

# MATCH

## OF MY LIFE

Twenty-Five Cherries  
Favourites Relive  
Their Greatest Games

**AFC Bournemouth**



Foreword by chairman Jeff Mostyn

Alex Crook & Pat Symes

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## *Foreword*

FROM THE moment I took my first step inside Dean Court, as it then was, in October 2006 I felt a warmth about the club which instantly attracted me. It was love at first sight. The club was deep in financial trouble, I knew that, but I just felt straight away that I wanted to be involved. As a financial advisor I must have been a bit deluded to think I could save the club, but I honestly felt I could do something positive.

It was Kevin Bond, a great friend of some 30 years standing and our manager at the time, who persuaded me to come down and meet the chairman, Abdul Jaffer, to see if I might be prepared to join a consortium of ten people, each of us being asked to put in £100,000. Mr Jaffer described the amount as “modest” but it was clear that the club’s plight was desperate. ‘Perilous’ would have been an understatement. But I went ahead knowing that any money I put into the club was unlikely ever to be returned. Along the way I had a Victor Kiam moment: I liked the club so much I bought it.

By March 2007 the club was absolutely doomed unless I, as chairman, put money into it. It is well documented that unless I made out a cheque for £100,000 there and then at one public meeting, the administrator at the time, Gerald Krasner would have closed the club. What is not known is that I had already spent some £1.5m on attempting to keep the club afloat. It was money written off, there is no other way of putting it. But I was so passionate about AFC Bournemouth that I just wanted to do all I could to save it, irrespective of the personal cost.

A year later Mr Krasner said to me that 10,000 people had offered to help us in our darkest hour but only one person was prepared to make out a cheque. And that was me. A case of heart ruling head if ever there was one.

I may have been a Manchester City fan of long standing but my love for this club was such that I was prepared to do anything to make sure football was still going to be played here and now of course, as I write, I can have no regrets as chairman of a Premier League club. My sacrifice paid off.



Yet there were many days when it all looked so bleak. Had we been relegated the year we were docked 17 points I think it might well have been the end. We escaped with a great run near the end of the season but what is not known is that had we gone down the Conference would not necessarily have taken us in. The Conference had a zero tolerance of debt and we would have been entering their league with a huge financial problem. I don't think we would have been accepted and we would instead have been forced to carry on five, six or even seven steps down the pyramid. So we were once more a matter of minutes from going out of business and I would have been selling the Big Issue.

If you had said to me at that stage that one day we would be in the Premier League I would have had you sectioned. It was an impossibility, a different world. But it has happened in the most spectacular fashion for which we must all be extremely grateful. Eddie Howe took over as manager when the club was on its last legs seemingly and when every pay day was a problem but through his managerial prowess he has presided over a progression which has shocked the outside football world.

But in Max Demin, we have a wonderful man at the helm. To many of our fans he may be a mystery but he is a real gentleman

## FOREWORD

and as passionate about the club as I am. Some may have feared that to him AFC Bournemouth was a play-thing, to be discarded when he grew tired of it. But I know his family and his parents and they care as much about the club as he does. After a year of his partial involvement I sold him my half-share of the club. I asked myself: why would he invest in us? I had no immediate answer to that but now I know him as a friend and I know him also to be a man of high integrity. Twice before I had sold my shares to others had and been let down, but I know deep down that in Max we have a man we can trust who treats the club as a surrogate family.

In introducing this book, I can single out a couple of matches my own. The win over QPR at home was special for me because my great friend Kevin Bond was assistant manager of the opposition but the win over Bolton topped even that. Our emotions went off the Richter Scale that night.

I thought back to the hard days, to the days when we had absolutely nothing and suddenly at the final whistle we were rubbing shoulders with the likes of Manchester United, Chelsea and, yes, Manchester City. It meant so much to me, my family and the family that is AFC Bournemouth. All that sacrifice was worthwhile after all.

Jeff Mostyn,  
Chairman,  
September 2015

JERMAIN DEFOE



## *Jermain Defoe*

JERMAIN DEFOE has been one of the most prolific goalscorers of the modern era. Born in east London, Defoe was a junior at Charlton before playing for West Ham, Tottenham in three spells, Portsmouth, Toronto and Sunderland. He returned to Bournemouth in 2017 where his career had started in earnest in 2000 while on loan as a teenager. Harry Redknapp was the manager of West Ham at the time and the ex-Cherries boss felt that a stint at his old club in the third tier would harden the slight figure of Defoe to the rigours of a long career ahead. It worked. Defoe's pace and lethal finishing were apparent from his first match at Stoke, where he scored with what he describes as a rare header, to set in motion an astonishing sequence of 12 goals in ten matches to herald him as an exciting young talent.

That goal at Stoke was his first in league football and his 200th, some 17 years later, came for Bournemouth at Crystal Palace. Defoe remembers them both vividly and rates his 201st in the same match at Selhurst Park as one of his all-time best. Bournemouth set him on the road to international honours during that first spell at Dean Court in which he scored 19 goals in league and cup. Within a couple of months of returning to parent club West Ham he was picked for England under-21s and by January 2018 had scored 20 goals in 57 matches for the senior side.

Crystal Palace 2 Bournemouth 2, Premier League  
9 December 2017, Selhurst Park

*Bournemouth:* Begovic; Francis, S. Cook, Ake, Daniels; Stanislas (Ibe), L. Cook, Surman, Fraser; King (Afobe); Defoe (Wilson)

*Goals:* Defoe 2

IN MANY ways that first spell at the old Dean Court was the making of me. I had lived away from home, at the FA School of Excellence at Lilleshall at 14, but this was the first time I was on my own, just 18 and not even sure where Bournemouth was. Growing up in east London, we never went to the seaside so it was a shock to the system. I lived with Jason Tindall, having known his dad Jimmy at West Ham, and Jason turned out to be the perfect host, cooking me pasta, beans and a little bit of toast for our pre-match meals. I think I was just about ready for the rough-and-tumble of lower division football. There is only so much you can do in training – I was getting a bit stale in the reserves at Upton Park and Harry could see I needed a new challenge.

Sean O'Driscoll, the manager, had been a key figure in Harry's teams at Bournemouth and knew that he would look after me. I was a confident lad, lots of self-belief and I found on arrival a top-class team spirit and plenty of ability. We did everything together off the pitch and how can I ever forget the infamous Christmas party where I was told we had to dress as women? Narada Bernard and I were determined to transform in style and we went shopping for wigs and all the rest of the things we needed and the next thing we knew it was all over the newspapers.

On the pitch the formidable figure of Steve Fletcher was my guardian. Some of our opponents were determined to stop me at all costs. Being small, they tried to kick me but Fletch would bully anyone who attempted that. Nobody took liberties with Fletch although in a funny kind of way I enjoyed the extra attention I got because it motivated me to out-do them. Fletch looked after me on the pitch, always speaking to me about where and when to go, and I learned a lot from him. Nine times out of ten if the ball was hit down the pitch for him he would win the header and I would gamble on where it would go next. Fletch was also a much better player on the ground than he sometimes got credit for, and there is no doubt in my mind that he could have played at a higher level.

People ask me about that 12 goals in ten games and I remember just being so excited to be playing in meaningful matches and making a mark. I couldn't wait for the next game. My best goal in my first spell was probably the lob against Oxford which I occasionally watch again on YouTube. Was it a fluke? No way. From a very early age I would practise shooting from all angles, envisaging where the ball would go; all kinds of angles, all kinds of situations. No matter which

club I was at, I would take on extra shooting sessions long after the other players had finished training and gone home. When you are on a scoring streak the actual act of putting the ball in the net seems the easiest thing in the world, but it's not as instinctive as some think, it's rehearsed. I used to watch tapes of Ian Wright's goals and note how he did it and then try to replicate those situations in training, imagining where the goalkeeper might be and what he would be expecting me to do. That goal against Oxford was deliberate because I had planned that sort of scenario in my mind over and over again.

What else do I remember from that first spell? A studious Eddie Howe, a natural leader who you always felt might have managerial potential, good players like Richard Hughes and Jason Tindall but one player stood out for me and that was Claus Jorgensen, the Danish-born midfield player. Claus was unbelievable, clever, vastly underrated, two steps ahead of everyone else on the pitch in his thinking and movement and better than the level he was playing at. I also recall the rutted training pitches used at weekends by rugby players, the dodgy food regime and having to wash my own training kit. I loved every character-forming minute of it.

The Bournemouth I returned to 17 years later was a very different place. I had always wanted to come back at some stage because I felt I had a special relationship with this club. Jason Tindall used to text me, saying it's warmer down here and it was tempting at times. Will there ever be another Bournemouth? Bournemouth had put me on the map after playing such a massive part in developing me and I wanted to see just how far the club had come in such a short space of time. I was not in any way disappointed.

This is a unique story, from the verge of extinction to ninth in the Premier League, and I was sold on the vision and it's a great time to be playing here, unrecognisable though it is from when I was here last in 2000. There are some top-class players here: Callum Wilson, Josh King and a sharp and explosive Ryan Fraser to name just a few, but in my view Junior Stanislas has the potential to be an England international if only he can stay fit. Forwards like me appreciate his clever passing and on his day he's an unbelievable footballer.

And so to my match, the Premier League trip to Crystal Palace. Palace had made a dreadful start to the 2017/18 season but by the time we got there, they were beginning to recover under Roy Hodgson. We were aware of how good they could be going forward so it was always going to be a tough assignment. We needed a good

start, and got it. The best part about our goal in the tenth minute was that it was a training ground routine and when something like that comes off it's a particularly nice feeling. Andrew Surman crossed from the right, Josh King held off a defender and I had time to direct a shot into the corner of the net, a clean strike, absolutely as planned. That was my 200th in the league, a landmark I'm proud to have reached and something I never really considered when I was starting out; 200 seemed light years away.

Just before half-time we conceded two goals at a time when we were starting to feel comfortable. The first was a penalty put away by Luka Milivojevic after Asmir Begovic was adjudged to have fouled Wilfried Zaha. We all felt it was a bit harsh. Zaha had overrun the ball and there wasn't much contact and although it was a bit soft you have to accept these things and move on. But we were clearly a bit ruffled and three minutes later, in the 45th, Scott Dann put Palace ahead from a few yards out.

From a position of some authority we found ourselves losing, but seconds later we were level with what I can now admit was the second-best goal I have ever scored. Not the most important, but for sheer perfection, the second-best. The best was a volley I scored for Sunderland in the derby match against Newcastle. That one was truly fantastic. The Sunderland fans are crazy in a nice sort of way and I was so pleased to have scored it for them against the old north-eastern enemy. This against Palace was not far behind.

Lewis Cook played a great pass from deep for me to run on to. I have thrived on that sort of service over the years and the only problem with it was that I was at an angle to the right of the Palace goal. Doubtless the Palace defenders would have been expecting me to hold it up and wait for assistance but from the corner of my eye I could see the goalkeeper was in no position to counter a shot, not that this was a shot in the proper sense. I simply lifted it in the direction of the goal and across. It came off perfectly, the connection was right and the placing in the far corner of the net just what I had aimed for. Again, people ask me if it was a fluke and I tell them how I envisage scoring from every angle, all positions relative to the goal, and that I work on those sorts of things. Selhurst Park was hushed and I remember thinking, 'Oh my god, it's gone in.' Junior Stanislas ran towards me and said, 'World class, JD.'

For a few seconds even I was astonished. It was Goal of the Month on BBC's *Match of the Day* and it's a strike I will always

treasure no matter how many I eventually finish with. For the record, my most important personal goals were the fifth I got against Wigan for Tottenham – not many people have scored five in a match in the Premier League so it was special – and the one I scored for England in the World Cup in 2010 against Slovenia to help us reach the last 16. We won 1-0 and without it, England would have been eliminated.

Anyway, after scoring that one against Palace it would have been nice if we had gone on and won but, as all the travelling fans will remember, we actually came close to losing. Palace were awarded another penalty in time added on when Charlie Daniels was said to have fouled Zaha. I think from the referee's vantage point maybe it was a spot kick but we like to think Charlie got some of the ball. By this time I had been replaced by Callum and I said to Harry Arter, sitting next to me on the bench, that Asmir was going to save it. There was a delay as Christian Benteke decided he would go for glory even though Milivojevic, who had scored easily from the spot earlier, was still on the pitch. In situations like this you need your big players to step up and Asmir was just the man, going to his right to block Benteke's unconvincing effort.

So we got a point but came away thinking it should have been three because we felt that overall we were the better team. More to the point, my two goals took me to 161 in the Premier League, just two behind Robbie Fowler in the pantheon of the competition's top scorers. I'm aware of statistics such as that, just as I was aware I was close to 200 overall, and I have the hunger to score many more and pass other landmarks along the way. The moment the desire goes I will get out the deck chair and cast my mind back to Selhurst Park that afternoon in December 2017 and recall my goal with huge affection.