

SPORT

ARSENAL F.C. 1951-52



Back row: L. Scott, G. Swindin, W. Barnes, A. Forbes, R. Daniel.
 Front row: D. Roper, J. Logie, C. Holton, J. Mercer, D. Lishman, R. Marden.

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Wistram
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Mortensen
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BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD FOR SOCCER

by
REG DRURY

HURRAH for Highbury! The recent 90-minute football frolic of the "Gunners" against Hapoel F.C. was a dazzling success. For, while the boys from Tel-Aviv did not set us alight, over 44,000 fans now know that future floodlight matches are a soccer certainty.

Among other things, this was a game that gave young football followers a comeback when the old-timers lament the forgotten skills of days of yore. The greybeards grouse has been put well and truly in the shade, for, while soccer may have been better in the past, it was never brighter.

It was possible to follow every single kick of the Arsenal-Hapoel affair, and that's far more than I can say of roughly half the Saturday games at the height of winter and of many early-season mid-week matches. Those mid-week League fixtures are often as great a curse from the spectators' viewpoint as they are to injury-handicapped clubs.

Kick-off times are delayed as late as possible, and often later than common-sense should dictate, with the result that the ghostly proceedings in the closing stages are reduced to a farce with fans stationed more than 40 yards from the ball completely ignorant of vital "who-goals-there?" facts.

Floodlight football is no new idea. Way back last century a Burnley v. Nelson charity match was staged at night, illuminated by paraffin flares held aloft by poles, but Arsenal's match last week was the very first in this country to be unanimously acclaimed "a hundred per cent winner."

Arsenal, who after their Brazilian experiences of floodlight football have put the seal of success on the idea so nobly pioneered in Lancashire over 50 years ago, were also well to the fore when a floodlit fixture was held between two selected London sides on January 4, 1933, at the White City Stadium—then the headquarters of Q.P.R.

A crowd numbering over 10,000 saw the game, which resulted in a 3-0 victory for the Whites over the Reds. All three goals were scored by Arsenal men; centre-forward Charlie Walsh (2) and right-winger Wally Reed. Manager with bright memories of that Spurs-sponsored game is Ted Goodier of Rochdale. Reds' centre-half on that occasion.

The idea seemed to die a natural death after that game, and no attempt at home revival was made until a couple of seasons ago. Since then Southampton, Swindon Town and Southern Leaguers' Headington United have all staged floodlit friendlies without quite achieving the perfect blend.

Arsenal v. Hendon Next

THOSE clubs did, however, inspire Arsenal interest and the possibilities were obvious when the Boxers v. Jockeys match was held at Highbury earlier this year. Immediately, manager Tom Whitaker made plans to hold a competitive match under lights and only the state of the playing surface caused the shelving of the floodlit Combination match against Queen's Park Rangers' second string.

But Arsenal will, after all, hold the first competitive game under floodlights in Britain on Monday, October 8, when



A general view of Highbury during Arsenal's floodlit match against Hapoel (Tel-Aviv).

their reserves entertain Athenian amateurs, Hendon, in a first round London Challenge Cup-tie. And Swindon Town are to hold Combination games by night later in the year.

The fans will flock to the Arsenal-Hendon game, and in even greater numbers to the Arsenal-Glasgow Rangers friendly on Wednesday, October 17. Kick-off in each instance is 7.30.

Hendon are delighted at the chance of participating in a floodlight game. It ensures that they will have a full-strength eleven, for their players will not have to seek time off from their daily employment, and the gate receipts will boom out of all proportion to the other L.C.C. games being held that afternoon.

This can put this competition on its feet, and here and now I predict that the London Challenge Cup Final will be held under floodlight at Highbury next March!

Indeed, it is reserve games which will reap the full benefit of this latest advance in soccer's march when floodlights are installed on a near-national basis. And second choice players who now have the disheartening experience of performing before a mere handful of spectators, will get a chance to shine before real "crowds."

Floodlight football is now, by popular acclaim, a juggernaut that cannot be stopped, even if clubs were in the least that way inclined. The clear view in the Arsenal-Hapoel game (as shown by the picture above) confirmed that; only snag for terrace types being that when they looked up into the lights the haze followed them for the next few seconds when their gaze was directed on the field of play.

There is, needless to say, always a snag to be encountered. And Benjamin Electric, of Tottenham, leading manufacturers of the floodlighting section of the installations, tell me that "Present shortage of materials for ground equipment is so acute that interested clubs—and there are quite a few—have little hope of being fixed up this season."

Oldham Possibilities

IT looks as though brighter days have already arrived for Oldham Athletic. There was a crowd of 23,077 at Boundary Park last Saturday to see the "Latics" defeat York City 2-0. Doncaster Rovers and Hull City apart, no other Third North clubs have been able to pull in crowds to compare with that figure with any consistency since the war, and it proves that Oldham has the potential support if George

Hardwick and his boys can deliver the goods.

The Oldham enclosure is the finest in the Northern section and the ground record, for a Cup-tie against Sheffield Wednesday over 20 years ago, exceeds 47,000. Which means it was still half-empty against York!

No doubting that Hardwick has worked wonders since he moved from Middlesbrough, and Athletic are the only side in the League with an unbeaten record. Bobby McIlvenny (ex-Merthyr) and Peter McKennan notched the goals that beat York.

Grimby's ill-luck, regarding injuries, continues. Goalkeeper Stan Hayhurst and left-winger Alex McCue, both crocked in the second game of the season, are still out of action; centre-half Bill Bellas, injured less than 15 minutes after the start of the season, had a try-out in the reserve side that won at Mansfield last Saturday . . . at centre-forward.

Meanwhile, during the second-half

of the League match with Accrington, outside-left Jimmy Maddison was carried from the field with a displaced cartilage and the "Mariners" gave another performance of their now all too familiar 1951-52 "ten-men act."

Even so, Grimsby took the points as well as the honours with a 2-1 victory. Goalscorers were inside-right Freddy Marlow and centre-forward Billy Cairns; not surprising when you realise that, between them, this pair have accounted for all but one of the 13 Town goals this term.

Seven-goal Cairns needs no introduction, for he has been around the League scene for the past 20 years, but Marlow is a name to note. He stepped into senior football for the first-time with Grimsby this season, and now has five goals to his credit. Nevertheless both Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday know of the Marlow monicker—for both clubs have given him a free transfer in the past two years.

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