

35) TWTD Issue 95 Diffydale celebrates double-decade at Clockton Park

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Due to the credit crunch TWTD bigwigs have ruled that the stupid introductions to Raydon Ramblings must be slashed to save on ink costs. However, we successfully negotiated that the introductions could be retained and instead printed in slightly smaller non-bold font. So, here goes:

Novice heart surgeon Malcolm Baggio has made a gaping incision in the Raydon chest cavity and is rummaging around trying to find the Ramblings heart. Bingo! There it is! All he's got to do now is connect a couple of tubes together and the Raydon Ramblings will be flowing once more…….

November 18th was a momentous day for Raydon defender Derek Diffydale as it was the 20th anniversary of his Raydon debut. To mark the occasion, the club awarded Diffydale a testimonial season involving a showpiece friendly and various other events and initiatives. The club also produced a special commemorative luminous pink t-shirt with the words 'Derek Diffydale's Double Decade' on it.

As a sprightly 18 year old back in 1978, Diffydale was a pacy left winger and he holds a Guinness World record for having the most eventful football debut within a 3 mile radius of Raydon*. Diffydale scored two, set up two, scored an own goal, conceded 12 free kicks, was caught offside nine times, was sent off for serious foul play and was then arrested for urinating over the referee's car.

These days Diffydale is a tough tackling centre back, his ageing joints restricting his once trademark pace. His knees can often be heard to audibly creak during games and if required to take a throw in, he usually needs someone to spray Deep Heat on his shoulders to enable him to move his arms back far enough. However, he is still a valuable member of the team and manager Roland Peters paid tribute to the wily old warhorse saying, "Derek is a wily old warhorse. He is always one of the first names on my teamsheet - although that's because I write the full squad including subs out in alphabetical order so he would be one of the first names even if he was a sub but that doesn't matter. Derek has been a great servant to this club and the local community.** He's 38 years old but he's still as fit as ever, except for his pace and the fact that he barely lasts for more than 60 minutes. I can see him going on to play until he's 48 at the rate he's going, providing he significantly improves his diet and starts to take his fitness seriously. I can't think of anyone more deserving of a testimonial in all the time I've been in football - except perhaps Pete Clockton, Jack Crankleshank, Mal Chipaway, Andy Slipper... I could go on."

Among the various events to take place as part of Diffydale's testimonial season was an X-Factor style event which was the brainchild of Derek himself who is a huge fan of the nauseating reality TV show. Unfortunately it had to be cancelled after less than six minutes after judge Roland Peters gave such a scathing assessment of Jack and Elaine Funtingdale's performance of 'I Will Always Love You' that a violent scuffle broke out between the trio which had to be broken up by no less than 20 people. Peters ranted at the pair, 'That's the most offensive thing I've ever witnessed. In some backward countries, singing like that would be a criminal offence for which the punishment would be having your vocal chords ripped out. I only wish this country was one of them. I can honestly say I'd rather have my eyes gouged out than listen to a second of you two singing.' In the ensuing scuffle, both Peters and Jack Funtingdale sustained various minor injuries about their person and it was decided to put a halt to proceedings rather than continue and risk further melees and fracas. George Mnunga was particularly disappointed as he was warming up to perform his rendition of the 14 minute long Dire Straits classic 'Telegraph Road' which would have included him humming the guitar solos.

Staying with the reality-TV-show theme, the club held another "I'm a Raydon Athletic Player, Get Me The Flying Fuck Out of Here!" again based in the small copse on the estate of millionaire Chairman Lionel Stubbs (although in a slightly different area as the site of last year's event is still considered by the police to be a crime scene). Diffydale's testimonial fund was the designated beneficiary of the exercise with Lionel Stubbs generously offering to donate 50p for every person who mentioned the event to him in passing.

Stubbs also boasted that he had negotiated a TV deal with Raydon TV – although this turned out to consist of his 9-year-old son recording the goings-on on a crappy Betamax camcorder and the terrible quality footage then being screened later in the Raydon club bar with people charged £1 entry.

Five personnel took part in the event - Satan Greaves, Dwyn Wynwynch, Saul Quan, manager Roland Peter and Sid

Chopper. Chopper was the only participant from last year's event to take part again and his involvement was surprising given that he broke his neck on the first day of last year's event during a "copse tucker trial". Chopper declared that he felt he had "unfinished business to attend to" after last year's early exit and was well and truly fired up and determined to give a good account of himself.

The five men entered the copse early on the morning of the first day of the exercise and were led to their camp. This was merely an opening of bare earth near the middle of the copse. The first copse tucker trial took place just 20 minutes after their arrival with Sid Chopper volunteering to take part in "Needle in a Haystack."

This involved Chopper being given one minute to search for a one-inch long needle in a massive 3-tonne stack of hay in return for food for all four camp members. To add extra spice to the challenge, the haystack was riddled with various other items such as dirty-used hypodermic needles, mousetraps, rusty razor blades and a family of black widow spiders - all painted in hay camouflage paint. Unfortunately a dirty needle became embedded into Chopper's main artery just three seconds into the challenge. He had to be rushed to hospital and the other four contestants went without a proper meal on the first day and faced the unpleasant prospect of sleeping in the open with absolutely no equipment whatsoever - just the clothes they were wearing.

They spent the rest of the day attempting to construct a makeshift shelter and beds from sticks and leaves but with no tools or anything to hold the materials together with it was impossible and they ended up sleeping on the bare earth with no covers. Their task was made even more difficult by an extra rule imposed by Lionel Stubbs which stipulated that they "are not allowed to use their initiative." They discussed whether to huddle together for warmth but decided that people might think it looked "a bit gay" and they'd rather stay cold than risk that.

They awoke on the second morning so cold that the saliva in their mouth had frozen and they couldn't open their mouths. This wasn't a massive problem as there was no food or drink available anyway. Dwyn Wynwynch was nominated to take part in the next copse tucker trial with huge pressure on him to succeed. The trial was called "Wheelie Wheelie Stupid" and required Wynwynch to unicycle across a thin rope suspended 50 feet up between a series of trees. On each tree was attached a star and for every star that Wynwynch collected he would win a meal for camp with a maximum of 4 meals available. There was a one-minute time limit on the task.

As luck would have it, Wynwynch spent 15 years working as a circus performer and is a competent tight-rope unicyclist. However, in an added twist, the stars were screwed tightly into the trees with massive 12 inch long bolts and Wynwynch had not even managed to move the first bolt a millimetre when the time ran out. In a further added twist, at the end of the allotted time the ropes became detached from the trees and Wynwynch plummeted to the ground. Luckily his fall was broken by an old crate which had been left lying around so Dwyn only cracked his pelvis and was able to hobble back to camp in just mild agony.

Later that day the group was excited by the prospect of winning a "treat" which they hoped would fend off the growing hunger. They were presented with the following cryptic limerick:

"There once was a really nice treat
 Wrapped up in a massive great sheet
 It was buried somewhere, but no-one knew where
 That really nice treat in a sheet"

Believing that all they had to do was find the treat wrapped up in a sheet buried somewhere in the copse, the camp-members searched thoroughly for over four hours but to no avail. The shattered and depressed quartet were gutted when it was pointed out to them that their limerick did not specify that the treat was located within the copse and in fact it was actually buried in the centre of a cornfield just outside Cirencester. Taking pity on the contestants' plight, the organisers decided to award them the treat anyway despite their failure and they were each presented with a single tic-tac.

On the third and final day, the contestants were all required to take part in a special copse-tucker trial, the winner of which would be crowned "King of the Copse." The trial was a predictable food-based challenge. Each contestant had to undergo five eating based challenges with the player who performed best becoming the overall winner of the competition. The below table shows the percentage of each food successfully consumed by each contestant:

Food

Satan Greaves

Saul Quan

Dwyn Wynwynch

Roland Peters

A wheelbarrow full of Ferrero Roche

3%

1%

5%

100%

A kilo of ground chilli (to be snorted)

2%

8%

0%

100%

A lump of lead

0%

1%

0%

100%

A live hedgehog

0%

0%

0%

100%

A yard of liquidised animal faeces.

0%

0%

0%

100%

Overall Total:

1%

2%

1%

100%

Peters was duly crowned 'King of the Copse' following his phenomenal performance and was given a £1.50 Waterstones voucher for his efforts. Despite being delighted at the achievement, he was furious when he realised that he had already mathematically won after the first three rounds and had therefore eaten the live hedgehog and the yard of liquidized animal faeces un-necessarily. Nevertheless he was proud at his achievement and all the participants agreed that they'd had a thoroughly great time - even Sid Chopper who, at the time of writing, remained in a critical but jovial condition in Ipswich Hospital with suspected Hepatitis Q.

Diffydale's testimonial match took place on the actual anniversary of his debut, 18th November. The opposition were none other than Chelsea, albeit their F team. A bumper crowd of 57 turned up with the hope that someone famous from Chelsea would be playing or at least on the bench. However, the most famous member of the Chelsea contingent was left back Dirk Buerke who was the only player to have made a professional first team appearance of any description having come on as a sub for 30 seconds while on loan at Accrington Stanley in a Leyland DAF Trophy first round match

in 1985. He failed to touch the ball once. Buerke has incredibly remained on the books at Chelsea since 1983 due to a clerical error when he signed what was meant to be a 2-year contract. A junior office clerk somehow mis-heard instructions given to him by his boss and accidentally wrote "30 years" instead of "2 years" in the box marked "contract length". As a result, Buerke - who never fulfilled the promise he displayed early in his career - will remain on the playing staff at Chelsea until he is 47 years old.

Peters pulled a selection surprise out of his fanny pack, naming Diffydale among the subs, much to the disgust of the testimonial. Peters explained, "This match isn't about Diffydale. It's about how we compete against class opposition. Nobody is bigger than this club, no exceptions, except me - and Diffydale is no exception."

The game started at a frantic pace with Raydon clearly keen to put on a good performance against their illustrious opponents. There were chances galore at both ends with Dave Mackinackie going close with nine headers. However it was Chelsea who took the lead when hapless Raydon keeper Ian Buffalo mis-judged a thunderous close range tap in, making no effort to save the point-blank piledriver. He later admitted that he had totally mis-judged it.

The game was generally played in a good spirits until Diffydale's introduction in the 55th minute. Diffydale was still livid at being excluded from the starting eleven and was more fired up than a sex-starved rhino on speed. His first contribution was a hideous two-footed brow-high challenge which in any other game would have merited a red card and possible legal action. However, all parties - including the recipient of the challenge who was able to continue after minor on-pitch keyhole surgery - agreed that it was a special occasion for Diffydale and no action was taken against him. The Chelsea players avoided going too close to Diffydale thereafter for fear of serious injury and this lack of attention contributed to the seasoned campaigner popping up with an equaliser in the dying minutes. Saul Quan floated over a corner which Diffydale headed home from close range with no Chelsea player within 10 metres of him, including the goalkeeper.

Diffydale seemed happy with the result and all the fundraising activities raised a total of £34.97 which he put towards a new cordless drill.

In the league, Raydon continue to do well.

* If the radius was stretched to 4 miles, that would include Capel St Mary and the Capel Plough legend Cyril Seymour who was struck by lightning on his debut and also bitten by an escaped cobra.

** He once raised £12 for a local dog refuge by doing a sponsored 3 hour famine. It was intended to be a 24 hour famine but Derek's dad arrived home from work with fish and chips three hours into the challenge and temptation got the better of him.