

13) TWTD Issue 67, Apr 2003: "Cup semi-final settled after penalty shoot-out"

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Malcom Baggio had a potent Raydon vindaloo last night. Here he is, the following morning, despatching the all the ring-stinging Ramblings from Clockton Park via his anus.

After a dismal first couple of months of the season, Raydon have surged to the top of the table, stringing together 15 consecutive victories.

Striker Dougie McManahammond was the villain early in the season, coming under fire from the management, coaches and supporters for his disappointing performances and inability to score. How quickly things can change in football. In the last league game he celebrated his ninth hat-trick of the season with an emphatic treble in the 4-0 win against fellow title contenders, Rushmere Rovers . He was also the subject of a 10-minute feature on BBC's "Football Focus".

McManahammond has now scored 31 goals since his painfully slow start to the campaign. When I recently asked him about the drastic improvement in his performances, he told me, "Things were tough at the start of the season. I just went off the rails over the summer and put on four stone and totally lost my fitness. I owe it to Lionel Stubbs for getting me back into shape. He made me eat a dodgy bit of halibut and from the resultant diarrhoea and sickness I actually lost five stone so I was in better shape than I was before the summer. Mind you, I was on a drip for five days and doctors said I was lucky to pull through."

The biggest match of the season took place on 15th March in the Grimwades-of-Ipswich Cup semi-final against Flowton Hotspur on a neutral ground in Lowestoft. Raydon were forced into a late team change after goalkeeper Ian Buffalo was struck down with stigmata during the pre-match warm up. This peculiar condition, where blood seeps out of the wrists and ankles in an apparent replication of the suffering of Jesus at the crucifixion, was especially strange in Buffalo's case as he has an artificial left arm and the blood was seeping out of his plastic wrist.

Buffalo's absence gave ex-goalkeeper Jason Gooseflesh an opportunity to prove his fitness. Gooseflesh retired as goalkeeper at the end of last season due to weight problems. Since then he has ballooned to a massive 35 stone. However, with reserve goalkeeper Saul Quan unable to get out of attending his late grandfather's funeral despite desperate pleas to his family and a strongly worded petition from the other Raydon players, manager Roland Peters had no alternative but to restore Gooseflesh between the sticks.

Peters was regretting this decision after just nine seconds of the kick-off. With both sets of players and the officials in position for the whistle, Gooseflesh was slowly waddling across the pitch towards his goal. The referee eventually lost patience with the lumbering Gooseflesh and blew his whistle with Gooseflesh still 50 yards from goal. A Flowton player tapped the ball to a team-mate who lofted it into the empty net from just inside his own half. A frowning Roland Peters then made football history with the quickest tactical substitution in living memory, deciding to take off the gargantuan Gooseflesh and put defender Colin Muggles between the posts after only 9.05 seconds.

The referee then showed again that he wasn't in the mood for unnecessary delays. As the sorry-looking Gooseflesh puffed and panted his way slowly off the field, the ref booked him twice for time-wasting and he was red-carded. Peters had no choice but to take off Jean-Pierre Duval in order to bring Muggles on.

With the team down to ten men, 1-0 down and with a makeshift keeper in goal after only ten seconds, Raydon were certainly looking down the barrel of an uphill struggle. However some desperate defending from Mal Chipaway, Jack Crankleshank and Andy Slipper ensured that Raydon made it to half-time without conceding any further goals.

Raydon began to fight back early in the second half with George Mnunga hitting the same post four times from six yards in the space of ten seconds. Shortly afterwards, Dougie McMannahammond reminded everyone why he has been tipped as a possible nominee for European non-league footballer of the year when he darted past three Flowton players, ran into the area and was tripped by a defender.

The referee pointed to the spot and McMannahammond himself stepped up to take the penalty. He decided to opt for a very unusual technique to surprise the Flowton keeper, running towards the ball and throwing himself forwards, scoring the penalty with an unorthodox diving header. The Raydon players were sent into a frenzy in which Mansley Kilkorkey sustained a compound broken rib. He was replaced by Ronnie Twigg.

The remainder of normal time was a scrappy midfield battle with little goal threat from either team. Extra-time passed with little incident and the final whistle was blown indicating that the match would be decided on a penalty shoot out.

Jack Crankleshank took the first penalty and duly blasted it over way over the bar, shattering the bathroom window of a nearby house. There was a 15-minute delay as the owner of the house stormed on to the pitch carrying the ball and remonstrated with the referee. The referee booked the man, costing him a £5 fine. The dejected householder returned to

his house and Flowton's number nine took their first penalty. He too blazed his effort over the bar. The ball flew towards the same house and shattered one of the bedroom windows. The homeowner duly stormed back over to the pitch, screaming abuse at the referee. The man was shown a second yellow card by the referee followed by a red card and was ushered from the scene by his frantic wife.

The players of both sides found the whole situation highly amusing and were now aiming for the windows of the man's house, rather than the goal. The Flowton keeper leant casually against a goal post and watched George Mnunga's penalty sail wide and shatter the house's kitchen window. Before the man had a chance to return to the pitch, Flowton's number 10 had quickly grabbed another ball, planted it on the penalty spot and toe punted it over the bar and towards the house, shattering the landing window. With no windows left to aim for, Mansley Kilkorkey blasted Raydon's third penalty over the fence and into the man's garden where it shattered several panes of his greenhouse. The owner of the house was by now crouching beside the pitch, sobbing as he watched Flowton's number two blast another penalty at the greenhouse where several more panes of glass were shattered.

With the score at 0-0 after three penalties apiece, both teams opted to continue the tomfoolery, with their fourth penalties finishing off the man's greenhouse. Dougie McManahammond ruined the fun with Raydon's fifth penalty, which he powerfully back heeled into the top corner of the goal. He was pushed and jostled by members of both teams as he strolled back from the penalty spot, and was actually booked by the referee for ungentlemanly conduct.

With Flowton needing to score to stay in the contest, their number seven sent a delicate chip over the fence and into the garden where it shattered the window of the man's shed. The Flowton players congratulated the penalty taker whilst the Raydon party left the venue feeling embarrassed.

Injury News: Ian Buffalo still continues to suffer from the stigmata. He has been visited by a senior priest from the Vatican and is to feature in Songs of Praise and Panorama later in the year.