



WHEN
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TVTIMES

Graham Denton



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**CLOUGH
SOUNDS
OFF**

STICK WITH BADMINTON, GIRLS... LEAVE FOOTBALL TO THE MEN

This week in World of Sport you can see the All-England Badminton Championships from Wembley Pool, London, in which the cream of the world's players will be competing for the most prestigious title in the game. Brian Clough looks at our prospects. Badminton? He can sound off about that as well



Margaret Beck, centre, and Gillian Gills at last year's championships

Two Yugoslavian geese stand between Miss Margaret Beck and her second successive All-England Badminton singles title.

Incredible? Well, you and I might play with overvalued, poorly flighted elastic shuttlecocks in our local badminton courts, but the shuttles used in such big championships as Saturday's are far from pre-pressed imitations.

Feathers for each shuttlecock come from the wings of two Yugoslavian geese. The Yugoslavs have faired up quite a trade in goose feathers since the Chinese, who used to be the main supplier, decided to take up badminton in earnest and keep all their feathers.

I have enjoyed just watching for many years, and though I don't claim to be



Rudi Hartono, the great Indonesian master, teased for a winning smash any sort of expert, I consider it to be the basic game of all games. It strikes at the root of what all sport is about: co-ordination between eye and muscle, agility, fitness and guile.

Watch one of the top players on Saturday. See him serve, leaning into the net, his face creased in concentration. Is it going to be a soft shot, just dropping over the net, or a fliee to

the back of the court? The great player never shows his hand. His arms, his whole body, will make the same movements whether it's going to be a slow shot or a fierce one.

The light-footed Indonesians, Japanese and Chinese have cornered the market in good, men players like Rudi Hartono, the Indonesian master, who will be defending his title for

the fifth time this week in Jakarta, he and his fellow internationals join intensive training camps before a big event like this one, playing, breathing and living badminton every day.

There, it is the country's national sport, enjoying the status that football does in Britain.

But where we score in badminton is with the ladies. We have a world champion in Margaret Beck, a 23-year-old Cumberland girl who now shares a flat in Surrey and works in Fred Perry's sports shop in London's West End. A close contender for her title is Sussex girl Gillian Gills.

Margaret approaches her sport like a true champion, and plays badminton for two hours three times a week, and does a daily round of grueling exercises to keep her at peak fitness.

"The most valuable exercise is doing 10 yard sprints backwards and forwards, turning each time," she says. "I do 10 sprints of 10 yards, rest for one minute, then do another 10. In all I go through this routine eight times. That's like spinning half a mile."

"It sharpens my reflexes, helps my speed off the mark, and my stamina. Anyway, if I know I have been thorough in my gym work, I feel psychologically right. If I miss a day, I feel as if I have cheated myself and it affects my game."

Margaret started playing badminton when she was 11. "In Cumberland, there was nothing else to do. I was hanging around trying to think of something to fill in my time, so in the end I joined my brother in a game. It was just one of those incredible things, but I can honestly say that I fell in my element playing badminton.

Right from the start I saw the shuttlecock well. I could co-ordinate easily, I could hit it hard and soft at will. My career just snowballed from there."

When you see Margaret on Saturday you'll be watching a perfectionist at work. She seldom eats before a big tournament, and if she does it's only a bar of energy-giving chocolate half an hour before she goes on court.

To me, it's a pleasure to see a girl like Margaret Beck playing a graceful sport like badminton, which is more than I can say for lady footballers, cricketers and the like. I may be old fashioned but I think women look ungainly playing football, or throwing a lump of lead on the athletics field. On the other hand, they can look beautiful on the track, on the tennis court, or the golf course.

I think the secret is that if they can retain their charm and femininity, if they can keep that special something which sets women apart, and still participate in a sweating, energy-consuming, strength-nipping sport, then I'm all for it. But if they don't, they are doing themselves and their sex an injustice.

I think the dividing line between what looks good or bad in any sport is when it ceases to be pleasing to the eye. Two boxers knocking the life out of each other, but with ringcraft and skill, can be good to witness. A hammer thrower spinning on his axis like a gyroscope can be a joy to watch.

The same applies to women. If it looks good, it's O.K. by me. And badminton, a ball of power and deft skills, is one of those games I could watch all day.

29 September–5 October 1973

Every week in *On the Ball* you can see the controversial and outspoken Derby County manager Brian Clough talking football, and now he joins *TVTimes* as a regular columnist. He doesn't promise to please everybody, but he will make you sit up and listen. To kick off, he takes a hard look at his own reputation as the biggest mouth in soccer ...

ME AND MY BIG MOUTH

WHEN I appear on television I know I invite trouble. I know I'm not everybody's cup of tea, I know I upset people. It's got to the point now when even if I'm paying a player a compliment, people take it the wrong way. If I say John Smith is the greatest goalkeeper in the world, 91 other goalkeepers think I'm telling them they are a load of rubbish.

I have one rule when I appear: to tell the truth. And I hope that apart from being entertaining, this column will, above all, be truthful. I love giving my opinion because I can't bear saying nothing.

The drive from Derby to London to appear on television is a pretty long one in my terms – I'd be a lot better off playing with the kids. And when I get to the TV studios I can't stand all that messing about with make-up and endless rehearsals. So by the time it's my turn to go on and say something, I'm not going to waste all that time and come all that way and not deliver.

I believe a hell of a lot of people can ramble on for an hour and still say nothing. Politicians are first-class examples and football pundits are no exception. But when I go on, I want to give people something that's close to my heart. The way I see it, if England turn

in a hopeless performance somebody's got to say it. There's no using it down and saying, 'Oh, they'll be better when they play at Wembley.' Somebody has got to lay it on the line. It's usually me.

There is too much woolly minded pap around in the newspapers and on television today. People are afraid to get down to business. They talk round a subject, as if it were a bad germ; they never get into it and say exactly what they feel. Expressing my honest opinion keeps me going, makes me feel alive. I'm often dead sure it's going to crucify me in the end, but that's a chance I'm going to take. I've been around for a long time now – 14 years, on and off, as a television talker, and eight years as a manager – and I'm still in a job.

Of course, I'm always saying things I regret. When I come home after being on the television, my wife says, 'Why on earth did you have to go and say that? Why don't you think just for a second before you say something? Why don't you just say nothing?'

I also find myself getting into trouble. I said in a Sunday newspaper article that Leeds United shouldn't have been fined the ridiculously low sum of £3,000 and warned for what the Football Association said was, 'allowing players to bring the game into disrepute'. I said they should be made to start the season in the Second Division. The FA wanted me to explain exactly what I meant, and I got a ticking off from my own chairman.

And yet when I leave the ground, the reaction from ordinary people I meet is entirely different. I don't mean television people and journalists. I mean the soccer fans, the people who push through the turnstiles and keep me in a job. They are in complete agreement with me.

I'm always sorry afterwards that I've caused a row and caused so much criticism and ill-feeling. But in retrospect, I think I was wrong in my article about Leeds. They should have started the season in the Third Division. However, I think all the publicity about my remarks may have helped to bring about the brilliant, clean start Leeds have made to this season.

A few years ago the chairman of Middlesbrough, where I was a player, said I shouldn't go around voicing my socialist views so

much. He said, 'Be careful, Brian. One day, you might have to go to a Tory for a job.' Well, I told him that if anybody was so biased and bigoted that they couldn't accept someone of opposing political beliefs, then I wouldn't work for them anyway and they knew what they could do with their job.

That's just the way I feel about appearing on television. They take me for what I am – not some puppet of their organisation, but a football manager giving his views about football, for richer or poorer.

I am 37 now, and well aware that I'm approaching middle age. And to tell you the truth, I've reached the age where I don't give a damn what people think or say about me. I'm reasonably respected in the game because I've had good results, and I think the rank and file believe I speak with a straight tongue. And they are the people I'm talking to.

I often wonder what people think of these so-called experts who mouth away their thoughts on the box. I'm sure they don't watch me because they're waiting for an outburst. I think they watch me because I try to voice what they are thinking, I try to be a mouthpiece for the ordinary football fan, the bloke who spends five days or five nights a week in the factory and the high point of his week is standing up on a terrace shouting his head off at a football match.

I want to identify with him, and when I say on television that I think a game wasn't worth paying good money to see, it would be nice to think that there were ten million people sitting at home saying, 'He's right, you know.' That's the man I'm after, the hardcore football supporter.

I do get things wrong, though. You can't win them all. The biggest clanger I dropped was in June, when England played Poland in that terrible World Cup qualifying match. Even when they were losing 1-0 at half-time I was still saying they'd win it in the second half. Everybody knows what happened. Alf Ramsey made no substitutions and we lost 2-0. I had to admit I was wrong – but I can't make a habit of it.

There are 92 managers in the Football League, give or take the odd vacant position and a few unemployed bosses, and only two or

three are asked regularly to speak their minds on television. You can't be right all the time, but unless you're right most of the time they'll soon push you off and get somebody else.

On the subject of that Poland match, this is a good opportunity to talk about the crucial game against the Poles at Wembley on 17 October. I think we will qualify. I passionately believe that, and I know that if we don't, it will be the biggest blow to football this country has ever known.

It will also be the death knell for Sir Alf Ramsey, and rightly so. Ramsey is paid to get us to Munich, an event that represents the pinnacle of football, a showpiece for our own footballing strength. Football is essential for the nation because it gives more people more pleasure than anything else I can think of, and it'll be a blow to the nation if we don't make it.

That's why Alf has got to do it this time. There's just about a month to go before what I think will be the most decisive day ever in our national game.

* * * *

Just over two weeks after he sounded off in his first column for *TVTimes*, Brian Clough was opening his big mouth as Derby County manager for the very last time. On Tuesday, 16 October 1973, 24 hours before 'the most decisive day ever in our national game,' Clough, along with his assistant Peter Taylor, after six and a half dramatic, often traumatic, years, were on their way out of the Baseball Ground, having tendered their resignation letters on the Monday and then had them accepted at a board meeting the next day.

As the papers had it, their decision followed further disputes – and 'an orgy of allegations' the *Daily Telegraph* reported – between Derby's self-made millionaire chairman Sam Longson and Clough over the manager's controversial statements and outspoken comments on TV and in print. The last straw, according to *The Telegraph*, came when, in his ghosted newspaper column, Clough accused some of his England players of 'cheating' by not giving 100 per cent because of their preoccupation with the forthcoming

World Cup match with the Poles. The truth, however, was far more complex.

Ever since arriving in the East Midlands from Hartlepool as a young up-and-coming manager in 1967, Clough, in tandem with Taylor, had transformed Derby beyond recognition, reviving the club spirit and fashioning them from an ailing, average Second Division side into champions of England for the very first time and then European Cup semi-finalists. At the same time he had also created for himself a presence in the media spotlight like no other football manager in the game's history.

Initially encouraged by Longson, Clough's ever-expanding public profile became a source of escalating embarrassment and no little annoyance for the Derby chairman. The chief bone of contention was not so much the volume of Clough's output – though Longson saw it as a drain on the time and attention he should be devoting to the needs of the club – as what he said, the manager's fiery outbursts frequently making headlines for all the wrong reasons. The often acid attacks on fellow bosses, the sniping potshots at rival clubs, the biting observations about those at the FA were, Longson believed, a poor reflection on his club and, increasingly fed up with putting out the fires that Clough's inflammatory proclamations had sparked, the man from Chapel-en-le-Frith went from occasionally telling Clough to 'calm down' when the manager's name hit the papers to openly expressing his total opposition.

He wasn't the only one who took issue with Clough; from the moment the manager began to receive payment for his opinions, some public sympathy was lost, and unforgiving critics charged him with being deliberately provocative. 'Controversial' was almost a prefix whenever Clough's name came into a conversation.

He'd even had a go at the Derby crowd. On 3 September 1972, the day after Clough had watched his defending champions defeat Liverpool 2-1 at the Baseball Ground, his strong verbal attack on the home side's supporters – 'They started chanting only near the end when we were a goal in front. I want to hear them when we are losing. They are a disgraceful lot,' he ranted – forced Longson to disassociate himself and the board from his manager's remarks

and apologise to the fans. An open confrontation between Clough and his employers seemed imminent.

Later that month, in another Sunday newspaper article, Clough suggested that the FA Cup, the most famous cup competition in the world, should be suspended for a year to give England the best possible chance in the World Cup. A month earlier, at a sportswriters' lunch, he'd already stated quite firmly that, given the present league set-up, England had no prospects whatsoever at the finals. Clough believed that 'the top club managers have the power to change the game in England, but they don't trust each other'. It wasn't what the Football League hierarchy wanted to hear. Derby were warned they faced disciplinary action if they could not persuade Clough to modify his criticism of the establishment.

A major opponent of Sir Alf Ramsey – the following January, the Derby boss openly declared he was 'willing to swap jobs' with the England supremo – Clough had also made caustic remarks about the two-year international ban placed on the Rams defender Colin Todd for refusing to go on an England under-23s tour that summer. Todd was 'suspended for being honest,' Clough told the sportswriters' gathering. Prior to Derby's European Cup first-round second-leg tie away to Yugoslavian champions Željezničar on 27 September 1972 (a 2-1 win to seal a 4-1 aggregate), Longson was summoned and told that Clough was not to make any further comments about matters not concerning the East Midlands club.

To Clough, it was simply a matter of standing by what he considered his right to free speech. The *Daily Telegraph* sympathised. 'He is totally involved in football, and perfectly entitled to speak about it, even if he does ruffle a few feathers,' one journalist ventured. 'Clough's abrasive personality might irritate a lot of people, but the other side of the coin was demonstrated after the Željezničar game, when he insisted his players meet the tiny knot of County fans who had travelled to the match.' 'These people have come 2,000 miles to see you,' Clough told his players, referring to the Derby fans staying in the same hotel. 'Go and shake their hands and thank them.'

Clough, though, had very few sympathisers following the night of Sunday, 28 January 1973 when he was guest speaker at an awards ceremony in which Peter Lorimer was honoured as Sports Personality of the Year at the Yorksport dinner under the auspices of Yorkshire Television at the Queens Hotel in Leeds. It was a prestigious prize, voted for by Yorkshire Television viewers, that had previously been won by the Formula One racing driver Jackie Stewart, and one that important figures were invited to present. On this particular occasion, it was the Prime Minister of the day, Harold Wilson.

Kevin Keegan, then in the early stages of his Liverpool career, was also present. On what was 'meant to be a nice evening,' Keegan recalled in the *Shoot!* annual of 1982, 'Clough stood up. Instead of proposing the toast, he announced, "I'm off to the lavatory" – and he didn't return for nearly a quarter of an hour. It still amazes me how patiently everyone waited.' Clough was actually away for 11 minutes. After listening to several speeches praising Leeds United, he was then called out to respond to a toast, but instead informed the 500 or so guests: 'I have been sitting here for two and a half hours and I am not replying to anything or anybody until I have had a wee. And I'm being very serious – you get on your bloody feet and go to the toilet, you get a beer, and then if you've not got to get up early in the morning, get back and listen.'

When he did return, having – according to his autobiography – been waylaid by someone who wanted to talk to him about Edward Heath's love of sailing, Clough launched into a full-blown lambasting of Leeds's Scottish international, Lorimer (he'd won the award 'despite the fact that he falls when he hasn't been kicked, and despite the fact that he protests when he has nothing to protest about'), the West Yorkshire club (who 'should be deducted ten points and relegated for their cynicism') and their players (Billy Bremner was 'a little cheat'; Eddie Gray had had so many injuries 'if he'd been a racehorse he would have been shot' – a line Clough would famously repeat).

Lorimer, luckily for him, wasn't there to hear it, having collected his trophy then been whisked away in a waiting taxi to

join his teammates at a Birmingham hotel (Leeds faced an FA Cup replay with Norwich at Villa Park the following night). But those who were, a largely local and partisan audience for whom the Leeds players were their idols, were left absolutely gobsmacked and greatly offended by the outburst. Boos rang out. People were on their feet, shouting 'get off' and 'sit down', to which Clough merely responded by saying, 'I was not particularly glad with the idea of speaking to you lot. I have to stand up here, but you are sitting in the crowd, which hides you.' He then described one complaining member of the audience as a 'mumbler', adding, 'we are becoming a nation of mumbler. Stand on your feet if you have anything to say. Come up here and make the speech if you think you could do better than me.'

When he finally realised he'd gone too far, some apologies were made, but by this time many guests had already had enough and left the room. Clough was unrepentant in the following days. He told the *Daily Mirror*: 'They didn't tell me beforehand it was being filmed. They didn't brief me on what I could and could not say. And if in future they want a puppet to get up and say something to please everybody in the room, I suggest they invite Basil Brush, instead of asking a football manager to give up his only day off of the week.' Whether or not the astonishing tirade was a classic example of Clough's honesty – or outrageousness – or just downright rudeness, Keegan regarded it as 'an all-time low' for English football in the 1970s.

Still Clough balked at being gagged. In a BBC TV interview the following month, he stated in all seriousness that he would like to be the 'supreme football dictator' in England. Already wanting a suspension of the FA Cup, he publicly avowed that he would also stop league football from March 1974, thus giving the national team three months' free preparation for the World Cup finals. Then, in April, came another episode to have Longson pulling out whatever hair he had left.

In their European debut, having disposed of Željezničar and swept aside Benfica (their 3-0 aggregate success meaning Derby became only the second club, after Ajax, to keep a clean sheet

against the Portuguese over two legs), the Rams then defeated Czechoslovakia's Spartak Trnava 2-1 to set up a cup semi-final meeting with Italian giants Juventus. In the first leg in Turin, Derby were beaten 3-1, and Clough's initial European adventure looked to be all but done, especially as two key men, Archie Gemmill and Roy McFarland – the two players already on bookings from previous rounds – received first-half cautions that ruled them out of the return. But even though Clough would admit that the Italians were superior on the day, he was convinced that some skulduggery was afoot and that Juventus had had the German referee Gerhard Schulenburg on their side, too.

Throughout the 90 minutes, Schulenburg made many calls that were questionable. Whereas much of the home side's persistent and violent fouling went unpunished, the German came down harshly on all the Derby players' tackling and the cautions for Gemmill (tripping Furino in retaliation after the Italian's elbow had smashed into his face) and McFarland (clashing heads with Cuccureddu in a fair aerial challenge) seemed most unjust and more than a little suspicious. It looked 'like a put-up job,' Gerald Mortimer of the *Derby Telegraph* observed post-match. Peter Taylor's witnessing of Juve's German midfielder Helmut Haller entering the officials' quarters at half-time only added to Clough's sense that Schulenburg was corrupt.

Francisco Marques Lobo, the Portuguese official for the second leg, would later reveal to journalist Brian Glanville that he'd thwarted an attempt to bribe him to bend the return match in Juve's favour – a set of car keys were dangled and £5,000 in cash put in front of him – by a notorious match-fixer, a Hungarian named Dezso Salti, allegedly enlisted by the Italian champions. Lobo wouldn't take the bait (and despite reporting the incident to UEFA, it was conveniently covered up), but Clough was certain some Machiavellian malpractice had taken place in the first leg and the manager made it very well known immediately after the game in Turin, emerging from the dressing room to tell the expectant Italian reporters, 'No cheating bastards do I talk to. I will not talk to any cheating bastards.'

As vindicated as Clough clearly felt, his disparaging remarks to the assembled journalists at the press conference about the Italian national character and their conduct during the war was one more black mark against him in Longson's books. Two weeks later, as Alan Hinton missed a second-half penalty and Roger Davies was sent off, Derby could only finish goalless in the return game and exited the competition. A seventh-place league finish, 14 points behind champions Liverpool, was also a disappointing end to the club's title defence.

Three weeks before the next campaign commenced and the County boss once again made himself a magnet for trouble. On 5 August 1973, echoing what he'd said in his diatribe at the Queens Hotel, Clough, using a *Sunday Express* article, savagely attacked the FA's decision to fine Leeds £3,000 for their 'above average misconduct' but suspend the punishment, calling for Leeds's demotion – Revie's team should have been 'instantly relegated,' he wrote – for their poor disciplinary record and persistent violation of the game's laws. 'No wonder Don Revie was smiling broadly as he left the disciplinary commission's hearing in London,' Clough noted. 'I looked at his happy face smiling at me out of my newspaper in Spain. It just about spoiled my holiday to read that the £3,000 fine has been suspended until the end of the coming season.'

Revie had always done his best not to rise to any bait, though five months earlier, frustrated at Clough's continual sniping at both his club as well as rival managers – Ramsey, Sir Matt Busby and Malcolm Allison just three who'd been on the receiving end of Clough's verbal lashings – the Leeds manager had responded in his Saturday column in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. 'I think it is wrong to criticise your colleagues as Clough does,' Revie wrote on 10 March, 'because the job is difficult enough without any of us slitting each other's throats.' Revie went on to say that it must be abundantly clear to football followers that he and the Derby manager weren't 'exactly the best of friends,' and, as their relationship stood at that moment, 'he is the last person with whom I would wish to be stranded on a desert island, and no doubt he feels the same way about me'.

Relations between Clough and Longson were at this point more overtly fractious, too. The previous autumn, on the subject of trying to reach an amicable agreement on his new contract, Clough reckoned that he and the Derby board were still ‘a million miles apart’. Now, on the issue of what Longson perceived as Clough’s non-curriculum activities, the gulf appeared to be even wider. ‘I believe the most important thing of all is the relationship between the manager and the board,’ Clough had written in *The Sun Soccer Annual 1972*. ‘By that, I mean the link between manager and chairman. I would even go so far as to say that unless a manager has the right kind of understanding with his chairman, he has no chance at all. He might as well pack it in.’ Longson and Clough now had anything but ‘the right kind of understanding’. Longson was nearing his limit.

Following Clough’s panning of their handling of the Leeds case, the FA formed an emergency committee to decide whether to accuse the manager of bringing the game into disrepute. Clough, on a number of occasions, had been told that his club was embarrassed by his frankness. Now, fearing actual expulsion from the league, Longson became more and more convinced that, before Clough landed himself and Derby in even deeper waters, a moratorium on all Clough’s media appearances was the only solution.

Clough, of course, was heading in a completely opposite direction. In 1967, shortly after joining Derby, he’d been lined up to take over from Jimmy Hill as Coventry City manager. Now, two days after *The Express* article appeared, he joined London Weekend Television on a part-time basis, agreeing to be a pundit on both the *On the Ball* and *The Big Match* programmes, having been approached to take the place of Hill who would be working for the BBC from the new season on. ‘I merely switched channels,’ Clough said. ‘This is no different to the amount of TV work I have been doing in the last three or four years.’ Longson, naturally, saw it differently. To him, it was one more soapbox for Clough to climb upon and possibly cause further damage to Derby’s reputation.

Without the distraction of European football, hopes were high among the club’s supporters that the East Midlanders would

enter the 1973/74 season as genuine title contenders. They made a decent start. A 1-0 win at Old Trafford on 13 October, secured by an early Kevin Hector goal, left them third in the table. But behind the scenes the ructions had been ongoing. In the week before the victory over United, in a letter signed by Longson, the Derby board issued an ultimatum to Clough: 'Stop engaging in literary work by writing articles in the press and stop entering into commitment with radio and television,' it read. Longson, in a rather desperate attempt to prompt Clough into quitting, had also had the grille pulled down on the club bar to stop both Clough and Taylor drinking. It didn't work. On 11 October, a call by Longson at a board meeting for both the pair's sackings had also failed due to lack of support. The long-simmering feud between chairman and manager, however, was soon to boil over.

At Old Trafford, Clough was alleged to have made a 'Harvey Smith gesture' (a V-sign) towards Sir Matt Busby and United's chairman Louis Edwards (following Clough's annoyance that there was no seating for his players' wives at the ground), and, although Clough vehemently denied it, Longson said that Busby 'was under no illusion as to what took place'. He demanded that Clough say sorry. Clough refused to do so. He, too, was reaching his snapping point.

The break wasn't long in coming. Derby director Jack Kirkland, whose brother, Bob, had been on the club's board before resigning after an ongoing power struggle with Longson, was another of the anti-Clough faction in the boardroom. He was said to have a particular dislike for Peter Taylor. When Kirkland weighed in, demanding to know exactly what Taylor's role within the club was – Kirkland instructing Taylor to meet him at the ground two days later to explain the precise nature of his duties – both Taylor and Clough had had enough. Taylor kept his appointment with Kirkland on the Monday but, feeling undermined – 'He [Taylor] had been humiliated by a man who was not entitled to question anything unless he'd been asking Peter for the time of day,' Clough wrote later – he told his partner that that was it, he was finished. The pair wrote out and submitted their letters of resignation that evening.

Several times before, they'd had at least one foot through the exit door. Most recently, in early April 1972 when, with Derby in the thick of their title hunt, although Liverpool and Manchester City were the favourites, Clough and Taylor met up with Coventry City chairman Derrick Robins and director Mick French on Easter Monday and agreed to accept the vacant job at Highfield Road, as replacement for the sacked Noel Cantwell. When Clough then asked for more time to come to a final decision, Coventry, angry at having essentially been given the runaround, withdrew their offer in a letter to the Derby manager.

The story was that Longson had no idea what was going on, and was told by Clough on a late-night visit to the chairman's house that he and Taylor were leaving unless Derby matched the wage the Sky Blues were offering – said to be three times the salary they were on at the Baseball Ground – even though the opportunity to go to Coventry was now gone. If it was basically a bluff to get a pay rise out of the Derby chairman, it worked. Somehow they got Longson to 'persuade' them to stay and give them more money. This time, with their offer to quit, if Clough and Taylor hoped to rally support from their few backers on the board and somehow force out the Longson regime, it was doomed to fail. On the morning of 16 October Longson announced to the press that he and the directors had accepted the resignations and, despite saying that they'd done so 'with a certain amount of sadness', Longson wasn't shedding any tears. One paper put it that 'he [Clough] and Taylor's departure will be a great loss' to Derby, but the chairman had got just what he wanted.

Demands for the duo's reinstatement would be made. There was a threat of strike action from the players; the formation of a group by furious supporters, the Derby County Protest Movement, which director Mike Keeling joined after resigning from the club; moves initiated by playwright Don Shaw, Bill Holmes, an ex-footballer, and respected local MP Phillip Whitehead. Public meetings were held, showdowns sought, there was even a march on the Derby streets – but Longson wasn't backing down. 'We will go into the Second Division with our heads in the air,' he stated defiantly,

‘rather than winning the First Division wondering whether the club will be expelled from the Football League.’

The storm wouldn't die down for a few weeks, despite the almost immediate appointment of Dave Mackay on 23 October as Clough's replacement – the ex-Derby captain was approached only after Ipswich Town boss Bobby Robson had turned down the job. When the unsettled Derby players issued a signed statement in support of their former management team, Longson replied with a letter detailing his criticisms of Clough. ‘Nobody regrets the current situation more than I do. I brought him here, I have glorified in his success and I leave it to the supporters of Derby County to judge me and my board,’ it concluded. ‘Hysteria is prevalent at present with some supporters. All in all, I say enough is enough. In conclusion, I must stress the point that Derby County will always survive and that no individual is bigger than the club.’

Peter Taylor had warned Clough about his ‘false relationship’ with Longson for years. The Derby chairman, Taylor felt, whilst initially revelling in the exposure that Clough had brought to his club – Clough later claimed that Longson had even loaned him his car to make journeys for TV appearances – had grown jealous of the rise in the manager's popularity and, according to Clough, ‘started to go around insisting in that gravelly voice of his, “I'm the one who runs Derby County – not Brian Clough.”’ Longson in fact was the one, Clough wrote in his autobiography, ‘who put his own interests, image and reputation before those of the club’. The chairman's complaints about Clough's media work, the worries about him landing Derby in ‘very serious trouble’ and getting their wrists severely slapped by the football authorities were, in both Taylor's and Clough's view, just a smokescreen, a convenient excuse to try to banish from the family someone Longson had once referred to as his ‘adopted son’.

Clough would also later claim that it was Taylor who instigated the double resignation – he was set on the path and wouldn't change his mind and because they were a partnership Clough went along with it, too. Whether or not the resignations were made in the belief that the strength of feeling among supporters et al. would lead to

their reinstatement – Clough would admit that in his heart he thought they would be invited back – they were very mistaken. It was, as Clough rated it in his autobiography, ‘the worst move of our lives’. The worst it may well have been – but far more unexpected ones were still to come.