

MICHAEL DUNNE
DEAN COURT DAYS

A black and white photograph of Harry Redknapp, a man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt. He is holding a trophy aloft with both hands, his arms raised high. He has a joyful expression on his face. In the background, several other men are visible, some wearing football kits. One man to the right is wearing a kit with "COOPERS BEERS" printed on it. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly on a football pitch or in a stadium. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

HARRY
REDKNAPP

AT AFC BOURNEMOUTH

M I C H A E L D U N N E
D E A N C O U R T D A Y S

H A R R Y
R E D K N A P P
A T A F C B O U R N E M O U T H



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Foreword

THE 15 years I spent at AFC Bournemouth as a player, coach and manager were amongst the happiest of my career in football. I first arrived in 1972 when my old friend John Bond was the manager and the club were on the up. Everything seemed set for promotion, but we never quite made it and when John left for Norwich things were never quite the same again. I enjoyed my playing days there, we had a great squad, but we never quite fulfilled our promise and persistent injuries limited my impact on the team in my final couple of seasons.

Despite the frustrations of those injuries, I loved every day I spent at Dean Court. My family loved the area as well. Coming from east London, we weren't used to living near the coast but it wasn't difficult to appreciate the benefits of bringing up our two boys near the seaside. That was why we kept our house in the area whilst I was playing in America. Thank goodness we did, because I was seriously considering a life outside of the game when we returned from the States for good, but the Bournemouth manager Dave Webb phoned me up out of the blue and asked me if I could help out with pre-season training as I was living just down the road. That was the start, and when Dave left and the club had no money to attract an experienced manager, they turned to me.

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I didn't get off to the best of starts, and the 9-0 drubbing at Lincoln in my very first game in charge remains one of my low points in football. We improved as the weeks went on, but when the club was sold the new owners brought in Don Megson as manager and I returned to my role as coach. To be honest, I was grateful, as I was sure Don's arrival would see me out of the door.

When I finally got the manager's job on a permanent basis when Don left after just a few months in charge, I was a little more competent than the first time around. In my first season in charge we knocked Man United out of the FA Cup and won Bournemouth's first trophy since just after the Second World War. After that, it was all ups and downs as I fought to create a decent squad whilst all the while the club struggled to stay solvent. To say that was a good grounding for a career in football management would be an understatement, as every day brought different challenges both on and off the pitch, and I relished every moment of it.

There were some extreme highs and lows in my days as Bournemouth manager. Promotion to the second tier for the first time in the club's history when winning the Third Division title in 1987 was the highlight of my time at Dean Court, and still ranks among the best achievements of my career. Three years later, I was at my lowest ebb following relegation back to the old Third Division on that dreadful day we lost to Leeds, and the death of my great friend Brian Tiler following our terrible car accident in Italy a few weeks later.

Other events that stick out during those years are promotion from the Fourth Division with Dave Webb, George Best turning out at Dean Court to double the normal gate, Colin Clarke scoring at the World Cup for Northern Ireland as a Bournemouth player, the night we knocked Newcastle out of the FA Cup on penalties at St James' Park and my son Jamie making his full debut for the Cherries at my old club West Ham.

FOREWORD

I left Bournemouth in 1992, but have always lived in the area and the Cherries are still very close to my heart. More than once I have been extremely concerned that the club was about to go to the wall, so to see it in such good health these days brings me as much joy as anything else in the game.

I am just glad I was able to play a small part in Bournemouth's history and am grateful that it is still remembered over a quarter of a century later.

Enjoy the book.

Harry Redknapp

December 2017, Sandbanks

Chapter One

Bright Lights to Pier Lights

1972/73

HARRY Redknapp had been a gifted footballer in his youth, a skilful and pacy winger whose signature was coveted by clubs across London. He played a key role in England's triumph in the 1964 UEFA European Under-19s Football Championship, playing alongside Howard Kendall and John Hollins in a 4-0 victory over Spain. Reflecting on the experience 50 years later, Kendall said:

'Harry Redknapp was a big personality even back then and was already upsetting people. Nothing has changed!'

Following four years in the Tottenham Hotspur youth team, Harry moved to West Ham United in 1962 at the age of 15. Over the next ten years at Upton Park, Redknapp became a popular member of the Hammers' squad, honing his trade at the feet of the famous academy led by manager Ron Greenwood and senior players like John Bond.

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Redknapp had looked up to Bond from an early age. 'I first met him when I was ten years old,' recalls Redknapp. 'Every afternoon all the West Ham players would go to Cassettari's, the cafe next to the ground and talk football, moving salt and pepper pots around on the table, talking tactics and all that.'

'I was standing outside, waiting. I had this team photograph from the Christmas party. In it, John Bond is holding a chicken leg and I wanted him to sign it. And he did. He was as good as gold with me and I just remember staring up at this big man. I then watched him walk home.'

Eventually Redknapp would get to train and play with Bond. 'One summer I think he'd fallen out with Ron Greenwood and he didn't go on the pre-season tour so he came and trained with the kids,' says Redknapp.

'I was about 16 and he was brilliant with us. He was a great player, a right-back. He could use a ball as well as anyone I've seen. He could see a pass to the striker, and he was a great striker of the ball, too. He could score goals and he had this arrogance about him.'

After finishing his playing career with a short spell at Torquay, Bond tried his hand coaching at Gillingham. It didn't last, and the now retired right-back found himself unemployed with a young family to support. Footballers' salaries were paltry compared to the million-pound contracts of the Premier League era, and even West Ham's World Cup-winning heroes Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters were forced to take run-of-the-mill jobs after hanging up their boots.

With Bond's fingers crossed in the hope that he would find another role in the professional game, Harry Redknapp stepped in to help his old friend out. 'Me and Frank Lampard senior used to do coaching in those days at Pretoria School in Canning Town,' he recalls. 'We got £2.50 a session and split the money. John was out of work so we shared our job with him. We did four afternoons

a week and made our £20 between us go three ways. John came in because he was struggling.'

Bournemouth was little more than a footballing backwater at the time of Bond's unemployment, having never featured in either of the top two divisions of English football since their formation in 1899. A reputation for a pleasing style of play and rare forays into the latter stages of the cups caused no more than a ripple beyond the faithful that gathered within the leafy confines of King's Park on Saturday afternoons. After being relegated on goal average to the Fourth Division for the first time in the club's history, manager Freddie Cox, the architect of the side the press dubbed Cox's Pippins during Bournemouth's run to the quarter-finals of the FA Cup in 1957, was relieved of his duties in May 1970.

Along with the vacant manager's post, Bournemouth advertised for a new assistant manager, a role which was rarely at the time filled by the new manager's preferred choice.

'John kept applying for jobs,' recalls Redknapp. 'He applied for the coach's job at Bournemouth, not the manager. Cyril Lea, who was assistant to Bobby Robson at Ipswich, was going to get the manager's job, but he missed his train. John went in for the interview and Harold Walker, who was the chairman of Bournemouth, liked him so much he made him manager.'

A lifelong supporter of the Cherries, Walker had been a director since 1967 and succeeded to the chairman's office after a successful takeover bid in 1970. He wasted no time in making public his ambitions for the club, declaring that he saw the potential for Bournemouth to become 'the Newcastle of the South'.

With the flamboyant Bond on board and former striker Dickie Dowsett installed as commercial manager, the club made a concerted effort to shake off its low wattage reputation in the years immediately preceding Harry Redknapp's arrival.

For the 1970/71 season, the Cherries changed their colours from the red shirts and white shorts worn since before the Second World

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War, to red and black stripes with black shorts, a combination which remains unique in English professional football. Bond is normally credited with being the architect of this change, the new colour scheme said to have been inspired by Italian aristocrats AC Milan, who had recently won their second European Cup. This reaching out for reflected glory is unlikely to have had much impact upon results, although the club were promoted to the Third Division in the new kit's first season on the back of Scottish striker Ted MacDougall's remarkable 42-goal haul from 46 league games.

After narrowly missing out on a second successive promotion the following season, the Cherries' name was changed by Dowsett from the traditional Bournemouth and Boscombe Athletic to AFC Bournemouth. Touted as reflecting a new, streamlined era at Dean Court, it was also a none too subtle ploy to get the club to the top of the alphabetical list.

'I said to John Bond, "If we call it AFC Bournemouth, then we will always be at the top of the list when they print the fixtures," remembers Dowsett. 'AFC stands for Athletic Football Club because before that it was Bournemouth and Boscombe Athletic Football Club, so we dropped the Boscombe part and swapped the rest around.'

Dowsett completed the modernising by contributing a new badge to replace the modified local borough council crest and erroneous monogram 'BFC' which had previously adorned the shirts. Folklore has it that Dowsett himself is the player depicted heading the ball on the now iconic badge, a theory confirmed by the man himself. 'Harold Walker had a design company,' says Dowsett. 'We were thinking of changing the badge after we had done the kit and name. I went down there, and they used an image of me heading the ball. I was always good in the air, that's how I scored at least half of my goals.'

Despite this rapid overhaul of the club's identity, Dowsett claims he received little resistance from the supporters, a notoriously

conservative constituency in every sense: 'I did it in the summer when everyone was away!'

Despite the agonising finish to the previous season, optimism was still in abundance at Dean Court. As was money, or so it seemed. There was at least enough in the coffers to dissuade Bond from being tempted away to pastures new. Coventry City were reported to have offered Bond £15,000 a year in June 1972, but Harold Walker fought back a few days later with the offer of a new ten-year contract worth £7,500 a year that would make Bond, in the words of the Cherries' chairman, 'one of the best-paid managers in the game'.

Bold as ever, Bond told the local press, 'We will get promotion next time,' before adding the caveat that, 'we will still be better equipped if we can get a bit more experience in a couple of positions. For instance, I need someone who can give the team command in the middle of the park. I felt that we really struggled to find any real authority in midfield during a vital period of the season.' In Redknapp, whom Bond had already attempted to lure to Dean Court when he first took over from Freddie Cox, the Bournemouth manager saw a potential supply of quality crosses for MacDougall to fire the Cherries into the second tier.

In contrast to the paranoid and shadowy approach taken with most football transfers, Harry's courtship by Bournemouth was played out in public. Posing next to a suited Redknapp in the *Bournemouth Evening Echo* on 5 June 1972, Bond summarised the process of wooing the Londoner to the south coast: 'He will be here for a day or two for a thorough look at our set-up, and I am confident that we can persuade him to join us.'

Redknapp spent the following day looking around the area, presumably at accommodation for his expanding young family. By 7 June, Harry, still under contract to West Ham, was pictured in the *Echo* making the Cherry Bees prize draw alongside vice-chairman Clifford Pardy.

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With all of this quaint preamble out of the way, the deal was sealed the next day, for a club record fee of £31,000. Jimmy Gabriel, who would go on to coach Bournemouth under Redknapp, signed for the club from Southampton on the same day. The two additions were due to commence training with their new team-mates on 17 July.

‘I’m prepared to risk a little on this player,’ said Bond, in a veiled reference to the persistent knee problems Harry had suffered at Upton Park. Never one to talk himself or anyone else down, the manager went on to declare Redknapp as, ‘potentially the best right-winger in the country. I feel I will be able to get that little bit extra out of him.’

At just 25 years old and playing for one of the top clubs in the country, Redknapp dropping two divisions was greeted with some surprise among the footballing press and public. Did Harry feel it was a significant step down? ‘No, not really,’ he says. ‘It was difficult, but because I’d kept in touch with John, I just thought it was a club that was going places. I could see the potential in the players Bournemouth had like Ted MacDougall, Phil Boyer, Tony Nelson and Dave Jones, who all went on to play in the First Division. And John had something about him as a manager. Also, we really liked the area.’

For John Harriss, the long-serving groundsman at Dean Court, his first impressions of Redknapp the player were positive. ‘He was a cheeky chappy,’ says Harriss. ‘Cheeky Harry I called him. Always had a smile on his face. I liked him straight away. He was a very good crosser of the ball. Took people on down the wing. It would be unfair to call him an old-fashioned winger, but he had all the attributes, a bit of pace. That was his game.’

As pre-season training approached, ambition was not in short supply around Dean Court. Chairman Harold Walker submitted plans for a new £1 million stand to replace the Brighton Beach End terrace and promised to offer the ‘finest spectator facilities anywhere in the country’.

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Redknapp did not turn out for his new club in the first pre-season friendly against Tottenham. However, displaying early evidence of his charismatic touch, he starred in the only photo the *Echo* published from the match, grinning happily at the camera as Harold Walker attempts to engage him in conversation.

Despite being just a friendly, a fixture with Manchester United on 1 August drew a crowd of 16,924 to Dean Court, an attendance that was only bettered once in the season that followed. It was also the game where Cherries' fans had their first opportunity to see new winger Harry Redknapp on the pitch. Two goals from Ted MacDougall helped Bond's side to a memorable 3-1 win. In a development that foretold the tale of Redknapp's playing career at Dean Court, the 25-year-old was forced to leave the game midway through the first half.

It was an injury that saw Redknapp miss Bournemouth's first three games of the season, leading to frustrated speculation from supporters as to why the expensive acquisition was not on the team sheet. Barely hiding his impatience with the fans' tittle-tattle, Bond sought to clarify matters in the match programme:

'There have been several silly rumours as to why Harry Redknapp has not played in our first few games,' wrote Bond. 'Let me squash these right away and tell you the real reason was he came on against Manchester United, was not 100% fit, and did a silly overhead kick and trapped a nerve in his back which resulted in him being unable to play in our early games.'

Consequently, Bond was as delighted as the player himself when Redknapp was finally available for selection for the encounter with Watford at Vicarage Road on 22 August. 'This is great news for Harry and for the club,' said the manager, who retained high hopes the winger would emerge as a powerful attacking force within the team.

Despite receiving praise for his performance, Redknapp could not prevent the Cherries from losing 3-2, a defeat made all the more

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galling as Bournemouth had led 2-0 after 32 minutes thanks to a brace from MacDougall. With his side now languishing near the foot of the Third Division table, Bond was less than happy.

‘I am the worst loser in the world and, in the circumstances, this really hurt. We must be more ruthless and cruel, in a footballing sense, when the opportunity arises.’

The Cherries were distinctly failing to live up to the pre-season hype, with just two wins in their opening eight games, including a 1-0 victory over Halifax Town in Harry’s debut at Dean Court.

Like the team as a whole, Redknapp was struggling to impress, his nagging knee injury stripping him of his pace and the ability to provide the service required by MacDougall and Boyer as a result. By the time an epic League Cup tie with Blackpool came around, Harry was again sidelined by a leg injury, and although he made an appearance in the first replay at Bloomfield Road, the winger was then injured in training, missing the next two league fixtures. He had recovered in time to line up against Blackpool at Villa Park in a second replay, only to finish on the losing side as the Cherries went down to an extra-time goal from Frank Barton.

At least a dozen First Division scouts made their way to Villa Park that September night to run the rule over Ted MacDougall, whose 93 goals in the preceding two seasons had made him one of the hottest properties in the Football League. At a recent meeting of the Dean Court Football Supporters and Social Club, Bond had told members, ‘We will be getting new players in the next few weeks and I might have to let one or two of the present players go. But you can rest assured, it will not be players like MacDougall.’

However, after the Scotsman scored the goal that earned the Cherries a point at Griffin Park against Brentford, Bond bowed to the inevitable and sought to ramp up any fee that might be forthcoming for his star player: ‘I would not let him go for less than £200,000. He has made such great progress in the two years I have been at the club, but it may be as much progress as he can make in

the Third Division.' Within nine months of being transferred, he would be the top scorer in the First Division.

Amid reports of interest from Tottenham, Manchester United, Crystal Palace and West Ham, MacDougall scored in the last game of his first spell at Dean Court in the 4-0 victory over Port Vale. With supporters hanging on every development in the transfer saga, they could be forgiven for overlooking Harry Redknapp's maiden goal for the club in the same game. Having contributed to the first two goals of the night, Redknapp rounded things off in style. Impressive play from Dave Jones and Bobby Howe released Phil Boyer on the left-hand side of the Vale half. Boyer delivered a fine cross which Harry struck low past goalkeeper Boswell into the far corner.

There was little time for the fans to enjoy the result before speculation regarding MacDougall's future was ended when the *Evening Echo's* front page lead the following day announced: 'SUPERMAC FOR MAN UTD'.

United manager Frank O'Farrell had been a team-mate of John Bond's at West Ham. Following 'secret negotiations' between the pair, in which MacDougall had little or no involvement, the deal was struck. 'I am happy for Ted, heartbroken for the club and disappointed for myself,' said the Bournemouth manager. 'I wanted to keep him here, but understand and appreciate his feelings.'

With supporters in dismay over losing their top scorer and talisman, Bond sought to soothe the turmoil. 'Rest assured, it will not be long before the money is spent and the team, for promotion – for that is our aim – is strengthened,' he said.

These developments were observed closely by Harry Redknapp, who had been sold the vision by Bond of delivering cross after cross to MacDougall to fire goalwards. Was he surprised the marksman had moved on so quickly after his arrival? 'Yeah, I was,' says Harry. 'Obviously Ted wanted to go, he was ambitious. The opportunity came for him to move and he grabbed it. The club couldn't do anything about it really.'

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As well as an almost certain loss of firepower, there was suddenly a vacancy for the role of club hero. For a brief moment, it appeared that Redknapp was in contention to assume the mantle. The Cherries' first post-MacDougall fixture was at home to Shrewsbury Town, and the winger put in a match-winning performance which saw the team given a rousing ovation at the conclusion of a 2-0 victory. Allowed space by the Shrews' defence, Harry sped down the line and delivered a series of accurate crosses which had the crowd singing 'We've got Harry, Harry, Harry Redknapp, Harry Redknapp on the wing' for the very first time.

Harry's status as Bournemouth's record signing did not last long, as John Bond splashed out £100,000 of the money he received for MacDougall on Cardiff duo Ian Gibson and Brian Clark. Keen to invest the balance in the playing squad before it disappeared down a financial black hole, Bond then signed Shrewsbury's skilful 24-year-old winger Alan Groves for £40,000 three days later.

With Gibson also a midfielder, Redknapp had every motivation to put in a performance against Bournemouth's next opponents Tranmere in order to retain his place in the starting eleven. But Harry struggled in the 1-1 draw, failing to deliver the quality crosses he had produced in the Shrewsbury triumph and being singled out as the 'biggest disappointment of the night' in the *Echo's* match report.

Harry somehow started the following fixture at Rotherham United. With all three new signings playing together for the first time, the Cherries made hay after Millers keeper Jim McDonagh was forced to leave the game with concussion in the first half. With only one substitute permitted at the time, Carl Gilbert, who had scored to put the home team ahead after five minutes, filled in for McDonagh between the sticks. There were no unlikely heroics from the stand-in keeper, who ended up picking the ball out of his net four times before he in turn was replaced by Mick Leng, who provided little in the way of improvement as the game ended 7-2. It

was Bournemouth's first away win of the season and a record away victory for the club at the time.

Emboldened by his side's lack of mercy for the luckless opposition, Bond brushed aside suggestions that circumstances had favoured the Cherries:

'No goalkeeper would have stopped these lads, the way they were playing. I have always maintained that some team would suffer once we got going and this was it. There would have been goals whatever the opposition.'

After a patchy start to the season, the Cherries found themselves 12 games unbeaten when they recorded a third successive away win at Lawrie McMenemy's newly promoted Grimsby Town. Redknapp played a key role in the 1-0 triumph, taking the corner from which fellow wingman Alan Groves back-heeled the ball into the net.

Groves had made quite an impression on Redknapp from the day he arrived at Dean Court, and the prowess of his late team-mate remains fresh in Harry's mind to this day. 'Alan was fantastic,' he said. 'I thought he was one of the most amazing talents I had ever seen. If he'd have been around now, he'd be such a superstar. So strong, such a big, powerful lad. Could run like no one I had ever seen. Dribble, shoot, hard as nails, he had everything.'

The win at Blundell Park took Bournemouth to the summit of the Third Division table and saw expectations escalate around Dean Court. On the pressure of fulfilling fans' hopes and dreams, Bond said, 'It suits me just fine. It is better than being at the other end of the table. We have the points but the others have to get them. We have been making steady progress this season after a poor start. There is still a lot to be done, of course, but the signs are very encouraging.'

The signs were less encouraging after Bond's side lost their next fixture and the lead of the division to Port Vale. Two goals from Vale's Irish striker Sam Morgan denied the Cherries the points

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and had Bond rapidly revising his confident attitude of a few days previously:

‘There has been a lot of talk about us gaining promotion as if it were a foregone thing. If others want to talk about us being certainties in the promotion race that is fine by me. I will start talking when it happens.’

Redknapp was again on hand to provide the assist for the only goal in the next game in which Bournemouth consolidated second place in the table against Wrexham. Fulfilling the role that Bond had envisaged, the winger accurately crossed the ball for Keith Miller to head home.

With spirits high around Dean Court once again, Bond finally signed the reported £75,000 ten-year contract with the club in November, making him one of the highest-paid managers outside of the First Division. With such a sweetheart deal on the table, the Bournemouth boss unsurprisingly described his relationship with Harold Walker as the best enjoyed by a chairman and his manager in the entire Football League. ‘It’s a fantastic contract and a tremendous token of faith by my chairman.’

As far as Redknapp was concerned, Bond deserved every penny. ‘John was a very good coach,’ he remembers. ‘He was flamboyant. He had his moods, but he had a great way about him – loved a team meeting, loved to talk to the players. He was excellent, popular with the players, a real character. You always knew he would go on to manage at a bigger club.’

Redknapp was still on the treatment table when Bournemouth won 2-0 at Layer Road in a replay to see off Fourth Division Colchester in the second round of the FA Cup. Bournemouth’s reward for making it into the third round was a trip to St James’ Park to play First Division Newcastle United. Bond was delighted with the outcome. ‘What a good draw,’ he said. ‘This will give us the opportunity to try out our football against a big club. I believe we can go to Newcastle and put up a good performance.’

Redknapp was keen to play a part and confirmed his fitness with a run-out in the reserves five days before Christmas and returned to the first team in the 1-0 defeat at Walsall on 23 December. Harry retained his place in the side as results picked up again over the remainder of the Christmas period. He was on hand to provide two assists in the 3-0 thumping of Watford in early January which consolidated the Cherries' first place in the Third Division table going into the cup tie at St James' Park.

Around 1,200 supporters made the long journey north, half of them on a train chartered by the club. Newcastle's famous black and white stripes clashed with Bournemouth's home and away kits, requiring the club to commission a third kit, an unusual move in an era when the replica kit market was almost non-existent. The dark blue shirt featured red and white diagonal stripes and it was the only occasion it was ever worn by the Cherries.

In front of nearly 34,000 spectators Redknapp, in his first appearance in the cup for Bournemouth, joined the rest of John Bond's team in running on to the pitch holding up placards reading 'Our aim – to entertain'. Newcastle's aim, on the other hand, was to get into the fourth round and avoid another embarrassing exit following their defeat at Hereford United the previous year. As it was, the home side ran out 2-0 winners, with the Cherries living up to their pre-match promise despite the defeat. Redknapp was singled out as the most effective of Bournemouth's wingers by Newcastle manager Joe Harvey.

With the cups off the agenda for another year, the Cherries returned to league action with a 1-1 draw at Scunthorpe's Old Show Ground. Bond's frustration with his team's inability to take a return of maximum points from a fixture they dominated was soon forgotten when the team coach skidded off the road as heavy snow fell across Yorkshire. Redknapp recalls the frightening incident in which the vehicle he was travelling in was written off. 'The coach was a mess,' he says. 'We were coming down the road and suddenly

the coach just took off and kept going. The road turned one way and the coach just started to skid the other way. We knew we weren't going to stop. We went straight into the wall of a garage. Kenny Brown, who was the first-team coach, got all mangled up in the wreckage and broke his thigh.'

Brown was taken to hospital in Doncaster for the night. Redknapp, who was sitting across the aisle of the coach from Brown, was fortunate to escape relatively unscathed, a happy circumstance that would not be repeated outside Rome 17 years later. The rest of the passengers were equally blessed, although captain Keith Miller lost two teeth as a result of the impact.

The front end of the coach, where Redknapp, Brown and the rest of the card school were playing, was wrecked, with not a window left intact. Despite the shock, Bond and his staff considered themselves lucky:

'I just don't know how we came out of it so lightly,' said Bond. 'There could have been five or six players badly injured considering the state of the vehicle afterwards.'

Stranded in freezing conditions, Redknapp says that little help was forthcoming for the uninjured players and staff to continue their journey south. 'We ended up getting a train home. Nowadays another coach would come and pick you up, but not back then. We had to get taxis from where the accident happened, wait in a station, catch the milk train home, change trains and we got back about four o'clock in the morning.'

Whilst the coach crash left the players thanking their lucky stars, it did little for results. Two defeats in a row, the second a 1-0 reverse at Rochdale, saw Bond stage a late-night team meeting in a Manchester hotel to thrash out the reasons for the Cherries' lack of goals. Redknapp, never one to contribute significantly to the goals tally, escaped censure as his recent form had seen him provide several opportunities per game which were then being squandered by his team-mates.

The second thrashing of Rotherham in the space of four months put such concerns to one side, as Redknapp put in a man-of-the-match performance in possibly his finest outing for the club. The frequency and accuracy of his crossing was a persistent thorn in the side of the Millers' defence and an audacious lob from a deep-lying position to set up Boyer's second goal was one of the highlights in a game full of them. The winger had found his feet at last, and continued to play an influential role in performances as the season wore on, providing the telling pass in goalscoring moves time and again.

Stuart Morgan, who played alongside Redknapp at Dean Court and had known the winger since their teenage years together at West Ham, recalls the attributes that Harry had at his disposal when fit and healthy: 'Harry was a tremendously skilful player,' says Morgan. 'He had a lot of Ryan Giggs about him. Great pace, ability with both feet, he'd drop his shoulder to the right, come back to the left. He was an absolutely tremendous crosser of the ball, probably one of the best near-post crossers of the ball that I've seen. He was a typically out-and-out winger, not strong in the tackle and defensively probably a bit weak, but on his day he was always at the hub of things in a match.'

This was the case in mid-February, when a bumper crowd of 18,374 at Dean Court saw Bond's side beat Bolton Wanderers 2-0 in a top-of-the-table clash in front of the *Match of the Day* cameras. Redknapp's pinpoint centres made both of the goals, scored by Brian Clark and Micky Cave in the second half. Bond was understandably delighted with the outcome, stating that the win was 'virtually worth four points'.

Thereafter, results stalled, and Redknapp found himself left out of the starting eleven five times in March and April as Bond reshuffled the side to accommodate new signing Paul Aimson in the hope that results would again pick up. This did not prove successful, and the Cherries' indifferent form over Easter saw Bond recall him to the side for Bournemouth's visit to Charlton, their

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first visit to The Valley for 38 years. Redknapp played a key role in getting the point that was secured in a 1-1 draw, crossing the ball which Brian Clark headed on for Jimmy Gabriel to score. But come the next weekend's victory at home to Oldham, Redknapp again found himself out of the squad.

There appears to have been little wrong with Harry's fitness at this stage, as he played the full 90 minutes of a testimonial match for Alan Green, a Bournemouth player who had retired due to a heart condition.

Testimonials are only played at half throttle, so if Redknapp's troublesome knee was bothering him, appearing in a friendly was significantly less risky than turning out when there were points at stake. Redknapp did enough, however, to convince Bond he was ready to return. He found himself on the bench for the game against Blackburn at Ewood Park, which pitted fifth-placed Bournemouth against third-placed Rovers. With the home side just a point ahead of the Cherries, there was no hiding the importance of the fixture, with Bond describing it as 'the big one'.

Bournemouth, without Redknapp, had beaten Rovers 3-0 at Dean Court less than a month before, but the Lancashire side got their revenge with a 2-1 win. Harry came on after an hour to replace Jim De Garis, but he could not help the Cherries to drag themselves back into the game.

With just four matches remaining of the campaign, it was a result which left Bournemouth relying on several results going their way to have any chance of promotion, and Bond knew the game was up.

'Promotion looks improbable for us now, but we will be aiming for maximum points in the remaining matches and, because football is so unpredictable, we cannot be written off yet.'

Qualification for the short-lived Watney Cup was the only realistic target Bournemouth had left to aim for. One of the first football tournaments to have a title sponsor, the competition

was a pre-season affair that featured the two top scorers from each division who had failed to be promoted the previous year. Unsurprisingly, money was the main motivator for clubs to be involved, with £4,000 going to qualifiers to help pay the summer wage bill with a further potential bonus of larger pre-season crowds to watch what was advertised as competitive football.

Every little helps, and Bond called upon his troops to 'score plenty of goals' in the final fixtures as the Cherries were in contention to qualify. With an almost resigned air of inevitability, his side managed only one win and two goals before the final whistle blew to end the season. Redknapp played in three of the four matches, all of which Bournemouth failed to win. He was replaced in the starting line-up by the inexperienced David Chadwick for the home game against Swansea on Easter Saturday, which ended 2-0 in Bournemouth's favour. It was the final game at Dean Court that season and, tellingly, it was the first in which the attendance dropped below 10,000.

The campaign concluded at Halifax in a 2-0 defeat, prompting Bond to describe his team's performance as 'one of the worst I have ever seen'. Qualification for the Watney Cup was not forthcoming, with Bournemouth's 64 league goals trailing in behind Bristol Rovers' 77 and Plymouth Argyle's 74.

Bournemouth ended the game at The Shay with ten men. Defender Dave Jones injured his hip midway through the first half and was replaced by substitute Paul Aimson. Bond was forced to reshuffle his side's formation, but they had little time to settle into their new roles before Redknapp, dropping back to help out in defence, was injured and had to be stretchered off the pitch. With only one sub allowed, Halifax made hay, using the numerical advantage to take the two points which saved them from applying for re-election to the Football League.

Redknapp made 37 appearances in all competitions during a season in which confidence had ebbed out of the team once again

BRIGHT LIGHTS TO PIER LIGHTS

during the business end of the campaign. Fans were restless, wondering how long a wage bill, said to be one of the highest outside of the First Division, could be sustained before the squad broke up.

Manager Bond, possibly forgetting his similar prophecy before the season kicked off, was having none of it:

‘To all the pessimists I would say we did not do too badly, either last season or last year,’ and he reiterated his belief that the club was on the verge of the big time. ‘The club, the town and the supporters deserve Second Division football and I would not have turned down other jobs if I did not think we could achieve it.’

He didn’t stop there, declaring that the team would ‘set the town alight’ the following season, before promising, ‘If it’s next year or the year after, I’ll see this club on its way to the First Division.’

Chairman Harold Walker was equally bullish, stating at the season’s end: ‘We have got to maintain our efforts, and we are all convinced that, in the end, we can do it,’ before responding to the age-old claim that the club were in fact reluctant to achieve promotion by asking the doubters, ‘Why would we have spent all that money otherwise?’

In time-honoured fashion, the words of both manager and chairman were to contrast sharply with the events played out at the club in the following few years.