

J E F F G O U L D I N G



 Red  
Odyssey

Liverpool FC 1892-2017

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# Foreword

LIVERPOOL Football Club means so much, to so many people across the globe. Each supporter will have their own unique connection to the club. For most of us, our emotions fluctuate between love, adulation and euphoria, anger and frustration; such is the life of a football supporter. Some worship, or despise, individual players, while others focus on the tactics of the coach and team selection. Then there are those, like me, who have simply come to love the history, ethos and spirit of the club.

There are many ways to approach the task of writing a celebration of this milestone in the club's history; 125 years of football played at Anfield. In doing so, I have decided to explore my own connection to Liverpool FC. This book will be unashamedly subjective.

As a child, growing up in Liverpool in the 1970s and '80s, the club meant everything to me. The players and the manager could do no wrong. But, beyond that, the club felt special and unique. We weren't like other teams or their supporters, and it wasn't just about the trophies.

Our songs were different, and our banners were witty and often irreverent. The Kop was a joyous and anarchic place, but its humour was as fair as it was cutting.

Of course, with the passing of time and the globalisation of the game, football is a very different beast today than it was back then. I confess to being far more cynical than I was as a child and an adolescent. However, I have never lost that sense of being part of something bigger than me every time I set foot inside Anfield. Maybe that's how every football fan feels when watching their team, I don't know, but it is how *I* feel.

So this book will not be a recitation of facts and figures, although there are many in there. It will describe the club's journey in the only way I know how, and with what I believe is the fuel that drives our love for it; the stories that made Liverpool FC what it is today.

I have come to realise that this is what Liverpool Football Club is; a collection of experiences and stories, passed down from one generation to the other. Of course, they get blurred along the way, but that too is part of the magic.

So I have collected 125 of them to coincide with the club's anniversary. Wherever possible, I have included the voice of the supporter and many of these tales contain first-person perspective on some of the greatest moments in the club's history.

I offer them as my contribution to this illustrious journey, our Red Odyssey. Enjoy!

# Introduction

**I**N June 2017, Liverpool FC turned 125 years old. This is a remarkable achievement for any enterprise, let alone a sporting institution. The club has survived relegations, scandals, two world wars and great tragedies. In all that time, it has become one of the most successful football clubs in history.

Having been born in 1967, my earliest memories of supporting Liverpool FC stem from the 1970s and I remember my early Anfield experiences vividly. While the games themselves are not so clear to me, the feelings, the sounds, smells and noise are deeply imprinted.

If I close my eyes for a moment I'm transported back to a pub near the ground, with my dad and uncle. The game is an hour or so away. I'm drinking Coke and a packet of crisps lies untouched on the table. I'm far too excited to touch them. All I want is for kick-off to arrive, so that I can make my pilgrimage up Walton Breck Road and climb the steps on to the Kop.

The bar is filling up and more of my dad's mates have joined us. The noise escalates, and I can just make out fragments of conversation over the clink of glasses and the mutterings of Kopites crammed into the pub. There's laughter, swearing and apologies. Someone winks at me and

says, 'No good saying sorry to him now, he'll hear much worse in the ground.'

More laughter and someone tousles my hair. My heart is bursting. There's a picture of the team on the wall with cups at their feet. It's Liverpool and soon I'll see them up close.

This was a rite of passage and I was part of a community, much bigger than anything I'd encountered before, and the sense of togetherness had to be experienced to be fully understood. I was following in my dad's footsteps and those who had gone before him. I felt ten feet tall.

Now I'm being handed a succession of drinks. Soon I've got a collection of unfinished lemonades and juices on the table. My uncle tells me, 'Go easy lad or you'll be peeing in your shoes with all that in your belly.' I would later see the wisdom in his words.

We were in the Kop for this game and packed in tight. The air is full of sweat, cigarette smoke and the smell of stale ale. It's a heady brew. We find ourselves somewhere near the middle of the terrace, between the two great pillars supporting the roof, and the toilets are a distant dream. It doesn't matter though, because kick-off is approaching.

The crowd is swaying back and forth and side to side. I'm only small and can't see much. Then a man I'd never met lifts me up and sits me on a crash barrier. I think nothing of it. It seems the most natural thing in the world. Suddenly the whole stadium lies before me. I see the pitch and my heart soars.

I have seen Anfield on *Match of the Day* many times but this is something else. The grass is so green. Sounds stupid I know, but this is the first thing that strikes me. The crowd are so loud, and the noise seems to be coming from everywhere.

Emotions swell up inside and I'm getting a lump in my throat. I think I'm going to cry, but that's unthinkable. I swallow hard and join in with the singing. My voice is small

and lost in the cacophony. I don't care, I'm doing my bit. I'm part of it all.

Even now, in the big games, when the stakes are high enough and the Kop rolls back the years, the ghosts of those first Anfield experiences return and I get that same lump in the throat and tear in my eye.

This is the Liverpool I fell in love with as a kid. It's been a love affair that has burned for more than 40 years. I've been lucky enough to see this team win everything. As I've aged and had kids of my own, naturally I have done all I can to immerse them in that great community and let them witness that green grass up close, as have countless Kopites down the years.

However, as the football I knew and loved gave way to the mega-rich, corporate entity it is today, I found myself falling out of love with the club and the game. I still went, handed over my money, but each step along Walton Breck Road began to feel like an act of duty, rather than the joyful pilgrimage it once was.

It became increasingly difficult to get a handle on what Liverpool FC was anymore. Was it the shirt that cost an arm and a leg? The badge previous owners sought to patent? Or was it the players or the managers who swapped teams during tough times? Even Anfield, once a cauldron of energy, wit and passion, had fallen into a brooding and sometimes eerily silent affair.

However, in writing *Red Odyssey*, I have reconnected with that old world once again. I've been reminded of the richness of our history. I've discovered long forgotten moments, like when Reds supporters stood at Lime Street station in 1914, eager to taste their first FA Cup Final. Their songs and raucous behaviour reminded me that today's Kopites stand on the shoulders of giants.

Completing the book has transported me across the ages. I've joined heroes and villains, unearthed forgotten victories and terrible defeats, relived great tragedies and moments of redemption and vindication.

Through all of that I have realised that the club I loved was never lost. It has been there all along, hiding in the archives and in the stories of the people who built it and nurtured it through more than a century of sporting endeavour.

So, I humbly present to you 125 tales that capture the richness of the people who are the cornerstone of this great club. Writing them has been my odyssey, a journey from the scepticism of middle age to the forgotten treasure of my youth, and the lives of our ancestors. Along the way I found a renewed sense of love for our club.

May reading it bring you as much joy as writing these tales has brought to me.

# The Call to Adventure

*Liverpool Football Club*  
1892–1939

## **From the flames of conflict: the birth of Liverpool Football Club**

Citizens of Liverpool, in 1892, divided their loyalties between two football teams, Everton FC and Bootle FC. Their supporters enjoyed a spirited but ultimately friendly rivalry. They would cheer on their heroes during home games at Anfield and Hawthorne Road. Then, when their team played away, they often switched their support to the other.

However, things were about to get much more complicated with the emergence of a new upstart that would challenge their dominance of Merseyside football. With talk of boycotting the new team's games, those supporters would watch in envy as this 'new kid on the block' grew to eclipse them both.

The story is chronicled in an innocuous column, situated in the top left-hand corner of the now defunct *Liverpool Mercury*, dated 16 March 1892. A remarkable tale is told under the headline:

THE FUTURE OF EVERTON FOOTBALL CLUB

---

LIVELY MEETING

---

MR HOULDING REMOVED FROM THE  
PRESIDENCY

The article tells of the birth of a sporting dynasty in stunning detail. It spells out how, in a packed committee room, in the Presbyterian School on Royal Street, Everton Valley, an extraordinary battle was being waged. It would ultimately lead to the city of Liverpool's only top-flight team tearing itself apart and the establishment of a rivalry that would turn the city into the most successful footballing town in England.

Everton had won the title in 1891 but had failed to defend it. Some directors had blamed the team's poor showing on the fact that they got changed into their kits at the Sandon pub, which was situated just across the road from the Anfield pitch.

The implication was they were sampling the local hospitality, instead of preparing themselves for games.

But that was the least of the club's problems. Before the assembled businessmen at the meeting was a motion to remove the president, John Houlding, a brewer and politician, from the board. Plans were also afoot to relocate the club altogether.

Houlding had set up a new company, the Everton Football and Athletic Grounds Company Limited. However,

he couldn't get it registered as two companies with such similar-sounding names couldn't exist. The board discovered this and, suspicious of his motives, they were outraged.

Rival factions within the club's hierarchy had been at war for months. The row stemmed from the fact that Houlding, who owned the ground at Anfield, wanted to raise the rent.

His opponents on the board believed he was trying to steal the club away from them, along with its fixtures and fittings, while making a tidy profit at their expense. As well as steadfastly refusing to pay up, they also wanted him out. If he lost the vote on the night it would leave him with a ground, but no team.

In truth he knew what was coming and had already worked out his 'Plan B'. Anyone reading the proceedings of these meetings would be left with the impression that Houlding was enjoying himself.

The board had called an Extraordinary General Meeting, ostensibly to carry out a coup by removing their president in the full glare of the local press. In the chair for the night was one of Houlding's rivals and a future leader of Everton, George Mahon.

Tensions reached fever pitch when Houlding entered the room. Mahon stood and asked if, as club president, he would like to take the chair. There were cries of 'Hear, hear' and 'No, no.'

Sensing the drama of the occasion, Houlding rose to the challenge. 'I am here to reply,' he said, then with a twinkle in his eye, he added, 'And a criminal never takes the chair, he steps into the dock.' It brought half the house down at least. Laughter and applause mixed with cries of 'Shame!' rang out.

A furious debate raged with claim and counterclaim flying in all directions. The committee accused their president of 'underhanded deeds'. He had, they said, sought

to set up his own company and register it with the Football Association. He steadfastly denied any wrongdoing, but it was clear that a historic split was on the cards.

In the end the motion to split was carried easily and just three days later, on 15 March 1892, Liverpool Football Club and Athletic Grounds Limited was formed. The Football Association granted it official recognition three months later, on 3 June.

A great sporting institution came into existence on that day. A rivalry that began in the boardroom would go on to divide families throughout the city for more than a century.

Houlding quickly assembled a squad, made up of largely Scottish players, dubbed the 'team of Macs'. He appointed William Edward Barclay as the manager and immediately applied to join the Football League. His application was rejected and Liverpool instead entered the Lancashire League.

For a time they would play 'third fiddle' to Everton, who were in the First Division, and Bootle FC, who had just entered the newly formed Second Division. But the new upstarts would eventually eclipse their rivals.

Barclay's men and the club's officials also met and got changed in the Sandon pub, where they donned the blue and white kits, left behind by their rivals before crossing the street to Anfield. They would wear those colours until 1896.

Liverpool's first competitive game came on 3 September 1892 at home to Higher Walton, in front of a crowd numbering the low hundreds. It finished 8-0 to the Anfield men.

Houlding and the club's new supporters would wait just seven months to face his bitter rivals from across Stanley Park, in the Liverpool Senior Cup Final at Hawthorne Road, Bootle. It proved to be an encounter as fiery as the

boardroom split that had created the two teams, but more about that later.

### **Two games and 15 goals in three days: Liverpool's barnstorming debut in English football**

Liverpool FC came into existence in March 1892, but they would have to wait six months to play their first official game. That came at Anfield where they faced a team called Higher Walton in the Lancashire League, in front of a crowd of just 300, thrashing them 8-0 on Saturday, 3 September 1892.

However, on the Thursday before, John Houlding's new creation would warm up with a friendly game against Rotherham Town. The game may have been lost in the mists of time, but for a report filed in the *Liverpool Mercury*.

The official attendance is unknown; however, there are suggestions that as many as 200 may have turned up. Entrance was probably free but supporters would have to pay one penny for the official matchday programme.

Liverpool, playing in blue and white, won the toss and were straight at the visitors from the first whistle. Within minutes they were a goal up through John Miller; then Andrew Kelvin hit a brace, with his second and Liverpool's third coming from a free kick.

Rotherham had been blitzed early on and it seemed to spark them into life. They mounted a series of attacks on Liverpool's goal, with at least two efforts going very close, but the defence was equal to it and the visitors soon ran out of steam.

Then the 'Anfielders' rushed into a five-goal lead with two goals from Tom Wyllie. Half-time couldn't come quick enough for the away side and they'd have been desperate for the break.

After the restart Rotherham had the wind at their backs and attempted to restore some pride.

This is how the *Mercury* described their attempted fightback, ‘Langdon missed an easy chance a moment later, and for the next few minutes the home defenders had a very anxious time. Leather and Pickering in turn sent in capital shots, and the Liverpoolians were somewhat lucky in keeping their position intact.’

Liverpool woke up, though, and Kelvin missed a sitter as they threatened to run riot. The visitors’ penalty area was under siege and eventually it caved in, with Miller adding his second and Wyllie his third. Liverpool then hit the crossbar, before Rotherham snatched a late consolation. The final score was 7-1 and Liverpool’s footballing story had truly begun.

The local paper gave Merseyside’s newcomers a report card that said ‘good, with room for improvement’, continuing, ‘As a team the 11 played well together, and are sure to improve with more practice. Ross, in goal, had little to do, but in the few cases in which he had to handle, he showed great coolness and courage. The backs played well together, thoroughly understanding each other, and showing great resource when pressed.

‘The trio of halves could hardly be improved on, McBride in particular playing a brilliant game. Forward the combination is sure to improve in time, but Smith showed a slight tendency to keep the ball too long, much to the detriment of his comrades.’

Improve they did. Liverpool won the Lancashire League in their first season and captured the Liverpool Senior Cup at the expense of their neighbours Everton, beginning a journey that would take the club to the pinnacle of European and world football.

## **Liverpool triumph but the spoils of victory are stolen as first Merseyside derby ends in protest**

Everton and Liverpool's official first encounter came in 1894, in the First Division of the Football League. Liverpool went down to a 3-0 defeat at Goodison Park. However, this wasn't the first time the two rivals had ever met.

During Liverpool's inaugural 1892/93 season in the Lancashire League, they also contested the Liverpool Senior Cup. After disposing of both Chester and Bootle, they set up a mouth-watering final against their Goodison neighbours on 22 April 1893.

Technically this was a friendly match, so it is not recorded in official derby records by either club. However, reports show it was hotly contested and anything but a friendly encounter.

The game was hosted at Bootle FC's ground in Hawthorne Road, a site also used for cricket. The city was abuzz at the prospect of such an important game taking place between Everton and Liverpool so soon after their acrimonious split in 1892.

Liverpool's home attendances had grown from a few hundred to nearly 2,500. However, the Blues were still by far the bigger club, averaging attendances of almost 13,000.

Liverpool were clearly seen as unpopular upstarts by their rivals, as evidenced by talk of boycotts of Anfield by Evertonians and Bootleites, as they were known. It was common back then for local supporters to transfer allegiance to their neighbours when their side was away from home. However, rumours were rife of a pact between Everton and Bootle supporters not to visit Anfield.

The *Liverpool Echo* review, written on the eve of battle, captures the mood surrounding the fixture:

'On account of the rivalry existing between the contestants – Everton and Liverpool – the game has created

a vast amount of interest, and arrangements have been made for a large attendance.

‘The game is sure to be one of the keenest and most exciting descriptions, as Liverpool are determined to try their best to dispossess Everton of the handsome trophy.’

The psychological battle was in full swing in the run-up to the match. Everton had threatened to field a ‘combination team’ as they didn’t see it as an important fixture. Liverpool threatened to retaliate, by fielding a reserve side. In the end, both sent out a strong XI.

On the day, over 10,000 supporters turned up. Conditions outside the ground were described by the *Lancashire Post* as appalling, with fans finding it difficult to get into the ground.

Everton came out first, followed by Liverpool. Teams would emerge separately and run past a box placed on the pitch to allow a photographer to line up his shot. Reports suggest both teams were given a sporting welcome.

Then battle commenced, and it was Liverpool, perhaps wanting it more, who went on the early offensive. The *Liverpool Mercury* gives an almost minute-by-minute account of the action, beginning, ‘Liverpool had the best of the play so far, being quicker and better combined than their opponents.’

The Everton goal was under siege, with their keeper pulling off a succession of saves to deny the men from Anfield. However, they couldn’t withstand the barrage for long and in the 35th minute Liverpool took the lead. Here’s how the *Mercury*’s scribe saw the goal, ‘McCartney was penalised for holding, but the free kick was adroitly turned to Liverpool’s advantage, as on Miller passing to Wyllie, the latter scored a goal with a low shot.’

The underdogs were 1-0 up and it stayed like that until half-time. The press couldn’t make out whether they were

the better team, or if Everton hadn't taken the game seriously enough. It didn't matter as far as Liverpool's new following were concerned.

The second half was different and, perhaps after a dressing-room telling-off, Everton emerged with more impetus. Still they couldn't break Liverpool down and, as the game wore on, they became increasingly frustrated at Liverpool's tactics.

The Anfield outfit had resorted to some agricultural defending by the end of the game. Meanwhile, Everton were pushing hard, desperately trying to avoid defeat.

In the dying moments they won a corner and from the resulting scramble, Everton alleged a handball by one of Liverpool's defenders and demanded a penalty. The referee, after consulting his linesman, waved away their appeals.

It was the last action of the match. As the final whistle sounded, there was uproar.

In what many felt was a cynical ploy to prevent Liverpool receiving the trophy on the pitch, Everton lodged a formal protest. The victors would have to wait to receive their spoils.

Writing in *Cricket and Field Review*, on 29 April 1893, one journalist recorded his disappointment at the behaviour of Everton officials at the end of the game, 'I would much rather have seen the full strength of Everton on the field, and so would lots of their supporters, but the executive I suppose considered the team quite good enough to again win the cup, but when they failed it is bad form then to step in with a protest, and this on the most flimsy ground.'

Everton complained that the referee was incompetent. However, Liverpool Football Association rejected this at a hearing, held at the Neptune Hotel, on the Monday after the game.

Andrew Hannah, club captain, received the trophy, described as ‘a splendid specimen of the silversmith’s art’, at a home game against Preston on Tuesday. He had also lifted the Lancashire League Cup, completing a historic double in Liverpool’s first season.

However, the drama was far from over. On 1 September 1893, on the eve of Liverpool’s debut season in the Second Division, both trophies were stolen from a pawnshop in the Paddington area of the city.

They had been on display there, allowing supporters to view them in the shop window. The *Daily News* on 4 September 1893 reported, ‘The burglars forced open the door of the shop with a jemmy, and took away the prizes, which are of considerable value. So far the police have failed to obtain a clue to the missing cups.’

Sadly, the trophies were never found. Liverpool would be forced to pay the princely sum of £130 to replace them. Who could have carried out such an act?

## **Changing colours: Liverpool become ‘the Reds’ in 1896**

Imagine a world where Everton played in red and Liverpool entered the field of play wearing blue and white. Hard to picture that ever happening, isn’t it? It’s unthinkable actually. Well it did and here’s why.

In 1892, Everton had walked out of Anfield and decided to set up a new club at Goodison Park. Liverpool’s new owner, John Houlding, quickly set about building a new team. He recruited most of his players from Scotland, leading to the creation of a so-called ‘team of Macs’. There was just one problem; there was no money left over to buy a kit.

Everton’s new board had decided to change their shirt to ‘ruby red’, so Houlding decided to go rummaging in the

Anfield store room and found Everton's old blue and white shirts and that became the new team's official kit. So, for four full seasons, until 1896, Everton played in red and Liverpool in blue.

Liverpool were referred to during this period as 'the Anfielders'. However, at the end of the 1895/96 season Liverpool manager John McKenna moved upstairs to the boardroom. Liverpool swiftly appointed Tom Watson as their new boss.

The last game under McKenna, against West Bromwich Albion at Stoney Park, would turn out to be the last time Liverpool played in blue. They lost 2-0.

Watson ushered in an exciting new era at Anfield and a new kit. Everton had decided to ditch the red shirts and opted for royal blue. Houlding quickly saw his opportunity and immediately purchased 20 red shirts from Jack Sugg's clothing store in the city centre.

It turned out to be a masterstroke because red and white were the municipal colours of the city. This meant his club now bore both the city's name and its colours.

There is some confusion over the colour of the shorts, or knickers as they were called at the time, as they were initially intended to be black. However, as the team kicked off the new season away to 'The Wednesday' on 1 September 1896, the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that they were wearing red shirts and white shorts for the first time.

Liverpool FC were now officially the Reds. They would win their first game wearing the new shirt 2-1 and the first player to score for the club in the red top, white shorts and red socks was George Allen, who netted twice.

Sadly the first game in red at Anfield was a 2-0 reverse against Bolton Wanderers. The Reds faced similar disappointment at Goodison when they faced the Blues

for the first time in their new kits. The game ended 2-1 to Everton, with Jimmy Ross scoring for Liverpool.

Liverpool's first victory over Everton after changing to red came on 25 September 1897. They won 3-1 in front of a crowd of 30,000.

The shirt was a simple one, with a 'dark red or black stand collar and buttons down the front'. There was no badge though. Liverpool players did not wear a Liver bird upon their chest until the 1950 FA Cup Final against Arsenal.

It would disappear after that game, which the Reds lost 2-0, and wouldn't be seen again until 1955. Eventually Bill Shankly would oversee the change to the all-red kit in a European Cup game against Anderlecht during the 1964/65 season.

Shanks initially only wanted red shirt and red shorts, because he thought it would make the team look more powerful. However, according to Ian St John's autobiography, 'the Saint' suggested they 'go the whole hog' and change the socks to red too. The evolution of Liverpool's kit is indeed intricately woven into the fabric of the club's history. It has been shaped by the many stories and great men who built the institution we love today.

## **Heartbreak as defeat snatched from the jaws of victory in 1899**

By 1899 Liverpool Football Club was seven years old. They had won the Lancashire League in their debut season and were crowned Second Division champions in 1894 and 1896. However, they had never mounted a serious assault on the First Division title.

That changed in the 1898/99 season under manager Tom Watson when they would go agonisingly close to the biggest prize of all.

Going into the season there was great optimism among Liverpool supporters, as reflected in a season preview in the *Lancashire Evening Post*, published on 27 August 1898:

‘Liverpudlians are awaiting the forthcoming season with eagerness and confidence, and unless Tom Watson is a false prophet Liverpool will achieve fame and honour before many moons have passed. No expense, no effort, has been spared in the attempt to get a first-class team together; and Mr Watson has every reason to feel proud of his handiwork.’

The paper cited the capture of Alex Raisbeck and the retention of several star players as reasons for Scousers to be cheerful. The club had also poached trainer James Chapman from Heart of Midlothian and apparently, he ‘already had the men well in hand’.

The Reds performed well and raced to the summit. With one game left they had won 19 of their 33 matches.

Going into their last fixture of the season, away to Aston Villa, Liverpool sat at the top of the table. They were two points clear of second-placed Villa, but the side from the Midlands had a far superior goal difference. This set up a mouth-watering clash with the winner taking the title.

The omens were not good though, as Liverpool had lost the home fixture 3-0 earlier in the season. Nonetheless, the *Liverpool Mercury* reported that many supporters made the journey from the city to Birmingham and the attendance at Villa Park was a bumper 41,357.

There was clearly a huge sense of occasion with the encounter taking on the air of a cup final, rather than a league match. Both teams entered the field to tumultuous applause with Villa coming out first. Imagine those hopeful Scousers taking up their places in the ground, hopelessly

outnumbered, bellies full of ale and trying their damndest to shout the lads to glory over the Villa din.

However, they would have their hopes cruelly dashed. Maybe Liverpool were simply outplayed, or perhaps the occasion got to them. Whatever the reason, they were out of the game by half-time. The local press was damning, stating that ‘the Anfielders lost heart and were outplayed’.

Two goals from Jack Davey in the first 20 minutes set Villa on their way. Then Billy Garraty and Jimmy Crabtree grabbed a goal apiece in the space of a minute and Fred Wheldon sealed the five-goal rout in the 44th minute.

Liverpool mounted a fightback in the second half but it was a case of too little too late. Those Liverpoolian supporters on their 19th-century away-day would make their way home to Merseyside, heartbroken.

They would return to damning headlines in the *Liverpool Echo*, words that would perfectly sum up the scale of their disappointment:

FIGHT FOR THE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

---

AGONY FOR LIVERPOOL

---

ASTON VILLA MAKE NO MISTAKE

---

ROUT OF THE LIVERPOOL MEN

Fortunately for those poor ‘Anfielders’ they wouldn’t have to wait too long for the club’s first top-flight championship. Tom Watson would lead them to the title in 1901. That team would receive an astonishing welcome on their return to the city, but that’s another story.