 times in his autobiography to prove that he wasn’t joking when he called it *I Was Born a Loose Cannon*. He’s

³ One of your authors had a Frans Thijssen Unpuncturable Football as a boy. Not sure where that gets us, but it’s true. The author’s brother had one too. Why it was felt two footballs that could never be punctured were needed, we don’t know.

⁴ Didn’t Mick/Mike Channon have this same issue? We never heard him moaning about it and he named his book after one of his horses (*Man on the Run*). Incidentally, places we found Mick Duxbury referred to as Mike include: Wikipedia, Man Utd’s official web page, the *Manchester Evening News* and on thefa.com’s England player profiles. Poor bloke.

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a Loose Cannon you see, and, like a Loftus Road Lady Gaga, he was 'Born This Way'.⁵

While we're on the subject of those 70s mavericks with skill to burn and questionable work rates, we can't ignore Frank Worthington's title, *One Hump or Two*. Terrific stuff. Rather than focus on his footballing prowess, Frank prefers to bring his sexy times to the fore. That title might not sound like a pun, but Frank is pictured drinking a brew on the cover (presumably with one or two sugars in), which doesn't clear things up that much to be honest, unless Frank was famous for advertising, or drinking, Typhoo back in the day. Hitting the pun mark much more cleanly and bringing just as much sexy to the table is Frank McAvennie. Both men are Frank by name and Frank by nature. McAvennie's *Scoring: An Expert's Guide* is so called because as well as being a goalscorer, he liked scoring with lasses an' that. Macca was also the subject of a Channel 4 documentary around the time of the book's release called *How to Score*, in case you were in any doubt that he liked doing it with girls. If we were being cynical, we might even suggest that it may also refer to scoring 'a wee bit of Charlie' now and again. In which case, hats off to Frank for a rare Triple Entendre title.

OTHER TITLES OF NOTE

- Johan Cruyff – *My Turn* (just lovely).
- Steve Nicol – *Five League Titles and a Packet of Crisps*.
- John Aldridge – *Alright Aldo, Sound as a Pound* (you can't go wrong quoting *The Anfield Rap*).
- Paul Parker – *Tackles Like a Ferret*.
- Duncan Shearer – *Shearer Wonderland: The Autobiography* (just for the sheer cheek of *Duncan Shearer* putting this out).

CHAPTER TITLES

As both Frank Worthington and Frank McAvennie will tell you, between the covers anything goes. That is to say, once you're hooked by the book title, we can all have fun calling our chapters whatever we want. This Liberty Hall approach led to some crackers such as 'Do

⁵ Half the authors of this book think Rodney should have called his book *Hot Rod* or *A Marsh a Day*, the other half can't get worked up about it.

TITLE CONTENDERS

Not Shit on David Seaman's Balcony' in which Paul Merson details shitting on David Seaman's balcony; 'If Only I Had Mark Hughes's Thighs', which goes a long way to explaining Robbie Savage devoting his media career to the promotion of Sparky's cause; and 'Blade Runner in Maryhill' in which Chic Charnley tells of that time he was chased around the Partick Thistle car park with a sword. We've all been there.

Some are more gifted at this sort of thing than they ever were at football. Paul Cannell alone gives us 'Grab a Granny Night', 'If It Moves Kick It, If It Doesn't Move, Kick It 'Til It Does' and 'One up the Bum, No Harm Done!', some of which come with stories you'll find within this book. He also gives us the cruel but funny chapter 'Meggy Thoo', which tells of Frank Clark's testimonial do. Frank got up to croon a certain Buddy Holly number, and with his 'slight speech impediment', Cannell describes him singing 'his very own rendition of "Meggy Thoo, Meggy Thoo, mitty, mitty, mitty, mitty, Meggy Thoo!"'

The manager who got the best tune out of Frank Clark was Brian Clough. Genius though he was, and perhaps deserving of his book title *Walking on Water*, we're not sure we can forgive him for calling a chapter 'Gazzamatazz and Hoddledygook'. And if he's pushing his goodwill to the limit with that one, then Lee McCulloch, having already had the temerity to call his book *Simp-Lee the Best*, severely tests our patience with the chapter 'Leeding out My Team'.

Lee shows us how easy it is to get a pun wrong, something we'll no doubt join him in as we go along, but when people get them right, only the most stone-cold-hearted would deny that they can be a thing of beauty. Therefore, let's take a moment to bow at the feet of Roy McDonough. The lower-league journeyman, who tells his life story in the extraordinary *Red Card Roy*, surely only joined non-league Heybridge Swifts and failed there so that he could call a chapter 'Heybridge Too Far': bravo.

Some people use their chapters to either show off their best friends, such as Mark Halsey's fawning 'Me and Jose',⁶ or to grind an axe, as in Lawrie McMenemy's 'A Paine in the Grass', in which he tells us what an arsehole Terry Paine was to him at Southampton, or Stan Ternent with 'I Dreamed of Killing Him' – Ian Porterfield, since you ask. Thankfully he didn't go through with it.

⁶ Mourinho, not Feliciano or Maria Olazabal, disappointingly.

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Let's finish up here with Joey Barton's excellent *No Nonsense* (warning: may contain traces of nonsense), in which the thinking man's thinking man asserts his indie credentials by having a chapter which takes its name from the Smiths song 'Sweet and Tender Hooligan'. Admirable though that is as a break from the Rod Stewart worship that's rife among the football fraternity, we can't help feeling it's a little too on the nose. Barton might have paid better homage by coming up with his own chapter titles that might also work as Morrissey solo tracks. That's what so many of his colleagues do.

Oh yes, they do. Look.

THE LAST FANCY DAN

(A fantasy Morrissey album. We even found the perfect cover featuring Duncan McKenzie and his carpet sweeper, which you can see among our pictures.)

1. This England (Carlton Palmer)
2. I Should Have Tried to Understand (Brian Clough)
3. The Leaves That Never Fade (Bobby Charlton)
4. Life Is a Play Thing for You Foolish Clown (John McGovern)
5. Not Bitter But Angry (Graham Poll)
6. Is This All There Is? (Lee Sharpe)
7. The Kindness of Women (Carlton Palmer)
8. England for the English (Terry Venables)
9. The Biggest Mistake of My Life (Brian Clough)
10. Lovelorn in Rotterdam (Lee Sharpe)
11. Young Man, Are You Good Enough to Play for Me? (Brian Laws)

Told you.