

Neil Vacher & Ted MacDougall

# MACDOU- GOAL!

THE **TED MACDOUGALL** STORY



FOREWORD BY LAWRIE McMENEMY

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STORY

Neil Vacher  
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# 1

## Finding His Feet

**E**DWARD John MacDougall was born in Inverness, Scotland on 8 January 1947, the only child of Alexander and Kathleen MacDougall. Sometimes referred to as the Capital of the Highlands and with a population of around 28,000 at the time, Inverness lay close to where Bonnie Prince Charlie fought the final confrontation of the Jacobite Rising in 1746, and in more peaceful times, had established itself as a mecca for bagpipe enthusiasts. When young Edward was making his first appearance in life, it was also home to three Highland League football clubs, as Ted himself recalls, 'We lived just across the road from Grant Street Park, the ground of Inverness Clachnacuddin, for whom my father played as a goalkeeper. My mother used to say that I had football boots on from about three years of age, so I certainly developed a love for the game very early on in my life! Later on, I remember my father making me practise wearing a slipper on my right foot to encourage me to use my left. That's why I was always quite useful with my left foot!'

Ted's father, a slater and tiler by profession and known to his friends as 'Eck', was in fact a goalkeeper of some distinction

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locally, says Ted, 'The "Lillywhites", as Clachnacuddin were known because of their white strip, were semi-professional and as a young boy I used to go with my Dad to watch them train twice a week, and then go to their match on the Saturday. I enjoyed watching my Dad play but I never thought of becoming a goalkeeper myself. The other teams in Inverness at that time were Caledonian and Inverness Thistle. Of course they eventually amalgamated to become Inverness Caledonian Thistle in 1994 and have gone on to reach the Scottish Premier League.

'I attended Merkinch Junior School and played my first matches for the school side there before I went on to Inverness High School, where I became centre-half and captain. We played on Saturday mornings but that wasn't enough for me, so in the afternoon I played on the right-wing for the local Boys' Brigade! I remember once travelling with the school team to play a match in Inverary, which is near Aberdeen, and we had to go by bus which was a really big deal at the time! Inverness was a beautiful place to grow up in but it was quite isolated in those days, the road network was very poor and to get from Inverness to Glasgow for example would have taken around five hours.

'The first time I hit the ball into the net as a lad I thought it was fantastic, a different feeling altogether to scoring without one and of course we didn't have to go and fetch the ball! It was great when I first played under lights as well instead of a lamp post!

'Apart from following the local sides, I also became fanatical about Manchester United and once, as a treat, Mum and Dad took me to watch a game at Old Trafford. If going to Inverary was quite something then you can imagine how I felt about this! It was about a 1,000-mile round trip to Manchester and back, and for a young lad coming from a small town like Inverness as it was then, I thought the place was phenomenal, just out of this world!

'However, a big change in my life occurred when I was 12 years old. My Dad had worked on the railways for many years, but as more and more of them were being closed down things were becoming increasingly difficult for him. He managed to

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find work in Widnes, Cheshire which was an industrial town on the northern bank of the River Mersey, so Mum and I moved down there with him. Chemical plants dominated the town and you smelt Widnes before you saw it. It was quite a contrast to the clean air that we had been used to in Scotland but my parents knew that moving there would also give me a better chance of having a football career.'

Unfortunately for Ted however, the major sporting interest in Widnes centred almost exclusively around the town's rugby league club, 'I attended Fairfield High School, which, no surprises, was of course a rugby playing school! It was all about rugby, the only lads who played football apart from me were those that were not very athletic types, or wore glasses or had one of those pink NHS eyepatches! We had the traditional house system and when it came to the inter-house football competition I represented York house and one year scored something like 45 goals in three games! My schoolmates gave me the nickname "Jock" – a lot of thought must have gone into that – and I became a bit of a celebrity, not because I was particularly good but because I was one of the few boys who played football rather than rugby league.

'Funnily enough a lot of the bigger guys used to look after me at school whenever there was any trouble. They seemed to like me because there was something strange about me, as I preferred football to rugby and I was Scottish!'

Despite the prevalence of rugby league locally, MacDougall's feelings towards the sport did not change, 'Widnes RLFC, or the "Chemics" as they were nicknamed, played on Friday nights and I used to go along and watch but I never fancied playing much. No, thank you!

'When I was 15 I left school on the Friday and the following week I went for an interview at the Swale Press in Widnes, who printed the *Runcorn, Widnes and Liverpool Weekly News*. My mother was a strong character so she came with me and the foreman, who was very polite and respectful, seemed to like the idea that I was the only kid who came for an interview with his

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Mum! He thought that was fantastic and I started work there the following Monday.

'I was a trainee compositor earning the equivalent of £3.50 a week, and in those days you used to have to set every letter individually into the print case which took a heck of a long time, so there was quite a large number of staff employed at the works. It wasn't just newspapers we printed, in fact the company used to offer a design service for all kinds of printed items, so I attended a Print and Design course at Liverpool College of Art three nights a week, the same college that John Lennon went to.

'Unfortunately I never met John but I did see the Beatles perform, as they used to play in Widnes every Monday night at this time. It used to cost half a crown to go and see them! I was given a photograph signed by all four of the Beatles and many years later my Dad sold it for £500! I didn't visit The Cavern but I loved the music coming from the Liverpool area. We also printed the weekly *Merseybeat* newspaper, so we got the first details of what was happening in the music scene. At the time, if you came from Liverpool people really thought you were somebody.'

Meanwhile, Ted had progressed into adult local league football, 'I had been playing men's football in the local leagues since I was about 15 for teams like ICI and Everite, who were big chemical companies. They were the sort of leagues where most players used to smoke cigarettes in the dressing room before they went out for the game. Anyway, I'd done well, scored a lot of goals and was making headlines in my own newspaper! Of course I made sure those headlines were a little bit bigger and bolder than they might have been otherwise! I was always a better player than I really was!'

# Learning the Trade

**M**ACDOUGALL'S reputation in Merseyside football continued to grow and he scored goals at such a rate that as a 17-year-old in 1964, he was handed the opportunity to have a trial for Liverpool. It came through his foreman at the printing works, 'He knew somebody at Liverpool and asked if he got me a trial, would I go? I said yes, of course, so I went over to Melwood on a Tuesday night and there were lots of young lads present from all over the country, and Scotland as well. The first person I was introduced to was a guy called Tom Bush. He was an elderly gent, a former scout who used to always have a small cigarette fixed in the corner of his mouth and wore a flasher raincoat! Joe Fagan, who would of course later go on to manage Liverpool for a couple of seasons in the 1980s, was also there as he was then the reserve team trainer, together with a wonderful character called Reuben Bennett whom I grew to love dearly. Joe and Reuben were also part of manager Bill Shankly's famous boot room staff, which guided the club so successfully for many, many years.

Anyway, I did okay and I was invited to come back on the Thursday, when I was asked if I would like to sign amateur



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forms. I grabbed the opportunity and played in the “C” team the following Saturday. I scored a few goals and gradually progressed through to the “B” team, then to the “A” team. I managed to keep scoring and eventually I displaced some young professionals and got into the reserve side. I actually scored probably the worst goal of my career playing for Liverpool reserves – although I must confess I didn’t know much about it at the time! The opposing team’s goalie had the ball and I turned my back as he was set to boot it upfield, but the ball struck me on the back of the neck and just flew into the open net. I don’t know who was more embarrassed – him or me!

For 18 months Ted played as an amateur, but after scoring twice in only his second reserve game at Bolton, the day after his 19th birthday in January 1966, he was offered the chance to turn professional, ‘I was summoned from training and was told to go and see “The Boss”, the great Bill Shankly. I began shaking like a leaf because I had never met him before and had to pinch myself to believe that Bill Shankly actually wanted to see me! But Bill was marvellous, he sat me down and told me I’d done great, and said he would like to offer me a professional contract at Anfield with a basic wage of around £16–£18 a week, I can’t remember the exact figure but it was twice as much as I was earning at the time! Typically, Bill said I should go away and talk to my parents before I decided whether or not to accept.’

The chance to sign as a professional arrived at a time when MacDougall had spent four years in the printing industry and still had another two years ahead of him to complete his apprenticeship, ‘It was a six-year course and in a day and age when everybody told you to get a trade to guarantee you’d be made for life. I reckon 95 per cent of parents would have insisted their son should see it through however, my parents had brought me down from Scotland hoping just such a chance might arise. When Dad asked me if I thought I could make it as a pro, I told him “yes”. What youngster wouldn’t? But what the hell did I really know?’

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‘Imagine how elated I felt when both Mum and Dad replied that if that was the way I felt, then I should go for it! My parents were so influential in changing the course of my whole life. You hear of many other guys less fortunate than I was, who reach 30 years of age and are still left wondering whether or not they could have made it in the game, and wished they had taken a chance. Well my parents gifted me the opportunity and I loved them until the day they died because they changed my life.’

When Shankly finally called time on his own distinguished playing career in 1949, he immediately began his managerial apprenticeship at Carlisle United. Spells in charge of Grimsby Town, Workington and Huddersfield Town followed before he took charge at Anfield in December 1959. Liverpool were then a mid-table Second Division side but gradually, together with his backroom staff, Shankly turned things around. Promotion in 1961/62 was followed by the First Division championship two years later and he now presided over a very strong side that had added the FA Cup to their list of honours in 1965, and established itself as one of the major forces in the English game. MacDougall was just one of a number of young players hoping for a chance to break into the side, ‘There were guys like Geoff Strong, Phil Chisnall, Alf Arrowsmith, Peter Wall, Bobby Graham, Doug Livermore and Ian Ross all fighting for a place in the senior side. Doug and Ian started their careers at the same time as me and the three of us became great mates. However, opportunities were very limited as Liverpool were on their way to winning the Football League championship in 1966 and did so using just 14 players. Not like the rotational system used by clubs today – what a load of crap that is by the way!’

Nonetheless, Ted has fond memories of his formative years in the professional game, under the guidance of the legendary Shankly, ‘We used to report to Anfield and get changed there for training. Shankly would always change with the reserves and afterwards we would all get into the big bath together. The training ground at Melwood was about three or four miles down the road and we travelled there by bus. Training with Shankly

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was all about the five-a-sides at the end of the session. If you were in his team you had to win and he would also act as referee, so if you weren't winning, he would award you a crazy penalty or something right near the end!

'Shankly's house overlooked the Everton training ground at Bellefield and he would look out the window and watch them train. Long before psychology was even thought of, while we were all in the bath he would say things like, "I just watched them train – big fat arses, their shorts don't fit, they cannae play!" We used to dote on every word he said of course. He was special and I loved him.

'The first Christmas I was at Liverpool we had the traditional party and as it was my first one, like all new players, I had to sing a song in front of everyone! So I chose "You'll Never Walk Alone". I thought I was on to a winner there and sure enough everyone soon joined in!

'When I eventually became a member of the first-team squad I would regularly be training with players like Roger Hunt, Tommy Smith, Ian St John, Ron Yeats and Willie Stevenson, and I loved that and I believe they liked me! These players were on about £30 a week, twice as much as me and they also got £1 for every 1,000 spectators who turned up for home matches over 28,000. We regularly had gates of around 48,000, so that meant they would also be getting some good bonuses!'

Unfortunately though, the nearest MacDougall got to First Division football with Liverpool was being named as substitute for a game at Aston Villa in March 1966. He was not called into action as two goals from Roger Hunt and another from Ian Callaghan ensured that the Reds came away from Villa Park 3-0 winners. Ted now treasures a picture of him in the Liverpool team group that day, 'I didn't realise that my Mum and Dad had this picture, but in fact my Mum had it on her wall the day she died. That was the first time I saw it.'

The Reds went on to claim their seventh league title at the end of 1965/66 and also reached the final of the European Cup Winners' Cup, where they suffered defeat against Borussia

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Dortmund. In October 1966, MacDougall was again a substitute for the European Cup first round second leg encounter against Romanian champions Petrolul Ploiesti. Defending a 2-0 lead from the first leg at Anfield, the Reds went down 3-1. Away goals did not count double in those days so a play-off match was hastily arranged at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels which Liverpool again won 2-0, with Ted watching on from the bench once more. Liverpool's interest in the competition ended at the next stage however, where they suffered a comprehensive 7-3 aggregate defeat against Ajax, 'Unfortunately I got into trouble while we were in Belgium. I was rooming with Ian Ross but I was out all night following the match, although I wasn't drinking because I didn't drink then. What used to happen was that the English guys in the Liverpool squad used to go off in one direction and the Scottish lads in another. Anyway I was supposed to be looking after Willie Stevenson, who was a top player and he was having a drink! When I eventually got back, Ian told me Bill Shankly had come into the room during the night looking for me. Anyway when I reported back to the ground the following week, Bob Paisley, who was a trainer at this time, called me over and gave me a big dressing down, calling me a "Billy Big Bollocks" who thought he could stay out all night and swan around with the first-team players! I explained what I was doing but even so my behaviour was frowned upon as I was still considered a young kid.'

MacDougall was a regular in Liverpool's reserve team throughout the first half of the 1966/67 season before falling prey to an unusual illness which hampered his progression, 'We were getting crowds of up to 10,000 for reserve games at Anfield which was just amazing. Then unfortunately I got this illness and nobody really understood what it was at the time, but it was mononucleosis. Lots of young people used to get it, it was also known as the "kissing disease". It debilitated me for about six months and made me feel permanently tired and lethargic. They couldn't diagnose it but that's what I had and I went down and down, and eventually found myself back in the

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“A” team. Bill Shankly was terrific though, always trying to help me get through it and I had so much respect for him.’

Ted now admits that at times he found his days at Anfield unnerving. Despite deep ambitions, he clearly found it difficult to imagine himself one day on equal terms with the stars around him, ‘Looking back I can see I was too much in awe of the other Liverpool players at the time. I virtually hero-worshipped them and I suppose in a way it gave me an inferiority complex. I became very introverted and it was a big mistake.

‘Ronnie Moran, who later became another of the “boot room” team at Liverpool, was still playing in the reserves when I was there. I remember we had a game against Aston Villa and I missed some chances during the match. We were having a “pee” alongside each other afterwards and Ronnie made a very unpleasant remark to me, so I told him to “piss off”. Of course, that was exactly the response he wanted because I wasn’t coming out and expressing myself vocally.

‘I learned later in my career that confidence is vital in football. You must always think and believe you’re better than the next man – and of course the opposition.’

Unable to retain their title, Liverpool finished the season in a somewhat disappointing fifth position. Soon after, MacDougall and many of the playing squad headed off to Majorca, although not for the same reason. The first team flew out for an end-of-season tour while Ted travelled for a working holiday of his own choosing. However, as he enjoyed his break in the sunshine, the youngster soon faced a big decision regarding his immediate future in the game, ‘I took myself off to Majorca on my own for six weeks, and Ian St John fixed me up with a job in a bar. Quite a few players used to do this sort of work during the close season in those days. While I was there the Liverpool side came over and stayed in a nearby hotel, I would go and see them, and they would give me food and look after me because, to them, I was still only a kid!

‘I was lying on the beach in Majorca one day when my career suddenly took a change. I had been working out

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there for about six weeks and was with the Chelsea lads John Hollins and Joe Fascione, when we met up with some of the Liverpool boys. They showed me a paper from home and there it was, "Ted MacDougall signs for York". I thought no, they can't do that? Then I got a telegram from my father telling me I needed to come home and sort things out. I was still under contract at Liverpool and of course they couldn't do anything without my agreement, but I was young and naïve and I didn't realise that.

'When I got back Bill Shankly called me in to his office and told me I didn't have to go and that he did not really want me to go, but it was up to me. He was fantastic about it but Mum, Dad and I went and met York's representatives and they took us to a nice hotel, ordered us a slap-up dinner, then offered me £21 a week rising to £24 during the season. I thought this was good, what nice people, so I signed!

'I felt I needed to establish myself somewhere, and needed to play regular first-team football. Even so, I didn't fully appreciate what I was doing leaving a First Division club like Liverpool to go to York, it was the worst decision ever really. I was silly but when you're just 20 years old you get carried away when someone comes along with a better offer than what you are getting. I was very naïve, I nearly got into the First Division and Europe with Liverpool.'

Shankly later confirmed that he would have been happy to let MacDougall stay at Anfield but after spending so much time in the reserves, the manager fully understood why he decided to leave.

Some years later, Shankly recalled that although Ted had an awkward style about him at the time, he had always shown a fair measure of promise, and believed him to be a genuine lad with real character who could be relied upon to give everything he had for 90 minutes. It should be remembered that during MacDougall's days at Anfield, he was competing for a place with international class forwards like Hunt and St John, together with the emerging Bobby Graham.

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Nobody could knock Shankly for letting Ted go at the time, although the legendary Liverpool scout Tom Saunders later admitted it was a decision he and his fellow boot room colleagues lived to regret. 'I left Liverpool on the best of terms and that's how it always remained,' said Ted 'Later in my career when I was at Norwich, if we were playing up north on a Saturday, I would stay a while afterwards with my Mum and Dad, and I would ring Joe Fagan to ask if I could train with Liverpool at Melwood on the following Monday morning. I was always welcomed back and of course I would end up playing in the five-a-sides again! I would be doing my usual trick of not tracking back and staying up front scoring all the goals, then from about three fields away I would hear Joe or someone else shout out, "Hey MacDougall – you gotta get back!" It was wonderful of Joe to let me train with them and so typical of everyone at the club.

'Years later, when I was player-coach at Blackpool I was scouting with Alan Ball when I saw Shankly at an Everton reserve match, and he repeated exactly what he had said to me before I left Liverpool. I thought that was phenomenal, it was one thing a 20-year-old kid remembering what he had said to me, but I thought for Bill to remember what he had said to that kid was amazing. He also mentioned that I turned out to be a thorn in his side because when I was playing for other teams, I always seemed to score against Liverpool!

'I think starting off my career at Anfield gave me a good understanding of a high level of football, and an opportunity to see how top players handled themselves and how they reacted with the public. When I left it soon made me appreciate that I had dropped down to a lower level and that I had to make my way up again. I have never lost my love for Liverpool. I still love the club and I loved the way I was brought up there.'