FOSSE
V LUFFS

LEICESTERSHIRE'S
FORGOTTEN
FOOTBALL RIVALRY

WELL
PLAYED

FOSSE

Leicester Fosse

Football Club.

1891-2.

Club Ground:—
COUNTY CRICKET GROUND,
Aylestone Park,
— AND —
WALNUT STREET, Aylestone Road.

NIGEL FREESTONE

NIGEL FREESTONE

Fosse
v Luffs

**LEICESTERSHIRE'S
FORGOTTEN
FOOTBALL RIVALRY**

pitch

Contents

1

Introduction to Victorian Football

THE INTER-COUNTY footballing rivalry between Leicester Fosse – the forerunner of Leicester City – and Loughborough Town at the end of the 19th century, although short-lived, was as intense as any in modern English football. Loughborough, known as the Luffs, played an important role in the history and development of the Fosse and hence Leicester City FC. Club rivalry stemmed predominantly from their geographical proximity. The Fosse were the dominant club in the town of Leicester, while Loughborough were the biggest and most successful club in the county of Leicestershire, so each encounter was seen by both clubs and sets of supporters as a battle for footballing supremacy in Leicestershire.

Prior to discussing encounters between Leicester Fosse and Loughborough on the field, we need to acclimatise to the period and better understand the game played during the Victorian era. Hopefully, this chapter will cover all you need to know to get into football of the 1880s and 1890s. This will be of benefit as we chronicle the intense rivalry

between the Fosse and the Luffs from their formation in the early 1880s to the demise of the latter at the very beginning of the 20th century. The story is full of drama, controversy, excitement, and passion, and peppered with sadness.

Introduction to 19th-Century Football

Although football had been played in one form or another for hundreds of years in Britain, it was not until the Victorian period that clubs formed and rules were codified. The Factory Act of 1850, among other things, stated that all work must stop at 2pm on Saturdays. This meant that the working class had 'free time' for recreational activity, which was unheard of for 'ordinary people'.

Free time could also mean trouble. Groups of young men on the streets being a nuisance or propping up a bar was likely to become something of a Victorian problem, and indeed that happened.

The first football clubs were started by churches through the emergence of Muscular Christianity, a movement that encouraged participation in sport to develop Christian morality, physical fitness, and 'manly' character. Promoting abstinence from the demon drink and clean living were also high on the religious agenda. Leaders worked with factory owners hoping to encourage healthy pursuits, which would be beneficial to the Church and employers alike. Football clubs were formed from Church groups (such as Aston Villa, Bolton Wanderers, Birmingham City, Leicester Fosse, Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur), factory groups (Manchester United – from the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway depot at Newton Heath, as the club was first known; Arsenal from

Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, known as Woolwich Arsenal; West Ham United who were formerly Thames Ironworks; Coventry City who were first Singers FC, having been founded by employees of the Singer bicycle company), or existing sports clubs (such as Loughborough Town from Loughborough Athletics Club, and Derby County from Derbyshire County Cricket Club).

The Rules

Football has been played in England for over 1,300 years, with each region or county or school having its own unique set of rules. This severely limited the number of potential opponents and hindered its growth. The Cambridge Rules, drawn up in 1848 at a meeting of Eton, Harrow, Shrewsbury and Winchester public schools at the University of Cambridge, were highly influential in the development of subsequent codes, including association football. They were not universally adopted and other rules, most notably those of the Sheffield Football Club, were written nine years later in 1857, which led to the formation of the Sheffield FA in 1867.

The Football Association first met on 26 October 1863 at Freemasons' Tavern, on Great Queen Street in London, and over several meetings across a period of three months produced the first comprehensive set of rules. Blackheath withdrew from the FA over the removal of two draft rules at the previous meeting: those allowed running with the ball, and hacking. Other clubs followed and instead of joining the Football Association, they were instrumental in the formation of the Rugby Football Union in 1871. The Sheffield FA played by its own rules until the 1870s,

with the FA absorbing some of its rules until there was little difference between the games.

The FA Cup, the world's oldest football competition, has been contested since 1872, while in the same year the first international football match took place, between England and Scotland. England is also home to the world's first football league, which was founded in Birmingham in 1888 by Aston Villa director William McGregor.

The following are the rules in place when Leicester Fosse were founded in 1884:

1. The limits of the ground shall be, maximum length, 200 yards; minimum length, 100 yards; maximum breadth, 100 yards; minimum breadth, 50 yards. The length and breadth shall be marked off with flags and touchline; and the goals shall be upright posts, eight yards apart, with a bar across them eight feet from the ground. The average circumference of the association ball shall be not less than 27 inches and not more than 28 inches.
2. The winners of the toss shall have the option of kick-off or choice of goals. The game shall be commenced by a place kick from the centre of the ground in the direction of the opposite goal line; the other side shall not approach within ten yards of the ball until it is kicked off, nor shall any player on either side pass the centre of the ground in the direction of his opponents' goal until the ball is kicked off.
3. Ends shall only be changed at half-time. After a goal is won the losing side shall kick off, but after the change of ends at half-time the ball shall be kicked off by the opposite side from that which originally did so; and always as provided in Law 2.

4. A goal shall be won when the ball has passed between the goal posts under the bar, not being thrown, knocked on, or carried by any one of the attacking side. The ball hitting the goal, or boundary posts, or goal bar, and rebounding into play, is considered in play.

5. When the ball is in touch, a player of the opposite side to that which kicked it out shall throw it from the point on the boundary line where it left the ground. The thrower, facing the field of play, shall hold the ball above his head and throw it with both hands in any direction, and it shall be in play when thrown in. The player throwing it shall not play it until it has been played by another player.

6. When a player kicks the ball, or throws it in from touch, any one of the same side who, at such moment of kicking or throwing, is nearer to the opponents' goal line is out of play, and may not touch the ball himself, nor in any way whatever prevent any other player from doing so until the ball has been played, unless there are at such moment of kicking or throwing at least three of his opponents nearer their own goal line; but no player is out of play in the case of a corner kick or when the ball is kicked from the goal line, or when it has been last played by an opponent.

7. When the ball is kicked behind the goal line by one of the opposite side it shall be kicked off by any one of the players behind whose goal line it went, within six yards of the nearest goal post; but if kicked behind by any one of the side whose goal line it is, a player of the opposite side shall kick it from within one yard of the nearest corner flag post. In either case no other player shall be allowed within six yards of the ball until it is kicked off.

8. No player shall carry, knock on, or handle the ball under any pretence whatever, except in the case of the goalkeeper, who shall be allowed to use his hands in

defence of his goal, either by knocking on or throwing, but not carrying the ball. The goalkeeper may be changed during the game, but not more than one player shall act as goalkeeper at the same time; and no second player shall step in and act during any period in which the regular goalkeeper may have vacated his position.

9. In no case shall a goal be scored from any free kick, nor shall the ball be again played by the kicker until it has been played by another player. The kick-off and corner flag kick shall be free kicks within the meaning of this rule.

10. Neither tripping, hacking, nor jumping at a player, shall be allowed, and no player shall use his hands to hold or push his adversary, or charge him from behind. A player with his back towards his opponents' goal cannot claim the protection of this rule when charged from behind, provided, in the opinion of the umpires or referee, he, in that position, is wilfully impeding his opponent.

11. No player shall wear any nails, except such as have their heads driven in flush with the leather, or iron plates, or gutta-percha on the soles or heels of his boots, or on his shin-guards. Any player discovered infringing this rule shall be prohibited from taking any further part in the game.

12. In the event of any infringement of rules five, six, eight, nine or ten, a free kick shall be forfeited to the opposite side, from the spot where the infringement took place.

13. In the event of an appeal for any supposed infringement of the rules, the ball shall be in play until a decision has been given.

14. Each of the competing clubs shall be entitled to appoint an umpire, whose duties shall be to decide all disputed points when appealed to; and by mutual arrangement a

referee may be chosen to decide in all cases of difference between the umpires.

15. The referee shall have power to stop the game in the event of spectators interfering with the game.

Definition of Terms

Place kick: the ball is kicked when lying on the ground, in any position chosen by the kicker.

Free kick: the ball is kicked when lying on the ground. No opponents are allowed within six yards of the ball, but players cannot be forced to stand behind their own goal line.

Hacking: intentional kicking of an opponent.

Tripping: the throwing of an opponent by use of the leg, or by stooping in front of him.

Knocking on: when a player strikes or propels the ball with his hands or arms.

Holding: includes the obstruction of a player by the hand or any part of the arm extended from the body.

Handling: playing the ball with the hand or arm.

Touch: the part of the field, on either side of the ground, which is beyond the line of play.

Carrying: moving more than two steps when carrying the ball.

Some notable differences from the modern game include:

- There was no crossbar. Goals could be scored at any height.
- Although most forms of handling were not permitted, players were allowed to catch the ball but could not run with it or throw it. A so-called 'fair catch' was rewarded with a free kick (this still exists in Australian Rules football, rugby union and American football).

- Any player ahead of the kicker was deemed offside (similar to today's offside rule in rugby union). The only exception was when the ball was kicked from behind the goal line.
- The throw-in was awarded to the first player (on either team) to touch the ball after it went out of play. The ball had to be thrown in at right-angles to the touchline (as today in rugby union).
- There was no corner kick. When the ball went behind the goal line, there was a situation somewhat like rugby: if an attacking player first touched the ball after it went out of play, then the attacking team had an opportunity to take a free kick at goal from a point 15 yards behind the point where the ball was touched (somewhat similar to a conversion in rugby). If a defender first touched the ball, then the defending team kicked the ball out from on or behind the goal line (equivalent to the goal kick).
- Teams changed ends every time a goal was scored.
- The rules made no provision for a goalkeeper, match officials, punishments for infringements of the rules, duration of the match, half-time, number of players, or pitch-markings (other than flags to mark the boundary of the playing area).

The following amendments were made to the Rules during the period of Leicestershire football derby games.

- 1887: the goalkeeper may not handle the ball in the opposition's half.
- 1888: the drop ball is introduced as a means of restarting play after it has been suspended by the referee.
- 1889: a player may be sent off for repeated cautionable behaviour

- 1890: a goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick.
- 1891: the penalty kick is introduced, for handball or foul play within 12 yards of the goal line. The umpires are replaced by linesmen. Pitch markings are introduced for the goal area, penalty area, centre spot and centre circle.
- 1897: the laws specify, for the first time, the number of players on each team (11) and the duration of each match (90 minutes, unless agreed otherwise). The halfway line is introduced. The maximum length of the ground is reduced from 200 yards to 130 yards.

The penalty kick, introduced out of frustration to combat cynical fouls committed to prevent a goal, was launched at a meeting of the International FA Board held in the Alexandra Hotel in Glasgow on 2 June 1891.

The four British associations agreed, 'If a player intentionally trip or hold an opposing player, or deliberately handle the ball within 12 yards from his own goal line, the referee shall, on appeal, award the opposing side a penalty kick, taken from any point 12 yards from the goal line under the following conditions – all players, with the exception of the player taking the penalty kick and the opposing goalkeeper, who shall not advance more than six yards from the goal line, shall stand at least six yards behind ball; the ball shall be in play when the kick taken; a goal may be scored from the penalty kick.'

It must be remembered that football began in England's top public schools and was played by gentlemen. Since a gentleman would never deliberately foul an opponent, penalty kicks were disdained by gentlemen amateur teams of the period. If awarded against them, the goalkeeper

would leave the goal unguarded while the opposition took the kick, and if they were awarded a penalty, they would deliberately miss it. The legendary Corinthians player C.B. Fry wrote, 'It is a standing insult to sportsmen to have to play under a rule which assumes that players intend to trip, hack or push their opponents, and behave like cads of the most unscrupulous kidney.'

The kick could be taken from any point 12 yards from the goal line and the goalkeeper could narrow the angle by advancing up to six yards off his line. On 14 September 1891, Billy Heath of Wolves scored the first penalty awarded in the Football League, against Accrington at Molineux, early in the second half of a 5-0 victory for his team. In some sources, it is reported that Leicester Fosse also scored with a penalty against Notts County on the same day. Another Wolverhampton Wanderers player, Harry Allen, became the first man to miss a league penalty just five days later, shooting over the bar against West Bromwich Albion.

Officials

Team captains initially ran the game. It was not until the early 1870s that referees appeared on the touchline, to act both as timekeeper and to settle disputes when the two captains could not agree. By the time the Fosse and Luff encounters began, two umpires, one appointed by each team, replaced the captains. Referees took complete control of games in 1891, when the umpires were relegated to the touchline, effectively becoming linesmen. Neutral linesmen were first used on a regular basis in 1898/99, but only for 'important' games.

Even during Victoria times referees were much maligned characters. Forced to get changed in a shed or pub requiring them to walk long distances to and from the ground, or in a tent adjacent to the pitch, without any security or protection of themselves or their belongings, they were subjected to verbal and sometimes physical abuse during and after the game. Many clubs were reluctant to pay the referee, who at the end of the game was required to seek out a club official to ask for his fee. Often because not he could not find anyone, he would have to write a letter to the club secretary a few days later requesting a cheque to be forwarded to his home address. Adcock's 1905 handbook, entitled *Association Football*, states that the standard pay for referees for an 'ordinary cup tie' was 10s 6d. A society for referees was established in London in 1893, and by the end of the century membership of the 27 societies in England reached 773. To ensure consistency in all regions the overall responsibility for refereeing was passed to the FA.

Montague Sherman, in his 1887 book *Athletics and Football*, neatly summarises the role of officials, 'Each side has its own umpire, who is armed with a stick or flag; the referee carries a whistle. When a claim for infringement of rules is made, if both umpires are agreed, each holds up his stick, and the referee calls the game to a halt by sounding his whistle. If one umpire allows the claim, and the referee agree with him, he calls a halt as before; if the other umpire and referee agree that the claim be disallowed, the whistle is not sounded. Two of the three officials must therefore agree in allowing the claim or the whistle is silent, and players continue the game until the whistle calls them off. Both

umpires and referee, therefore, must lose no time in arriving at a decision, or so much play is wasted.'

Excerpts from the Football Association's 'clarification rules' memorandum, which contains several pointers for umpires and linesmen; hopefully help further in bringing 19th century football to life:

1. The kick-off must be in the direction of the opposition goal line, and therefore, all back kicking is illegal; and, secondly, that the other side shall not approach within TEN yards of the ball until it is kicked off.
2. Goals cannot be scored until the whole of the ball has passed over the goal line. The ball is also in play until the whole ball has passed over the touchline.
3. A player is always offside if he is in front of the ball at the time of kicking unless there are three or more of his opponents nearer the goal line. A player is never offside if there are three or more players nearer the goal line than himself at the moment the ball was last played. A player cannot be offside if the ball was last played (i.e., touched, kicked, or thrown) by one of his opponents or by one of his own side who at the time of kicking is nearer his opponents' goal then himself. Law 6 further enacts that a player being offside shall not in ANY WAY WHATEVER interfere with any other player.
4. A goalkeeper is allowed to use his hands in defence of his goal. The committee do not consider a goalkeeper to be in defence of his goal when he is in his opponents' half of the ground.
5. No player shall wear any nails, excepting such as have their heads driven in flush with the leather, or iron plates, or gutta-percha on the soles or heels of his boots or on his

shin guards. Any player discovered infringing this rule should be prohibited from taking further part in the game.

6. In the event of an appeal for any supposed infringement of the rules, the ball shall be in play until a decision is being given. Umpires should remember how very important it is for the proper working of this rule that their decisions should be given as quickly as possible.

Ownership and Management of Football Clubs

Early football clubs were run by committees elected by its members. Management committees oversaw the running of the club, signed players and were responsible for team selection. Sometimes secretary-managers were appointed to carry out these duties. The club secretary was often an old or former player and would try to entice opposition to his team's home ground that would attract a larger than usual crowd. This often involved promising them a percentage of the gate money.

Mismatching was not uncommon, resulting in scores of more than 10-0. Crowds got bored with watching either their team thrash a hopelessly outclassed opposition, or would leave the ground in their droves long before the end of the game if their team were losing by more than four or five goals with 20 minutes to go. Top teams would often field severely weakened sides or send teams to more than one location on the same day.

Towards the end of the 19th century, as clubs and businesses sought to exploit the huge popularity of the game, the Football Association allowed Football League clubs to form limited companies. However, they restricted the profits that could be issued to shareholders to a maximum

of five per cent of the shares held. In addition, club directors could not be paid. So, in essence, clubs operated as not-for-profit businesses.

The Football Association aimed to ensure that clubs met the social and cultural needs of the communities they represented, while still permitting a fair rate of return to their owners. Leicester Fosse would later take advantage of this to help themselves out of a financial crisis. With hindsight, if Loughborough had adopted a similar strategy, they might still be a footballing force today.

A maximum wage was also introduced to stop clubs from increasing salaries as a means of retaining players. Gate receipts, the only significant source of revenue at the time, were split between the competing clubs, with a small percentage going to a central fund for redistribution to all Football League clubs. The idea was to ensure that smaller town clubs would not be at a disadvantage to those from large towns and cities with larger fan bases.

The Game

Football at the end of the 19th century was a brutal game, once described as 'the terror of mothers, the dread of the timid and the joy of athletes'. Although 'hacking', kicking an opposition player beneath the knee, an integral part of the pre-Football Association game, had been banned, players could charge or interfere in any manner that did not involve tripping, hacking, or using hands to hold or push. A young Coalville player was even charged in 1878 with the manslaughter of an Ashby player following a 'charge'.

The violent nature of football attracted the attention of the world-renowned medical journal, *The Lancet*. In 1885, it

published an article entitled 'The Perils of Football', which collated all the footballing accidents, both association and rugby union codes, reported by newspapers during the 1884/85 season. It made grim reading with numerous broken legs, arms, ankles, collar bones, cuts, players having to retire as a result of their injuries, and, tragically, some subsequent deaths.

Although the list does not represent total amount of the season's football casualties, it amply demonstrates the exceptionally dangerous nature of the game. No other popular game had the same amount of peril attached to it. *The Lancet* urged both Rugby Football Union and the Football Association authorities to reform. *The Lancet* did state that the nature of the reforms 'is not for us to decide, but we would venture to call the attention of the Rugby Union and the Association authorities to collaring and charging, respectively'.

The article and recommendations appear to have had little effect, for during the 1888/89 season there were no fewer than eight fatalities and numerous injuries from lockjaw and brain fever through to limb amputations and ruptured kidneys. Shrewsbury Town player John Henry Morris died aged 23 on 12 November 1893 from an internal haemorrhage following a kick in the abdomen by William Evans in an ill-tempered cup tie against Madeley Town at Shrewsbury. A verdict of 'accidental death' was returned. Evans had to be escorted from the coroner's court by the police and was 'followed to the railway by an excited crowd'.

Another football fatality occurred less than two weeks later. William Bannister of Chesterfield Town had collided with the inside-right of Derby Junction at the Recreation

Ground on 4 November 1893. Better known as 'Wash', Bannister appeared to recover rapidly and when he took up his place at the back again, he was loudly applauded. After the match, however, Bannister collapsed and was taken home. Dr William Booth and Dr Robinson were called in, and after careful examination they found that Bannister had ruptured his kidneys but believed that he might pull through. However, just as he appeared to be on the mend, he slipped on a stone, fell and re-opened the wound. A relapse set in, he gradually grew worse, and tragically died. The consensus of players, officials and medical staff was that there was no one to blame. Rough play did not cause the injury; instead it was the simplest collision.

In March 1896, following a clash of heads, Teddy Smith, playing for Bedminster against Eastville Rovers in the Gloucestershire Cup semi-final, suffered severe concussion. After a short period of rest, he bravely carried on playing, but was forced to leave the field and by the next morning he had died from his injuries. Loughborough Town suffered a fatality, as we shall see later, with many players across Leicestershire having to endure life-changing injuries as a result of playing the kicking game.

Team tactics were simple: dribble the ball straight down the middle of the field. There was little sideways movement of the ball. This often meant using sheer physical force to move through, rather than around, the opposition. When the opposition successfully stopped an individual forward, another member of the onrushing group followed up to force the ball on by dribbling or kicking to team-mates who were close by. Mass 'scrimmages' occurred as loose balls were pounced upon when dribbles were cut short by hacks and fouls.

Although passing of the ball occurred, it generally was a last resort and took only two forms – very short passes exchanged by forwards running together in pairs or small groups, and long forward punts by backs for the pack of forwards to chase. The sweeping pass to the wing, or longer lateral or even backward passes designed to set up subsequent forward attacks, were unknown in this era.

In many respects the game was more similar to rugby league than modern football. Teams lined up and played with a goalkeeper, two or three backs and half-backs, and the rest of the team as a tightly packed swarm of forwards. This style of football changed slowly during the 1870s into one based around teamwork and cooperation. Developed by Queen's Park in Scotland, the so-called 'combination' or 'passing' game was rapidly adopted with considerable success by English clubs Liverpool, Aston Villa, Blackburn Rovers, Fulham, Arsenal, Southampton, and Derby County. The playing style involved a combination of dribbling and passing, offering a great advantage over the rudimentary style of football. It seems strange that until then, the idea that a ball could be deliberately passed to a team-mate in a better position had barely been considered. By cooperating and working together as a team, giving them the upper hand.

Teams typically employed the 2-3-5 'pyramid formation', which dominated the game for 60 years, until a more technical, defensive approach, when Arsenal developed the 'W-M', essentially a 3-4-3. For the first time, a balance between attacking and defending was reached. One of the backs often acted as a minder or bodyguard to

the goalkeeper, protecting him from excessive barging and acting as a last line of defence. The other roamed further upfield to break up attacks. The offside rule at the time required three defenders to be between the recipient of the ball and the goal. Therefore, it was tactically sound to utilise the second back to play higher to spring an offside trap far from goal. Backs with big kicks were highly sought after to both clear the ball away and to launch attacks. When defending, the two backs would watch out for the opponents' outside- and inside-forwards, while the half-backs (midfielders) would watch for the other three forwards.

As today, the midfield was the engine room of the team, taking the ball from the opposition and launching attacks. The central half-back had a fundamental role in both coordinating attacks, as well as marking the opponents' centre-forward, generally considered to be their most dangerous player. The forward line comprised outside and inside wing men who would combine to make rapid progress down the less muddy wings and create chances for other forwards. The role of the centre-forward was to get on the end of crosses from his wing men and essentially to be in the right place at the right time to score. It was this formation that gave rise to the convention of shirt numbers.

The Victorian goalkeeper's role was quite different from that of today's keeper. Until 1912 he was permitted to handle the ball anywhere in his own half of the field. Few goalkeepers managed to take full advantage of this, as they had to bounce the ball every two steps to continue running. This was almost impossible on muddy and uneven pitches.

Goalkeepers could be legally charged by burly opposing forwards and if knocked over the goal line while carrying the ball they would concede a goal (point). This meant that the goalkeeper generally stayed close to goal, preferring to fist or punt the ball high up the field instead of catching the ball.

Just to confuse matters, the goalkeeper wore the same kit as his team-mates. Gloves only started to be worn in the 1890s. The law changed in 1894 when charging was only permitted while goalkeepers were in possession of the ball. In 1866, Darlington's Charles Craven identified the attributes and skills required to be a goalkeeper, 'A good goalkeeper should not be less than 5ft 6 in. in height (the same in girth if he likes), active, cool, and have a good and quick eye. He should be a safe kick. In clearing the ball, he should strike up in the air, so that the ball does not meet an opponent and rebound. He sometimes has eight yards to cover in next to no time, and as it is quicker to fall than to run, he should practice throwing down himself. When this art is acquired (and it cannot be done without practice) he will find it fairly useful.'

During the period Fosse and Luffs met, football did noticeably change from dribbling and scrimmages to a passing game, with even the odd goal being scored from a header.

Players

It must be remembered that association football began as an amateur game. A rule had been in effect since 1881 and stated, 'Any member of a club receiving remuneration or consideration of any sort above his actual expenses and any

wages lost by any such player taking part in any match, shall be debarred from taking part in either cup, inter-association, or international contests, and any clubs employing such player shall be excluded from this association.'

Throughout the early 1880s the issue of professionalism would simply not go away. The Football Association had several disputes with northern clubs, including Bolton Wanderers, Blackburn Rovers and Darwen who had all signed Scottish players professionally. Many northern clubs retained two sets of 'books', with one set of true accounts and another book detailing fabricated accounts that would be presented to the Football Association if the need were to arise. It was common practice for players to be paid from gate receipts, prior to the club declaring the gross takings on matchday. Local tradesmen were often used by clubs to 'employ' players. In reality these players had their wages paid by the clubs themselves. Many of these practices had become very well established; for example, excessive payments had been given for time taken off work (broken-time payments), paying players for 'one-off' or ad hoc games and myriad other financial inducements, all of which were implemented to ensure that particular players represented a particular football club.

The Football Association embraced 'amateurism' promoted by Corinthian FC and other clubs founded by alumni from top public schools. The difference between the southern amateur clubs and the professional teams from the north came to a head in 1884 when Preston North End played Upton Park in January 1884 in the FA Cup. Preston were accused of professionalism, which they admitted. Billy Sudell, who masterminded Preston's rise to the pinnacle of

English football, admitted the practice was commonplace. He said, 'Professionalism must improve football because men who devote their entire attention to the game are more likely to become good players than the amateur who is worried by business cares.' Feeling they had little option, Preston withdrew from the competition.

At least 30 other clubs, mainly from the north of England, quickly followed suit, and threatened to set up a rival British Football Association if the FA did not allow professionalism. The FA relented, and in July 1885 professionalism was formally legalised in England. Professionals had to be registered and there were strict conditions, on paper at least. The main condition was that professionals were required to either be born, or have been in residence for two years, within six miles of the ground or headquarters of their club. Preston, however, was a long way from London and the rule was difficult to police and was abandoned in 1889. Professionals were also not able to play for more than one team a season without special permission of the FA. Though English clubs employed professionals, the Scottish Football Association still banned them. Many Scottish players consequently moved to England to ply their trade. Preston North End's 'Invincibles' team, who won the 'Double' of the FA Cup and the inaugural Football League championship in 1888/89, fielded no fewer than ten Scottish professionals.

Although Leicester Fosse and Loughborough players from 1889 onwards were classified as professionals, most did not earn enough to support themselves. They supplemented their income by working for a local employer. Lesser-known players received a pittance. This meant that

through a mixture of employers refusing to allow players to take time off, illness or fecklessness it was not unusual even for top teams, particularly away from home, to be short of one or more players, or to acquire substitutes from the crowd.

Training

Training was not part of the 'gentlemanly' ideal. Intense training was considered to be 'poor form'; 'Practising too much undermined natural grace and talent … gentlemen were not supposed to toil and sweat for their laurels.' Due to the aggressive and physical nature of the game, players who could kick long and were robust were favoured over those with ball skills or speed. Robert Crompton, the Blackburn Rovers full-back and England international, was described in the following terms, 'Physically Bob Crompton is one of the finest examples of the native-born professional player. Standing 5ft 9in, and weighing 12st 7lb, he is splendidly developed, and a fine figure in shirt and knickers … He can charge with effect, however, on occasions, but he is something more than a mere rusher … His kicking is naturally powerful-probably his punts are the biggest things in league football … Perhaps he balloons the ball rather too much for the perfect back, and when attacking his feeding passes often have too much powder behind them.'

Meanwhile, Herbert Smith, the captain of Reading, was once described as follows by a former team-mate, 'In watching the figure of Herbert Smith on a football field one is tempted to exclaim, "There stands a man!" As a specimen of English manhood, one might search far and wide for his

equal. It may be that in these days purely physical qualities are extolled too much, but a fine man, a perfect human animal will always command respect. To watch Smith at play, to see him run, to witness the play of his muscles, makes one feel proud of one's kind. He is a type of perfectly developed manhood.'

Given the emphasis on brute strength and idea of Muscular Christianity promoted by the Church, many early professional football clubs employed professional athletes or ex-boxers. Training sessions rarely developed ball skills and typically involved 'the use of heavy clubs and dumb-bells to 20 minutes' skipping, ball-punching, sprinting, and alternating with an eight- or nine-mile walk at a brisk pace'. An unnamed former English international, writing in the early 20th century, bemoaned the lack of skills development in training, 'There is no running about or dribbling, feinting, passing with the inside or outside of the foot, trapping or heading the ball and placing it with the head like you do with your feet, judging distances etc; indulged in at all.'

In an article entitled 'The Day's Work', Mr W.I. Bassett, a former England international who played for West Bromwich Albion for 16 years, gave a detailed account of the manner in which a professional footballer was trained, 'The bulk of the trainers vary in their methods … Monday is often a *dies non*. Many clubs allow the men to do as they like on that day, providing that there is no midweek engagement. On the Tuesday morning they get to the ground at ten o'clock and the trainer takes them for a good walk into the country. They probably cover five or six miles, and do it at a fair pace. This is the form of training

I cordially approve of … plenty of good fresh air. Should the morning not be conducive to pleasant walking, then the trainer orders alternative exercise.

'One of the greatest full-backs of the day is in the habit of skipping every morning; practically he does little else, and he is always in the pink of condition. It makes for increased agility, it improves the wind. Most of our leading clubs have a well-equipped gymnasium.

'Another player will have a long turn with the Indian clubs, and others will punch the ball for an hour … Some of our leading pugilists are very fine ball punchers … Then there is running exercise. Most of the players will run round the ground a few times or many, according to the amount of exercise each are deemed to require. This was the only real training I ever did. Then there is sprinting exercise … The men indulge in short bursts at top speed. But I fancy I hear the reader ask, what about learning to play football? Once a week, and once a week only, the men have ball practice … the men simply kick in … My own opinion is that men get nothing like as much actual work with the ball as they need.'

The Pitch

Although some private pitches may have been used, most football clubs began on public parks, which began to appear in Britain from the 1860s onwards. In Leicester, for instance, Abbey Park (1882), Victoria Park (1883) and Spiney Hill Park (1885) all opened within three years of each other. The best-known private sports grounds in Leicestershire during the 1880s were the cricket grounds on Wharf Street, Aylestone Cricket Round (Grace Road),

Belgrave Cycle, all of which were in Leicester, Coalville's Fox and Gosse Cricket Ground and Loughborough's Hubbards Athletics Ground.

Pitch markings when Fosse played their first game in 1884 simply comprised a four flags to mark the corners of the playing area. The goalposts were eight yards apart – precisely the same distance as they need to be today. In general, there was nothing to indicate the edge of the pitch, nor the end of it. Pitches were just patches of grass wherever they could be found. Only when clubs had their own homes was it possible to lay down pitch markings. Bollards or a rope fencing along the field edges were used to help players know where they could not go beyond and to keep the spectators close to the action.

When it was decided that players could no longer be offside from a throw, for example, it wasn't necessary for there to be markings on the pitch to denote that. But when the rules were changed in 1887 to ban goalkeepers from handling the ball in the opposition's territory, referees clearly could not enforce the new law without knowing the location of the halfway point of the field of play.

The biggest change resulted from the introduction of the penalty kick four years later in 1891 to punish players other than the goalkeeper for handling the ball within 12 yards of the goal line. Equally, a penalty could also be awarded for foul play within the area, meaning that referees needed to be able to see exactly where that area began and ended. That was why pitch markings were introduced, dictating where both the goal area and penalty area were located as well as the location of the centre spot and the centre circle.