

IVAN BUTLER



LIVERPOOL

MATCHES OF MY LIFE

From Second Division
to World Champions



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Liverpool FC to May 1960

LIVERPOOL FC was formed in August 1892, ironically born out of Everton FC, which is the only nice thing you will find in this book about Everton, by the way. Everton's president, John Houlding, owned the Anfield Road stadium, where the team originally played. Everton and Houlding fell out, so Everton decided to move across Stanley Park to their current ground. Houlding, meanwhile, decided to set up a new club, Liverpool Football Club, which was to play in the Lancashire League.

Their first match was against Higher Walton in the 1892/93 season, which resulted in a resounding 8-0 win at Anfield, under manager William Barclay. Amazingly, the Liverpool team for that match included ten Scottish-born players.

Their successful first season saw them playing in the Second Division in 1893/94, playing their first Football League match against the wonderfully named Middlesbrough Ironopolis, at the equally wonderfully named Paradise Field, winning 2-0. At this time there were only two divisions in the Football League, and it was the old two points for a win system.

They won the Second Division but, in those days, they had to play off, in something called a Test Match, against the bottom team of the First Division to see who would play in the top league the next season. Interestingly, their opponents were Newton Heath, who they beat 2-0. Newton Heath were later to become Manchester

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United, so this was Liverpool's first great success against their future arch-rivals.

Unfortunately, their stay in the top league was all too brief, as they were relegated in their first season, after losing a Test Match against Bury. Yes, that's the same Bury that while I was writing this book were expelled from the English Football League. They were once in the First Division.

Liverpool bounced straight back by winning the Second Division in 1895/96 and coming through the Test Match ordeal at the end of the season. Then only five years later, in 1900/01, they were crowned First Division champions for the first time. Now managed by Tom Watson, they pipped Sunderland by only two points after defeating West Brom in the final match of the season.

An awful 1903/04 saw Liverpool relegated but, once again, they bounced straight back the following season as Second Division champions, then claimed their second First Division title the following season, despite losing their first three matches and conceding 11 goals in the process.

During these early years there hadn't been an inkling of any cup success, the closest being FA Cup semi-final defeats in 1897 and 1899, but eventually their chance came when they reached the final of 1913/14, played at Crystal Palace. In front of nearly 73,000 people, they faced mid-table Burnley, who had finished only one point above them in the league that season. Surely this was their chance!

Although it was a close-fought encounter, it wasn't to be, as Burnley scored the only goal of the match. This was the first FA Cup Final played in front of royalty, with King George VI presenting the cup to the Burnley captain.

After a break during the First World War, the Football League resumed in 1919/20, and in 1921/22 Liverpool secured their third league title, with the next not far away, as they won back-to-back titles for what wouldn't be the last time.

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Was this a sign of things to come, a dominant Liverpool team winning endless league titles? Not yet anyway, as their fifth title didn't come until 1947, a 24-year gap, and there was no cup success during this period either.

The 1946/47 league championship win went down to the last matches of the season. Wolves were top of the league by one point going into their final match, crucially against Liverpool at Molineux. The Reds pulled off a 2-1 win to pip Wolves by one point, but then had to wait to claim the title, as Stoke City still had a match in hand and could pip Liverpool on goal average. However, the Potters were held to a draw by Sheffield United, so Liverpool were crowned champions. Unfortunately, they were beaten in an FA Cup semi-final replay by Burnley, to spoil their chances of a first league and cup double.

Despite their league championship successes, cup silverware continued to elude them, and they were once again beaten FA Cup finalists in 1950, 36 years after their first appearance in the final. This time it was Arsenal who lifted the cup after a 2-0 victory at Wembley, and it would be another 15 years before the Reds got their chance of FA Cup glory.

Following Liverpool's 1946/47 title success, it was mid-table mediocrity, until things got even worse. They finished rock bottom in 1953/54 and were relegated after 50 years in the First Division. Worse still, Everton replaced them in the top tier after finishing runners-up in the Second Division.

This time there was no immediate bouncing back for Liverpool. In successive seasons, 1955/56 and 1956/57, they came agonisingly close, finishing third, at a time when only the top two teams were promoted. This was followed by two fourth-place finishes and another third place, so they were always there or thereabouts in the late 50s.

Surely the top flight beckoned. Perhaps all they needed was something or someone special just to give them that final push. Manager Phil Taylor had consistently achieved good finishes in the

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Second Division, but the club yearned for First Division football and, with Liverpool sitting 11th in the table, Taylor resigned in November 1959.

So, enter Shanks. Bill Shankly was appointed just a couple of weeks later, and despite losing his first match 4-0, he guided Liverpool up the table. However, they once again finished third in 1959/60, so even Shanks couldn't provide miracles – not immediately anyway.

So, we now arrive at May 1960, the year I was born. Apparently, I was born at home, and while my mum was upstairs in labour, the doctor and my dad were downstairs watching sport on TV. I guess that's where my love of sport emanates from.

I can't remember exactly when I got into football, but it must have been at around the age of seven or eight. Unfortunately, I was only six when England won the World Cup, and while I was aware that 'something special' had happened, I didn't know what. That's surprising really as my dad was a West Ham fan and a huge admirer of Bobby Moore, so I'm sure he must have been watching it that day and would have been shouting at the TV.

As I was born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, there was no big local team to support. The closest I had was Peterborough United, who had just come up from non-league to win the Fourth Division, but I wanted to support a First Division team.

It's confession time ... my name is Ivan Butler, and I once supported Leeds United. There, it's out now. I'm hoping that diehard Liverpool fans don't stop reading at this point – we all make mistakes. Leeds were the top team of the day in 1969 and if you don't have a local team to follow, you tend to go for the top team. Just look at how many new Manchester City supporters there are nowadays, and it was the same in the heyday of Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United.

However, it didn't take me long to see why Leeds had the nickname 'Dirty Leeds', and I actually hated their captain, Billy

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Bremner, so how could I carry on supporting them? I wanted to support a clean-cut team with some flair, and anyway, their white kit was boring, and I'm sure my mum hated having to try to keep my football shirt gleaming white.

Every other week, I used to watch Wisbech Town play in the Eastern Counties League. They played in all red, so there was I with my red scarf (possibly a home-knitted one) and my red rosette (definitely home-made by my mum), cheering on the Fenmen. So, who else could I support now that my fickle ways had deserted Dirty Leeds?

It was obvious. Why buy another scarf and rosette when I could support another team in all red? So, Liverpool it was from 1970, which means I've no personal memories of some of the early matches in this book, but that doesn't make them any less iconic to me.

When I was born, Liverpool were a Second Division club that had been on the cusp of promotion for the previous six years. Bill Shankly had been in the hot seat for only a few months but was to go on to manage the team for over 600 matches. During the early years of my life, Shanks would win the First Division title three times, the FA Cup twice and the UEFA Cup. It seems that I was born at exactly the right time to witness the great days ahead for this wonderful club.

1

Return to the Top Flight

Liverpool 2 Southampton 0

Second Division

21 April 1962

Anfield

Attendance: 40,410

Liverpool	Southampton
Furnell	Godfrey
Byrne	Patrick
Moran	Traynor
Milne	Wimshurst
Yeats	Knapp
Leishman	Huxford
Callaghan	Paine
Hunt	Clifton
Lewis	Reeves
Melia	Mulgrew
A'Court	Penk
<i>Manager: Bill Shankly</i>	<i>Manager: Ted Bates</i>

BILL SHANKLY was considered to be a whole-hearted player during his time at Carlisle United and Preston North End. We would come to see this same whole-hearted attitude applied to his management style. He'd even made one appearance for Liverpool during the time that the Football League was suspended during the Second World War. Liverpool beat Everton 4-1 at Anfield. It

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probably didn't mean that much to him at the time, but I would like to bet he reminded a few Blues about this years later.

After the war, he returned to Preston, then eventually went back to Carlisle as their manager. Following this he managed Grimsby Town, Workington and Huddersfield Town, where he gave a debut to a 16-year-old Denis Law, so he obviously had an eye for spotting young talent.

Immediately on his arrival at Liverpool he set about improving facilities at the club and bringing in some fresh faces to the playing squad. Two early signings were Ron Yeats and Ian St John, who would go on to play a significant role in Liverpool's emergence from the doldrums, but most of his early signings were low-key ones, such as Kevin Lewis from Sheffield United.

During his first full season in charge, 1960/61, Liverpool again finished third in the Second Division. This was becoming an annoying habit, but was one that was soon to be broken, as 1961/62 got off to a blistering start with ten wins and a draw in the first 11 matches.

Liverpool led the league after three matches, following a 5-0 thumping of Leeds United, and that's where they stayed for the rest of the season. They were a free-scoring team, netting 99 league goals, 68 of those at Anfield, where they remained unbeaten in league and cup all season. As well as thrashing Leeds, they had big wins against Bury (5-0), Walsall (6-1), Swansea (5-0) and Middlesbrough (5-1). A taste of the style to come.

The Reds reached the fifth round of the FA Cup but lost after a second replay to Shankly's old club Preston at the neutral venue of Old Trafford. The only goal of the match was scored by Peter Thompson, who was later to become a Liverpool legend.

By April, however, the league was almost won with matches to spare. On 21 April Liverpool faced sixth-placed Southampton, knowing that a win would seal the championship and the long-awaited return to the First Division.

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Southampton were one of the few teams that had beaten the Reds during the season, when they triumphed 2-0 at The Dell, so it wasn't a forgone conclusion that Liverpool would romp to the league title. However, given that they had a further five matches to play after this one, they could be forgiven for feeling pretty confident going into the match, particularly at fortress Anfield.

Liverpool's regular striker Ian St John was suspended for this one, so Kevin Lewis was brought in up front. The young striker was to brighten up a damp Anfield with the only two goals of the match within the first half hour. Lewis joined Liverpool from Sheffield United for £13,000, scoring on his debut in August 1960, aged just 19. During his three-year stay at Liverpool, he would go on to play 82 matches, scoring 44 times, not a bad return for such a young striker. He was a winger, rather than an out-and-out striker, and faced stiff competition from Ian Callaghan for a spot in the team. Having lost his place to Callaghan, his recall for the Southampton match came after four months out of the team, and back then there was no substitutes' bench for him to warm.

The Reds started the match against Southampton well and had already hit the post early on through A'Court before Lewis scrambled in his first goal on 19 minutes. Moran took a free kick that Hunt helped forward. The ball bounced off a Southampton defender, Knapp, falling to Lewis, who was facing away from the goal. He turned and shot but the ball cannoned off Knapp again and back to Lewis. Second time around he made no mistake, although he needed the help of the woodwork.

Liverpool were ahead and on their way back to the First Division, and the all-important win was confirmed just ten minutes later. Liverpool scrambled the ball away from their own penalty area and quickly found Callaghan on the right wing. He crossed to the far post, where Hunt headed the ball back across. Although the

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Southampton goalkeeper knocked the ball away, it went straight to Lewis, who headed in his and Liverpool's second goal.

The Reds continued to push forward throughout the match, creating more chances to put Southampton to rest. Hunt and Byrne went close, and Lewis nearly claimed his hat-trick, but there was to be no addition to the scoreline. At the final whistle, there were celebrations all round and the players returned to the pitch for a lap of honour. They were enveloped by fans, who had swarmed on to the pitch to congratulate their heroes.



Finally, Liverpool had won promotion back to the top flight, and Bill Shankly was just beginning what would become a trophy-laden managerial career with his beloved club.

For Kevin Lewis, this was to be the highlight of his Liverpool career. He did get a place in the team, although he had to switch wings to the left. However, once Peter Thompson was signed from Preston in the summer of 1963, Lewis's opportunities were again looking few and far between, so he moved on to Huddersfield for two years, before moving to South Africa to play for Port Elizabeth. He spent three years there before a serious knee injury forced him into premature retirement at the age of 28.

However, even though in years to come there would be many famous names to grace the Anfield hall of fame, Kevin Lewis's name should be fondly remembered as the man who scored the goals that took Liverpool back to the First Division, where they have been ever since.

The following season was to be one of consolidation for Liverpool, as they finished a creditable eighth in the First Division, which was won by the arch-enemy Everton.

The First Division table from that year includes some interesting names, such as Blackpool and Leyton Orient, teams which many people today wouldn't believe were once in the top flight. In fact, what had been fortress Anfield the previous season was immediately

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breached by Blackpool, who won 2-1 there in the season's opener. This was one of five matches lost at Anfield in the league that season.

There were some highlights though, including a 4-1 victory over Manchester City, a 5-0 drubbing of bottom club Leyton Orient and a 5-1 win over Birmingham. But the most spectacular matches were against Spurs at home and away. Spurs were the current league champions and were to finish runners-up behind Everton this season. However, Liverpool thrashed them 5-2 at Anfield in April 1963, only to lose 7-2 at White Hart Lane two weeks later. Spurs were undoubtedly the team of the early 60s, which is probably why my older brother supports them and why I enjoy Liverpool beating them so much.

The highlight of Liverpool's season, though, was an FA Cup run to the semi-final stage. The Reds were still seeking their first FA Cup success and again came close. Victories over Wrexham, Burnley, Arsenal and West Ham took them into a semi-final against Leicester at Hillsborough. Leicester won 1-0 thanks to an 18th-minute goal, but Bill Shankly described this as the most one-sided match he'd ever seen, as Liverpool had 80 per cent of the possession but couldn't find a way past the brilliant Gordon Banks in the Leicester goal. So once again the chance of cup success had gone.