

## 16) TWTD Issue 70, Jan 2004: "Striker returns after 15-year injury lay-off"

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Mad Professor Malcolm Baggiostein has been lurking around the Raydon graveyard digging up body parts and now, with a flash of lightning and a bone-chilling cackle of laughter, he is here to unveil his hideous Ramblings monster!

Raydon's crunch cup match against Torpedo Bungay saw the return of striker Banoffi Harrison to the Raydon starting eleven after a fifteen-year injury lay-off.

Harrison was sidelined after falling off a roller coaster in 1988 whilst on holiday with his girlfriend Belinda in California. As a feisty 19-year-old, he was one of Raydon's most prolific strikers in the late eighties, averaging a goal per every 1.75 shots.

His fall from the top of 'The Devil's Shit-Stirrer', the highest roller coaster in the world and the only one visible from space, put his career on hold. Caused by a faulty Velcro safety buckle, his 750 feet plunge disintegrated every single bone in his body, ruptured every internal organ and bruised every muscle. Harrison was in a coma for eight years and was still being taught to walk again as recently as the summer of 2002. Since returning to the UK, 4% of the NHS's total expenditure has gone towards financing Harrison's recovery.

The impact on Raydon Athletic at the time of the accident was disastrous. They were five points clear at the top of the table after fifteen games when Harrison was injured. Without Harrison's goals the points dried up and Raydon were relegated, failing to win another game that season. To be fair, the slump was partly caused by the fact that Raydon manager Roland Peters and seven key players travelled over to America and kept a vigil at Harrison's bedside for six months. A squad of just ten players was left behind to battle out the remainder of the season. "It was an emotional time," Roland Peters told me. "It was so sad sitting at Banoffi's bedside, seeing such a talented youngster in such a dilapidated state. It was emotionally draining. To be fair though, we did take it in turns, one-at-a-time, to sit with him while the others went out on the piss, partying. Looking back it was probably the best six months of my life. And I do think our presence helped his recovery, even though it was seven-and-a-half years after we returned home that he finally woke up."

Harrison's love of Raydon Athletic played a major part in his recovery. His girlfriend, Belinda stayed faithful to him throughout the eight long years in a coma. She used to receive the Green-Un by post and read out the local football news to him.

One day in the summer of 1996 she read out a feature article about the world-class performances of Raydon's new star striker, Dougie McManahammond. Harrison was obviously shocked at the news that another striker had taken his place as the young darling of the Clockton Park faithful. His eyelids began to flicker and the first words he uttered were, "So who's this tosser McManahammond then?"

Within minutes he was sitting up straight in bed, ignoring the tearful Belinda, swearing and shouting about McManahammond stealing his position in the Raydon team.

A few days later Harrison began an affair with a nurse and he and Belinda split up soon afterwards.

Since awaking from his coma, Harrison has had just one target in his sights – to step out onto the hallowed turf of Clockton Park once more. Harrison has undergone massive surgery and physiotherapy in order to build himself up to peak fitness. Before the game against Bungay he spoke to me whilst having his stainless steel kneecaps buffed by an NHS Care Assistant. "It's obviously been a difficult time for me," he said. "It's been really hard sitting on the bench, missing so many games - 732 to be exact. I've been chomping at the bit ever since the accident. In fact I can actually specifically remember chomping at the bit when I was in a coma."

Harrison's comeback is widely accepted by experts to be, "the most remarkable achievement since the construction of the pyramids in ancient Egypt." With over two miles of steel pins and wiring holding his body together, Harrison's body is now made up of 90% man-made materials.

Harrison has now been training with the Raydon squad for the last three months. There was initial animosity between Dougie McManahammond and Harrison but this was soon smoothed over when McManahammond kindly offered to credit him with every other goal he scored to help him make up for lost time and they have been best of friends ever since.

Harrison was drafted in to the starting line up for the Torpedo Bungay match due to the absence of strikers George Mnunga and Dave Mackinackie. Mnunga missed several matches as he had numerous Christmas shopping stints to get through in view of his extended family back in Nigeria. He has sixteen brothers / brothers in law, twelve sisters / sisters in law and a hundred and forty five nieces and nephews. Every one of them expects a Christmas present and each year Mnunga literally has to re-mortgage his house to cover the cost of the presents.

Dave Mackinackie was also ruled out for the Torpedo Bungay match after a violent argument with his fiery wife Marjorie about whether to spend Christmas day at his or her parents. Mackinackie sustained a severed ear when Marjorie threw an ornamental machete at him during the peak of the argument.\* Mnunga and Mackinackie had also been ruled out of the previous match against Tattlingstone Reservoirists but Harrison was unable to play as the local FA had somewhat unsportingly decided to hold over a one-match suspension from fifteen-years earlier.

Harrison partnered McManahammond up front against Bungay and turned in a fantastic first half performance. He scored two goals himself and set McManahammond up with the third. After the break, the Raydon onslaught continued. Harrison continued to pull the Bungay defence all over the place with his silky skills and mazy runs. All the metal joints and wiring in his body actually helped him to move in ways that normal players are unable to, with his legs able to rotate 360 degrees in their sockets. Funtingdale latched onto his 75th minute cross to drill home a fourth and Harrison himself headed home the fifth and most impressive goal just before the final whistle to complete his hatrick. Harrison had his back to goal as Quan crossed from the left. Due to his enhanced dexterity though, he was able to turn his neck to face the goal, in much the same way as an owl, and power a header past the stranded keeper.

Unfortunately, the 5-0 result was declared null and void by the league governors after they discovered that Harrison's player registration expired at the end of the 1989-1990 season and Raydon had failed to renew it. Instead, Bungay were awarded a 3-0 victory by a hastily convened pools panel.

Harrison moved to Argentina the day after the game, after a nasty bust-up with Roland Peters over the repotting of some shrubs.

\* Dave and Marjorie spent Christmas at Marjorie's wifes parents.