

# CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR

The team that won the old First Division for Jack Charlton by 15 points back in 1974 was built by the man he took over from: Stan Anderson. Like Big Jack, Stan was an ex-England international, but when he took over at Boro in 1966 the club was heading for relegation to the old Third Division.

**SHAUN KEOGH** went to meet him...



Stan Anderson's managerial reign at the Boro was a mixture of many emotions for fans, players and manager alike: frustration, anger, gloom, elation but most of all, optimism. Boro were always going to make the leap to the Big League under Anderson; it was written. If ordinary people owned their own homes back then, then the Boro fans amongst them would have gladly risked the roof over their families head by betting on Boro for promotion.

Except that the gods were not reading from the same script. Anderson's most successful period as a manager can now be seen as the first full season that he took charge. He led Boro from the old Third to the Second Division. From then on, Boro were fuelled by optimism as each season opened, then worked through anger and frustration before the traditional gloom settled over Teesside as the end of season approached and Boro narrowly missed out yet again.

Now aged 69 but in fine physical and mental form, Anderson lives in quiet retirement in Doncaster. This writer interviewed Anderson for MSS back in 1995 (or thereabouts; I lost my copy of the interview in a fire a couple of years ago.) At that time, he seemed very tired and world weary, and it was a massive effort to get responses to some questions, and a smile was out of the





question. The Stan Anderson of 2003 is a different man. He smiles broadly and greets me warmly like an old mate and I feel touched that he does so. He speaks animatedly and loosely throughout our two-hour meeting, which is really more of an informal chat than a normal interview. Anderson is still a slim, smart and quietly spoken man. But viewing the interview for the first time nearly five months after I videoed it, I am struck by how warm, and full of humour Stan is now. This is in direct contrast to how he was when I first met him, and indeed how many of his former players remember him, though that is not to say that any of them have a bad word for him. Well, perhaps with the exception of Dickie Rooks. (See **mss** 133).

We are at Tall Trees in Yarm, the night after Boro's 5-1 demolition of Tottenham and the afternoon of the Willie Maddren memorial dinner, reported by this writer in the previous edition of **MSS**. Stan is chatting freely as soon as he enters the room. While I set the camera up, I get so involved I almost forget to put a microphone on him.

I steer the conversation back to Stan's arrival at the Boro as a player in 1965. Some of his answers are remarkably frank, but from the tone of his voice and his facial expressions, it is easy to tell that he is not settling scores or simply mouthing off; he is just telling it as it was. And I can tell you, that is very refreshing. Anderson played over 400 League games for Sunderland, before a brief time at Newcastle brought him to the Boro at the age of 32. He is still, and is likely to remain forever, the only player to have captained all three clubs.

He was brought in as an experienced player, to be groomed for management. But what was his first impression of the Boro side, who were destined for relegation that year? Anderson shakes his head, lowers his eyes... and pauses before replying. "Having played in a very disciplined set-up under Allan Brown at Sunderland, I couldn't believe what I saw when I came to Middlesbrough. The players were just hopeless; they couldn't play. You latch onto the good ones like Gordon Jones, but I remember one day soon after I took over as manager looking down a list of 30 or so players, and I thought 'We're going into the Third Division here, and I have got about six players that I can rely on'".

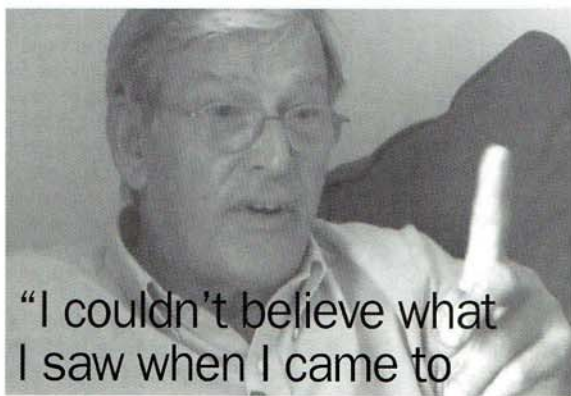
Anderson wielded his axe. "I was just giving players away; managers were phoning up and saying 'What about such-and-such player?' and I would say 'Have him! Take him!' (*laughs*). I think I got rid of 16 in the first year."

Were there, I wonder, any of the usual somewhat eccentric characters? Anderson stifles a chuckle and replies "For some reason I'll always remember a character called Dick Le Flem. [a left winger who spent 11 months at the Boro from February 1965]. I came in late one day, around 9.40 for training at 10am. I saw this car outside Ayresome, a real heap, with all the windows steamed up. Through the steam I could just make out Dick Le Flem, so I went over and tapped on the window. When he opened the window, I could see heaps and heaps of old newspapers all piled up in the car; there was hardly room for him to sit. I said to him 'Are you alright?' and he said, 'Oh, yeah, fine. It's just not time to go in yet' We were due to start work in 20 minutes, and he was sitting in his car until the last possible minute. I thought to myself 'What a strange bloke.'

"Anyway, during training, I arranged for us to do some hard running, and Dick stopped and was physically sick. I went and asked him what was the matter and he said 'Oh, I can't do this; I've just had a big breakfast you know. If you're gonna do this in future, you must give me prior warning' (*laughs*) I couldn't believe it - it was incredible. Can you imagine a professional player at any level coming out with that nowadays?"

"Then there was the goalkeeper - Eddie Connachan. He saved a penalty in the first match I played for Boro, which was against Cardiff." Boro lost this match 4-3 at Ayresome, but Anderson marked his debut with a goal. "The ball trickled to within a couple of feet of his body. Now, he had made a good save, but he was that fat that he couldn't move his body quick enough to collect it, so the bloke who took the kick ran from the penalty spot and kicked it in. He covered the distance from the penalty spot to the goal line faster than the keeper could move a couple of feet.

"It was a learning curve, but that was why I went to the Boro as a player - to learn about management. I thought to myself, 'Their manager is Raich Carter - the great Raich Carter - I'll learn all about management from him.' As a player he was legendary, but as a manager he was absolutely useless. To be fair, Joe Harvey, who was my manager at Newcastle, also did absolutely nothing while I worked under him. Under Allan Brown when I was at Sunderland we would sit for two hours talking tac-



“I couldn’t believe what I saw when I came to Middlesbrough. The players were just hopeless”

► tics and about the opposition, so I got to know a lot about the players and the teams. Then when I played my first game under Joe at Newcastle, he said about half a dozen words like ‘get stuck in out there lads’ before sending us out onto the pitch. I said ‘Is that it, like? What about the opposition?’ And he said, ‘Oh, we don’t bother with all that here Stan.’

“Well, we lost that match 0-4 at home. From then on, he left it all to me; I used to do the pre-match talk. I used to say to Joe ‘This is not my job; you should be doing this.’”

So, the prospect of learning from a legendary former player drew Stan to the Boro – but who set the deal up? “It was Eric Thomas, the Boro Chairman. I had also been very friendly with George Whinney, one of the Boro directors through playing golf, so he was also instrumental in me going to Boro. Having said that, I wouldn’t have left Newcastle if it wasn’t for Joe Harvey... In those early days of his management career he was...” Stan’s voice trails off “...hopeless.” This remark is made with heavy regret; Stan had known Joe for many years and liked and respected him.

In 1966 there were any number of reasons for ambitious professionals not to join the Boro. The club was in the bottom five of the (old) Second Division from January until the last game of the season when they finished second bottom and relegated. Raich Carter, a legendary inside forward who played most of his career at Sunderland and gained 13 England caps, had been in charge since January 1963. He took over a team in mid-season and mid-table, and eventually finishing a respectable fourth. From then on, however, the rot set in, with journeyman players coming to the end of their careers being brought in to replace quality players moving on to better things. Cyril Knowles, Mick McNeil, and Alan Peacock all left the club for the top Division during Carter’s reign, sowing the seeds of doom for poor old Stan Anderson to reap.

If the grim realisation of Raich Carter’s poor management were not enough, worse was to come. Anderson continues. “Harold Shepherdson held the position of England Coach at that time, but he was no coach; he was the baggage man – that was all he did. He took no training at all. But because he was at Middlesbrough and I didn’t know what his role was in the England set-up, I thought to myself before I decided to join Boro ‘Well, there’s the great Raich Carter, and Harold Shepherdson, the England trainer; I’ve got it made here.’” (*Ironic laughter*)

Stan’s introduction at the Boro left him bewildered – and worn-out. “I signed for Boro on a Thursday, and went in the next day for training, which, on a Friday at any club is always a light loosening up session before the match the day after. But the session started and I had never trained so hard in my life.

“I said to Gordon Jones,” [the legendary Boro skipper] ‘What’s all this about?’ He said ‘We’ve never done this before, he’s just trying to make an impression on you.’ Well, I was absolutely knackered. That day was the end of Harold Shepherdson as a trainer; he didn’t do any work for me. He was the chief scout or whatever it was he did. (*laughs*) He used to come and say things to me but I would just ignore him and make my own decisions.” Throughout all this, Anderson is speaking without any malice or venom; he is just telling it how it was.

Anderson brought in four players to boost Boro’s promotion bid: Willie Whigham, John O’Rourke, David Chadwick and John Hickton. He readily admits that like any other manager he “made a few mistakes... I had to buy players on the cheap.”



But these four were dynamite in that promotion year.

As the years went by, Anderson’s attempts to put the Boro among the elite were worthy, but ultimately unsuccessful. Can he see why this was, with the benefit of thirty years hindsight? Stan collects his thoughts slowly and replies:

“People get too used to you and take liberties. I’ll give you two examples. I used to talk to the Boro chairman [Eric Thomas] about the team and football matters, but as far as I was concerned, it was a manager to chairman conversation. After a while he started saying things like ‘Well, we should be buying such and such player.’ I used to think ‘Who the bloody hell are you, like?!’, I used to say to him ‘You are starting to tell me things that you shouldn’t. You are talking like a football manager but you are a football club director.’ It used to make me... smile.” (*laughs*)

“Then one day Charlie Amer said to me ‘I want you to ask the Chairman for £50,000 for new players.’ So I told him that there was no way that the Chairman would agree to that – it was a lot of money in those days, and Charlie said ‘He’ll turn you down, but I’ll back you to the hilt.’ Of course, what he

**Stan pictured playing for the Boro at Charlton Athletic; Stan’s playing career: England under-23 – four caps Full England caps – two Sunderland: 1951-63, 402 League games, 31 goals Newcastle: 1963-65, 81 League games, 13 goals Middlesbrough: 1965-66, 21 League games, two goals**

**Stan’s managerial career:**

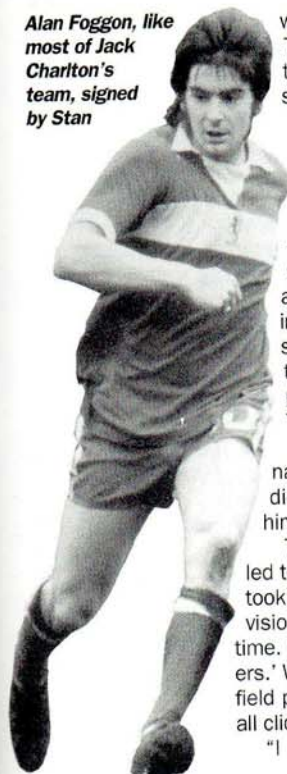
	P	W	L	D
<b>Boro</b> 1st Apr 1966 – 25th Jan 1973	305	130	94	81
<b>AEK Athens</b> 1st Feb 1973 – 1st May 1974	(Unknown)			
<b>QPR</b> 7th Sept 1974 – 16th Oct 1974	6	1	3	2
<b>Doncaster</b> 3rd Feb 1975 – 20th Nov 1978	174	67	60	47
<b>Bolton</b> 28th Jan 1980 – 31st May 1981	62	18	27	17
<b>Total</b>	547	216	184	147

(Source: www.soccerbase.com)





Alan Foggon, like most of Jack Charlton's team, signed by Stan



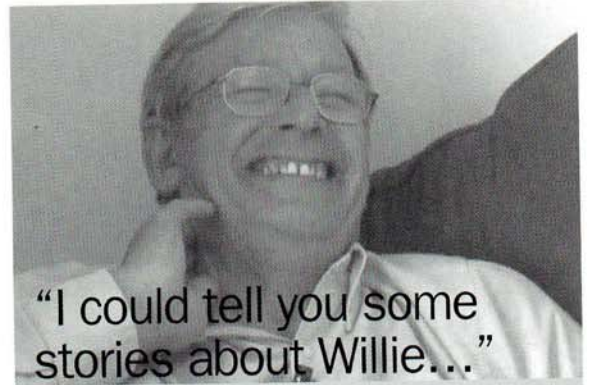
wanted to create a boardroom scene to get Eric Thomas out so he could take over as Chairman. I said there was no way I was getting involved; I told him to sort his own problems out.

"Then, on the playing side, there was loads of niggly things that got to me. There was John Vincent, who was, shall we say, economical with the truth. I also had problems with George Kinnell, who thought he could kid the life out of me. I got a call from a pub once, and I was told that a bunch of players had been in after we won a match, and they had walked out with a few crates of beer and told the pub to charge it to the club. I called George in and he tried to tell me it was a mistake and all this nonsense. Players like Kinnell and Vincent – whose wife used to come in crying her eyes out – these were experienced players who had got away with it at their previous clubs. That's why Sunderland got rid of Kinnell."

So why I ask, did you buy him, Stan? He had a funny name but... "Well, he was actually a good player; Kinnell did not want to lose on the field, but the other side of him..." His voice trails into an ominous silence.

These and other issues over the following years finally led to Anderson deciding enough was enough. Jack Charlton took over, added one player and Boro stormed to the top Division. Stan recalls a conversation with Charlton around that time. "Jack said to me once 'You left me a good squad of players.' Well, I knew that. The only thing I did not have was a mid-field player who could create. Jack got Bobby Murdoch and it all clicked. The rest of that squad were my players.

"I loved watching the Boro go up that year; I love the fact



"I could tell you some stories about Willie..."

IT IS DIFFICULT to talk about the Anderson era without mentioning Willie Whigham. David Chadwick talked about Willie (as does every player from that era) so I wanted to hear Stan's stories. What about the head-butting incident where Willie gave a Scots kiss to Boro coach Jimmy Greenhalgh? "I said to Willie, I don't care about the incident, but you must apologise to Jimmy. He refused, so I told him that he was not playing against Blackpool. The only other keeper I had was a 17-year-old called Maurice Short. I wouldn't do it in the current game; there is too much at stake, but I had to make a stand. Gordon [Jones] begged me to bring him back, as did the directors, but I wouldn't have it." Stan's reluctance to stand for indiscipline from players is matched only by the disdain that he holds for club directors of the era. "As soon as there is anything difficult for them to do, like backing me up to make Willie apologise, they can't handle it. Mind you," he smiles, "I'd love to see Willie again, I could tell you some stories about him...." Stan chuckles at another classic Whigham memory. I urge him to continue.

"We were playing Norwich and their striker, Albert Bennett shot at goal, which Willie got down to save. The momentum of his run meant that Bennett stopped just in front of Willie, and then, all I could see was Willie jumping up and chasing Bennett half the length of the pitch. Well, I'm in the dug-out watching this and I'm thinking 'What the hell's going on here?'"

"Gordon Jones came over to me and explained that when Bennett had stopped himself in front of Willie, he looked down and said to him 'By Christ, you must be the ugliest keeper I have ever seen.'" At this, Stan breaks up again with laughter before adding: "Willie was gonna knock his lights out if he caught him."



Picture: Universal

that they can hold their own in the Premiership now. I mean, they are not a big club, or a top club, in the way that Arsenal and Manchester United are, but they are there, and I love that."

Stan's departure from the Boro was out of the blue. He had only just signed Graeme Souness the previous week, and a couple of months previously had bagged Alan Foggon. The pieces were, with hindsight, just starting to fit. But following a dismal FA Cup exit to Plymouth, Stan resigned without a word. What happened?

"Well, a few weeks previously Peter Robinson, the Liverpool Secretary asked me if I knew anyone who might be interested in a job in Greece, for a club who wanted an English coach. I told him I would ask around. But I found myself thinking about it more and more, especially as Boro were going through a less than magnificent run of form at that time."

He's not wrong – up to Stan's last League match, a 1-2 defeat to Fulham (Souness's debut) Boro had only won three out of twelve, then came the FA Cup exit at Plymouth.

"Anyway, I decided that I fancied it, and it turned out that the club was AEK Athens. I phoned Peter Robinson and he arranged a meeting for me. I was offered a brilliant deal; I was put on double the money Boro were giving me, paid monthly in advance, and they gave me a lovely house. We arranged a two-year contract, so I resigned from the Boro and told my wife I was off to Greece. I stayed 15 months in the end. Technically, they were better players, but work wise...they were typically Mediterranean, shall we say." (laughs)

I run off the names of a few of Stan's players, and the memories start coming back. "I saw Stuart Boam play twice for Mansfield; I would have bought the lad who played alongside ▶



**"I think I was the first England player to get sent off in an international"**

► him if we had the money. Maddren had not developed at that stage and I was playing him all over the place, trying to find his best position."

It is interesting to note that had Boro's coffers not been so depleted, the Maddren-Boam partnership may never have happened. During this writer's meeting with David Chadwick earlier this year (see previous edition of **mss**) he was genuinely hurt that Stan brought in Mike Kear to replace him when he felt he was doing well after making such an important contribution to winning promotion the previous season. So I ask Stan, what made him feel the need to replace Chadwick?

"I got concerned about David once we got into the Second Division. In the Third, he was probably first on the team-sheet, but in the Second, he started to get a bit of a battering, and he was only a small lad. I just decided that I needed someone stronger on that wing. I had Derrick Downing on the other side who would run through brick walls, but I needed a similar player on the right, which was why I signed Mike Kear.

"For the first three or four months with Kear, I thought I had won the pools. Then his form just plummeted. This was a lad who could run and control the ball and knock it in from any distance. He was fantastic. But then the next season he got involved with George Kinnell, started to drink, and it fell away. He became a disaster."

Anderson's finest signing was John Hickton, who he bought from his old manager at Sunderland, Allan Brown, by then at Sheffield Wednesday. But if the Boro board had had their way, Hickton would have moved to London: "The Boro wanted to accept an offer in the region of £100,000 for Hickton, because they felt it was too much to refuse; it was a lot of money back then. But I said no; if he is worth that much to QPR he is worth more than that to us. I mean, promotion to the Boro was worth a lot more than £100,000 even then. A lot more."

The double-dealing of club directors incurs much of Anderson's wrath; clearly, he experienced many differences of opinion with them. However, on at least one occasion, he was able to throw some stick in the opposite direction.

"Bill Nicholson (Then Spurs' manager) was in charge of the under-23 side that I played in, and I would see him at football do's so I knew him a bit. I rang him one day about Graeme Souness [right] who I had heard was looking to get away from London because he was home-sick for Scotland. He couldn't get in the Spurs first team and was only 19.

"(Bill) Nick said Souness was a good player, very ambitious but they couldn't find a place for him in the first team at Spurs. He said they

**"I said – 'hang on a minute – you're the guy at the board meeting who said it was a waste of money to spend £25,000 on a Tottenham reserve"**



**Stan won two caps for England in the early 1960s, here he is with then England manager Walter Winterbottom and Roger Hunt**

wanted £35,000. I went to the board and put it to them. The meeting lasted about three or four hours, just talking about this deal – was he worth it? Can we afford him? Isn't that a bit too much money for a Spurs reserve player? All these things were gone over and over, and not all of the board were in favour, but they agreed to pay £32,500 and luckily, Bill Nicholson let us have him for that amount.

"Anyway, years passed, and after I got back from Greece, I went to a Boro match when I was manager at Doncaster, and was invited into the boardroom. There was a Boro director there who I will not name, but he was at that meeting a few years previously when I begged them for the money to buy Souness, and he was one of the most vociferous opponents.

"The guy came up and was boasting to the group of people I was talking with about how much the club had made by selling Souness. (A whopping £319,500) So I said – 'hang on a minute – you're the guy at the board meeting six years ago who said it would be a waste of money to spend even £25,000 on a Tottenham reserve. Now you're here trying to tell me how foresighted you were to see his potential?' Well, the bloke didn't know what to say and just disappeared through the floor." At this, Stan snorts disdainfully and shakes his head. Clearly no love lost there, and given stories such as this, quite understandable.

Stan came back to the Boro to pay his respects at Willie Maddren's funeral, but he did not follow on to the Riverside, where the wake was held. "I have never been to the Riverside Stadium; I don't know why, but it just has not happened. When I came to Willie's funeral, the wake was at the ground, but I did not go to that because I didn't think it was a happy enough day to spend reminiscing. It was a sad affair."

Going back to Willie's knee injury that curtailed his career, Stan recalls, "I remember Harold Shepherdson coming to me and saying we have to do something about Maddren, he is jumping out of tackles. I called Willie in and he said he had a bad knee. When I looked at it I couldn't believe he was playing. He had an operation after that but it was never the same. He never recovered to the point where he could have a full career. Having said that, I was always amazed that he never got a full England cap. When the Boro got to the First Division under Jack, he was playing at his peak, and his use of the ball from the back was excellent. He was a two-footed player and was very good in the air. You have to say he was very unlucky.



## “Nobby thought he was the kingpin...”

**TWO WORDS** have Stan laughing out loud again – ‘Nobby’ and ‘Stiles’.

“Nobby... (laughs) It’s the same as the Jack Charlton and Bobby Murdoch scenario, I knew what I was looking for, but Nobby was not it, or by the time we got him he wasn’t. I wanted a midfielder who could win it and play it. When Nobby played for England, he was a short game player who would win it and give it to someone who could play. That was all I wanted.

“But then Nobby, coming to Middlesbrough from Manchester United thought to himself he was the kingpin, and he wanted to run with the ball or play it long. I used to say to him ‘For f\*\*\*’s sake Nobby, (more laughter) get it and give it to someone who can play.’ And he would look blank and say ‘What do you mean?’ (laughs) I really loved Nobby though, he had no airs and graces, but trying to get him to play the simple way that he won all his England caps was impossible. He was always upfront and trying to score goals; hilarious. Can you imagine him getting away with that under Alf Ramsey? He would have had him out after one game.

“Gordon (Jones) came in one day and said to me ‘I think you are gonna have to leave Nobby out, ‘cos the lads are playing hell about him.’ We were all tearing our hair out.”



“John Hickton was another one who should have got the England call. He would score goals for fun. You’d think they would have been given one chance against, say, Luxembourg, in a friendly. When you see Wayne Rooney getting in at 17, a 24 year old who hasn’t got the call would think that he has lost the chance.”

What does Stan make of the current England set-up? He expresses a weary sigh. “It drives me crazy. For 30 years I have been saying that as a passing country we are miles behind anyone else. For effort and strength, we are as good as anyone else, but for getting the ball and playing it we are miles behind.”

Anderson played a couple of senior games for England – a short interlude, but at least he got the call, although it is curiously omitted from the *Boro Bible*. He remembers:

“I played twice for England against Austria and Scotland in 61-62 I think it was. However, I was sent off in an under-23 match when I was about 21. In those days, that would not have helped your cause. In fact, I think I was the first England player to get sent off in an international. Anyway, it happened because I punched a guy after he spat at me. Being sent off was not so prevalent then as it is now. I was an outcast for the rest of the tour; getting sent off then was a very rare thing to happen. I regret that, it might – might – have stopped me getting more international caps.”

What of the end of Anderson’s playing career? He left himself out of the team for the crucial last three games of Boro’s relegation season of 1965-66, and never played a first team game again. Why?

“I had pulled a stomach muscle. It got to a stage when I could hardly walk. I was told that if I didn’t rest, it would be a permanent injury. We had Billy Horner and Don Masson, so I decided to stay out. I also learned that there is no way you can coach and play at the same time, although I never officially retired. I played in a reserve match at Ashington, but I was concentrating that much on what the other players were doing from a managerial point of view that I wasn’t playing to the best that I could.”

What of Don Masson? There were stories of bust-ups between Masson and Anderson circulating for years afterwards. Masson came through the ranks at the Boro and went on to be a first class mid-field player in the top Division at QPR and Derby as well as earning 17 caps for Scotland. Was there a personality clash? “No, there was no personality clash.” Anderson pauses. “The one regret that I had was that players like Don Masson refused to

play in the positions that I wanted them to. Now he turned into one of the best midfield players in the country, and was a hero for Scotland, but he wouldn’t do it for me, he just wanted to score goals. I told him, you’re not fast enough to play up front. He was a bit volatile, shall we say, but a very good player. It was a shame to lose Don. He was a beautiful passer of the ball.”

John O’Rourke was Boro’s leading scorer in that promotion season of 1966-67 – so why did Stan off-load him the following year?

“John had done his job at Boro. There was no problem with him, but there is something in his game that you could not change. He was brave in situations where you would not expect him to be, but he was not brave in areas where you would expect him to be. He did a great job for me in the Third Division, but... John Hickton could score goals in any division, which was the difference between the two of them.

“In the Third Division season, I started playing Hickton at centre-half and fullback, so, as was the way back then, he wore the number five or number two shirt. But I decided to swap it

around one day and play him upfront, but we kept him with a number two shirt, so it fooled a lot of people, such a simple trick, give your centre-forward a defenders shirt and the opposition won’t know who to mark.

“It worked a treat until towards the end of the season, so I gave him a number eight I think, because by then everybody knew what we were doing.”

Stan ponders for a couple of seconds and then adds with a chuckle “Actually, on reflection, what I should have done was give him the number eight and play him as a full back, that really would have confused everybody!”

35 years on, it all sounds like a great era, and Stan agrees with one proviso. “You wouldn’t want to go through what I went through in the first year I was at the Boro, but I have some great memories from that time.”

When it comes to a squandered talent, Anderson is in no doubt who the main culprit would be from that era. “Without a doubt, Hughie McIlmoyle [pictured inset]. A waste of talent, an absolute waste. We paid a record fee for him of about £55,000 and when he could be bothered, he was a great player. If I saw him now I would tell him that. In the air you couldn’t wish for a better header, and he could have walked into the Scotland team, which considering the players that Scotland had then, would have been some achievement.” ■

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