

## Testimonials for *Mud, Blood and Studs*

‘We all have family histories, but not many can lay claim to the sporting history of the Brown family. Whether the shape of the ball is round or oval, or the team is Manchester United or British & Irish Lions, James Brown takes us on a journey where the ball’s bounce takes us across the globe and the generations. There’s even a third-place finish at the inaugural World Cup, the best-ever finish for the US men’s national team. First and foremost, James is a top-notch researcher and an able writer, but he is also a son, grandson, brother, and father. He has a reverence and respect for his ancestors as he covers mid-century international sport, an era when those who played did so for the love of the game. Specifically, this book is about an important American soccer family, one who helped keep the flame of the sport alive during its “dark ages”. As a driving force behind the Society for American History, James Brown has also brought light to our nation’s soccer story. His family’s story is our story.’

*Tom McCabe, president, Society for American Soccer History*

‘The Brown legacy is the perfect example of the pioneering influence Scotland had on the world of soccer and rugby. This book provides exceptional first-hand insight into the world of the Scotch Professors, where home and abroad they took their ball, whether spherical or oval, and demonstrated their natural abilities and gifts to the communities they found themselves in, and in this family’s case, on three separate

continents. The Brown family, over many generations, became sporting legends both domestically and on the international stage, with their desire to excel in their sporting field born out of necessity. This compelling story shows their rise to the pinnacle of sporting achievement, and I commend the Brown family as one of the best examples of the Scotch Professors in sporting history.'

*Graeme Brown, founder of the Hampden Collection*

'As a journalist, researcher, and developer of many initiatives regarding soccer history that I am, it was just a matter of time for me to get in contact with James Brown and his passionate labour about his grandfather in the 1930 World Cup. Long expected by me and many others, this book is also a confirmation of something I always say, firmly believe and confirm almost every day: there's a lot of new things we can discover and do about the past in order to enrich and correct the way it was usually exposed. Yes: those old days can still be a source of new stories and revelations that can lead not only to a more accurate knowledge and understanding of those times and the people who lived back then, but also to such great fun and touching personal experiences. That is all contained in the story of James's ancestors, which is also the story of how sport developed in the USA, Scotland, and other parts of the world. A magnificent journey, which any football or rugby lover could not resist.'

*Esteban Bekerman, founding director of Entre Tiempos*

'Any football club with a long history will have players remembered long after they have hung up their boots. Old men and women will gather and recall those happy days of

their youth when legendary players trod the turf of their favourite club. It's 100 years since the formation of Guildford City Football Club. Since 1921 there have been perhaps four or five players who truly could be considered "a legend" of the club. But arguably at the top of that list is Jim Brown. There will be very few people today who saw Jim play in the red and white stripes. Jim Brown was a goalscorer supreme and his period at the club between 1937 and 1940 coincided with Guildford's best ever side; a team that had World War Two not intervened may well have been elected to the Football League. Jim Brown made 150 appearances for Guildford City, scoring with his pace and shooting ability an incredible 148 goals. But there was far more to the man than three years spent in Guildford. Any man who scores in a World Cup semi-final, signs for Manchester United while on a transatlantic liner, and plays a part in the formation of the Players' Union is worthy of high acclaim.'

*Barry Underwood MBE, secretary of Guildford City Football Club*

'History tells stories and the best kind of stories are true ones with real characters and intriguing narratives. In *Mud, Blood and Studs*, James Brown shares much more than his own family history. He has painstakingly researched the life of the Brown booters (and Lambie and Brown ruggers) from Scotland to America, Mexico to South Africa, with a passion unique to family history. Following James's research journey these last few years has been a privilege and sharing in his discoveries a joy. How he has been able to build his own family football archive with unique material and sources from multiple continents should serve as a template for

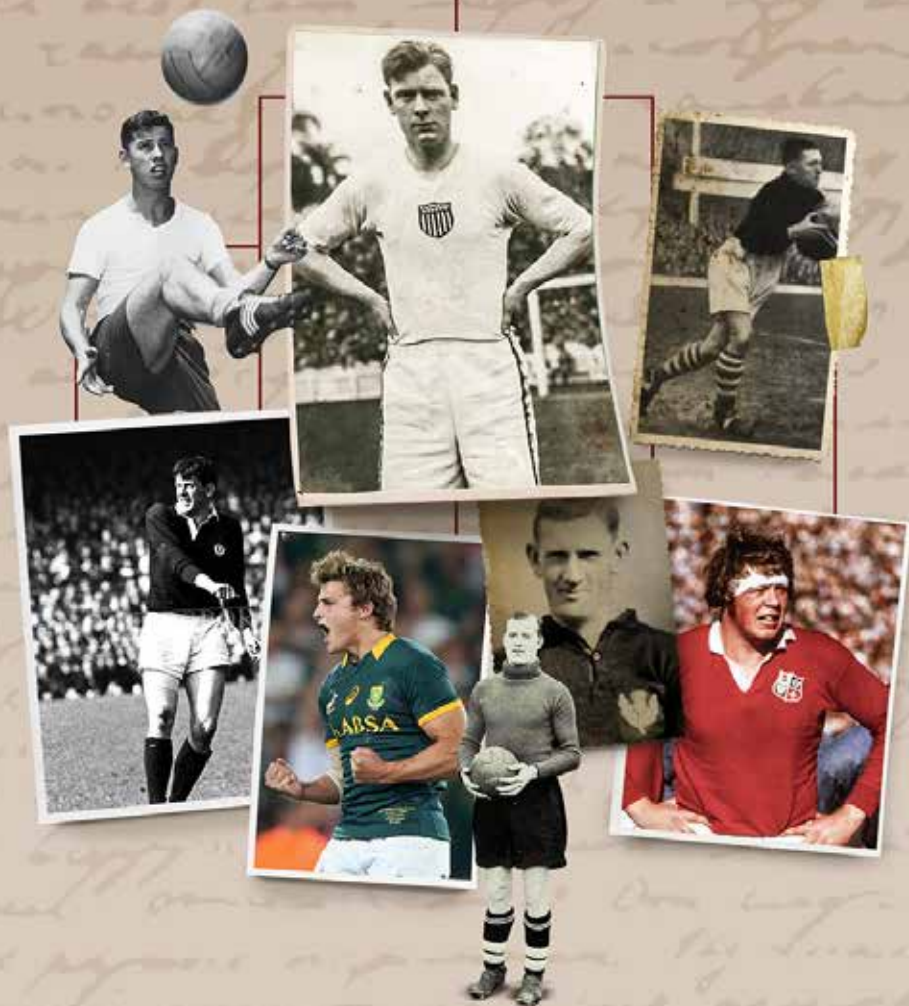
more of this kind of essential research into the sporting past. Whether it was how the matches “waxed hot”, the fear of “razzberries” or even the “sentimental playing field”, James has woven in the sporting details of universal human experience that make a personal story accessible to all.’

*Dr Kevin Tallec Marston, research fellow and academic project manager for Centre International d’Etude du Sport, and member of the Society for American Soccer History*

James Brown

# MUD, BLOOD AND STUDS

One Family's Legacy in Soccer and Rugby  
Across Three Continents



# Contents

Foreword by George Brown	11
Introduction	13
Scottish Origins	17
From Street Soccer to the Big Leagues	19
Going Pro in the Middle of the Soccer War	22
Joining up with the Giants	26
Preparing for the 1930 FIFA World Cup	28
Organising the Shot-Putters	31
The Run to the Semi-Finals	36
Returning Home from Uruguay	42
The Post-World Cup Windfall	45
Returning to the Source	52
A Second Season in Manchester	61
Three Lean Years in London	68
Glory Days at Guildford City	75
Milestones and Near Misses	81
Last Hurrah at Guildford City	88
John Bell Brown, Pride of Clyde	94
Tom Brown, Commando Between the Sticks	98
Reunited in the Wartime Years	103
From Father to Son	107
Greenport United	115
George Spreads His Wings	120
A Second-Generation American International	126
Returning to the Falcons	129
Life Out of the Army	132
The Ingonish Years	135
Oneonta and the National Soccer Hall of Fame	138
A Third Generation of Brown Booters	147
A New Generation Takes Up a New Code	155
A Rise and Fall on the International Stage	158

The Lambie Connection	167
21st-Century Rugby Star	179
Editor's Epilogue	184
Appendix A: Family Timeline	187
Appendix B: Additional Recollections	191
Recollections about James Brown	191
Recollections about Jock Brown	193
Recollections about Peter Brown	195
Recollections about Gordon Brown	202
Recollections about George Brown	212
Recollections about Dave Brown	216
Recollections about Jim Brown	224

# Introduction

AT ONE point or another in your life – whether through work, friendships, or eventual relationships – the question about your family origins comes up. Most often, you mention your parents and where they are from. Or you might talk about your grandparents, especially if they came from another country, or discuss where you’ve lived and how come. But when you grow up in a sporting family who came from very little, you tend to look at life and the future in a different light. No matter what sport or how big or small it may be, there are always fascinating stories to be told and to be passed along to the next generations; that’s exactly what this book was meant to be.

Six long years ago, I took up the task of exploring, researching and documenting the paternal Brown side of the family because I was fascinated by the rich mixture of stories about the football (soccer) and rugby careers of family members from Scotland to South Africa through the Lambie branch of the family.

This book was initially intended for my son, so that he would have a comprehensive look at his US/UK side of the family, since we live in the Paris region and he hadn’t had the chance to visit the US or UK at that point. I always mentioned them – but it’s not the same as reading, seeing photos, and physically walking down the same



tunnels or stepping on the same terrace as some of these relatives.

There are intriguing and courageous transatlantic migratory decisions that changed the destiny of whole families and future generations. Essentially, those on both the Brown and Lambie sides made bold, brave choices to pick up and make a new life for their family in different parts of the world where nothing was certain. They followed their instincts.

As long as there was hope, and as long as they were not afraid to put their nose to the grindstone, anything was possible. Sacrifices were made, but you grow up with the idea that if you believe so passionately about something then you go for it. You never know how it'll turn out, but you still give it your best. You've already won by believing in yourself, your family, and your choice – no matter what it happens to be. Only regret the things you don't do. If you never try, you'll never know.

I grew up with that train of thought, watching my parents make decisions to move to different parts of the world because of various career or entrepreneurial choices. It exposed me to a wonderful view of the world and different cultures and traditions that I might never have experienced if I had just stayed put in one particular region of the US. I'm excited about the idea of imparting that knowledge and tradition to my son.

The focus starts in Troon, Scotland, with a teenage James Brown forging a new path to the United States. The narrative then expands to immediate Troon Brown family brothers and their offspring, and finally to the extended Lambie family down in South Africa. I always knew how talented this side of the family was, but I was only able to envision a 'skeletal framework' of our relatives based on these stories passed down the line.

## INTRODUCTION

After the majority of the research had been found digitally while I was in the south of France in Antibes around 2015 and 2016, I also began to gather personal comments and situations about each of these men in my family, penned by writers from back in their time as well as historians from various football clubs, former team-mates, and family. At the same time, I contacted my father, George Brown, on a nearly daily basis, recounting how I had found such-and-such article or photo or made a contact with a club. He would invariably start telling me more about the items that I mentioned to him, and those were the diamonds in the rough that I would make note of and methodically document to essentially polish over and over. Ten pages suddenly became 20, 50, sometimes 80 pages of notes and summaries of the articles I found, sprinkled with great memories from dad and other members of the family. The research odyssey even led me to a point where one cousin informed me that I had another cousin, Andrew Lambie (on the US side of the Lambies), who had lived in Paris for over 30 years; though I had been in France for 20 years, I had never previously known about or met him, so what a joy! We were both retracing the Lambie family tree at the same time and were able to complement and help one another complete certain areas.

It was then time to head out and visit, to absorb the atmosphere where these relatives played, trained, or spent some of the most creative moments of their careers. I traced my grandfather James Brown and his steps through life: passing by the factory in Plainfield, New Jersey, where he first worked as a teenager and where he first laced up his boots for the local soccer team when arriving in the United States in 1927; walking down the only tunnel at Old Trafford that he walked through in the early 1930s as a soccer player at Manchester United; wandering transformed streets

and apartment lots in Guildford City and imagining the electricity of the non-league team's dominance and desire to keep winning and move up to the Third Division while war loomed in the late 1930s; and huddling around the only brick in the Tottenham Hotspur dressing room where he suited up.

The hope is that you enjoy this fascinating adventure as much as I have while sifting through newspaper archives and boxes of family photos, contacting club historians and memorabilia collectors, and talking with many members of the family. Along the way, I assembled as many of the pieces of the puzzle as possible. The time spent has allowed me to know more about the Brown and Lambie clans and to reconnect with family members – or, in some cases, to connect for the first time with family members that I didn't know before.

I want to thank all of those who spent countless hours talking about the family and providing their own thoughts about our families and who helped me keep moving forward.

This journey has helped me to grow from a family tree documenter into a public soccer historian as I've combined my long-standing love for soccer and ever-growing love for rugby and family. Along the way, I've become the current vice-president of the Society for American Soccer History. I now view myself as a soccer detective and relish the opportunity to work with other football historical societies throughout the world to help them learn more about players or teams who might have played in the US during specific periods. I want to send special thanks to all family and friends who have listened to me along the way about this research.

## Scottish Origins

WITHOUT ANY pregnancy support services closer to home, Isabella Bell Brown and her husband James Brown spent New Year's Eve 1908 at a hospital in Kilmarnock, Scotland. Married three years earlier, the young couple lived on Scotland's south-west coast in the port town of Troon. They had celebrated hours before the calendar turned over from 1908 to 1909 ten miles inland as Isabella gave birth to their new son, James 'Jimmy' Brown. Jimmy entered a rapidly growing family that eventually grew to include three brothers and four sisters: Isabella (Bella), Sarah (Sadie), Jennie, Andrew, John, Martha, and Thomas (Tom).

The elder James Brown was a renowned water polo player, and he would later serve as a balloonist during World War One. At this point of his life, though, he toiled away as a ship labourer and suffered through alcoholism. Regularly away from home for long periods on the sea, James was only sporadically present in the household. It was rumoured that, upon one return, James was threatened and told to stay away because his visits too often ended in Isabella getting pregnant with no means to support another child. Unwelcome back home in Troon, James crossed the Atlantic in 1920 and settled near his brother Robert McCulloch Brown and other Browns who had immigrated to Westfield, New Jersey, to start a new life in the United States.

Growing up in a large working-class family meant that Jimmy and his brothers were expected to contribute to the household income as soon as possible. In addition to the immediate support they offered, James and Isabella both felt that it was extremely important for all the children to look at apprenticeships as a way of helping to secure a means to provide for their future families. With James no longer present in the house, it became even more imperative that every family member earn their keep.

Sent out at the earliest opportunity to learn a trade, Jimmy was 13 years old when he started his apprenticeship in 1922 as a ship's riveter for the Ailsa Shipbuilding Company at Troon Shipyard. During the 1920s, the main customer of the shipyard was the General Steam Navigation Company, which commissioned several coasters from Ailsa. This led to further orders for other coasters, coastal liners, and paddlers.

Jimmy's teenage years thus settled into a familiar rhythm that wove themselves into the fabric of daily family life. Midway through his five-year apprenticeship, Jimmy started to play street soccer in Troon with a group known as the Cookie Rasslers every day after completing his long hours at the shipyard. Playing with anything they could find that would roll along the ground, these first kick-about set in motion a lifelong love affair with the sport.

For Jimmy, though, that love affair would take its first full flame across the Atlantic from his native land.