



...having failed to record  
...um 2-0 in their last fix-  
...Leicester 9-0 in mid-  
...Charlton down.

...re I have ever  
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...t season a 3-0 win  
...y at home in mid-  
...nt that we could all  
...ne final match and  
...care about a 4-0  
...Forest as Charlton  
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...ason. It had been a  
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...Old Trafford.  
...on Park season  
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...s centre watching  
...om Bristol Rover's  
...ark. Charlton lost

1-0 and were left ruing their failure to beat Tranmere earlier that week as a play-off spot went begging.

Since the return to The Valley, there have mainly been indifferent encounters to close the season. In 92/93 it was a 2-1 win over Derby and in 93/94 I couldn't have cared less about a 1-0 defeat at Birmingham as Palace were beaten 3-0 at

Highbury and got relegated.

In 94/95 there was a 2-1 defeat at Reading, Dean Chandler scoring on his debut in a game surprisingly televised live on ITV. Reading were after a play-off spot.

The next season we would know play-off misery over at Selhurst and in 96/97 an unremarkable 0-0 bore draw with Sheffield United.

Little did we know that Sunday what the last game of the next season would have in store for us all at Wembley. That was truly the most memorable last day of any season.

But if Premiership football is assured at the final whistle on Sunday, May 16th, then the Sheffield Wednesday match will have been equally as momentous.

## Picture of innocence

An insight into Charlton's youth policies in the golden years of the late 1930s is provided by a photo feature published by *Picture Post* in December 1938.

In the years before and after the war, this magazine enjoyed a mass circulation and was renowned for its high standards of photojournalism.

A carefully preserved copy of the article was found by a relative when he was sorting out his great aunt's papers after her death at her home in Kent.

The article is fronted by a large picture of Jimmy Seed, thumbs up the coat of his splendid suit, watching a young boy kick a football in the gutter.

"Will he be the man we want in 1953?" asks the caption. From the background it looks as if the picture was taken in Floyd Road.

The article takes us through the stages of a player's career in the 1930s. The first photograph shows a playground kickabout.

"Almost all famous footballers played first in the playground of a council school. Here, in ordinary shoes, on a concrete ground and 'goal posts' of chalk are developed speed, stamina and balance."

The next step is described as "first-class council school football", characterised by an "astonishingly high standard of play as well as sportsmanship".

It is here that he may be spotted by a scout. Now 16 "our boy has left school and perhaps obtained a job in the local gas works where, naturally enough, he plays for the works' junior team".

The manager takes a look at him and persuades his parents to let him sign amateur forms (he can't turn professional until he is 17).

The "building-up process" now begins. This is illustrated by the

young player sweeping the East Terrace!

However, in anticipation of modern sports physiology, his work with the broom is supplemented by special diets and exercises to build up his physique. A picture illustrates "the most modern treatment", showing two players in a bath described as "massage and special baths", a caption which reads a little oddly today.

By now, the young hope is playing for the third team and may find a regular place in the reserves. The club "has no wish to hurry his progress for, among other things, the risk of (a) swollen head is great".

By the time he signs on, he will be making £3 or £4 a week, and this will rise to £6 a week in the season before he is 21, although he will receive a few pounds less in the summer.

The clerks (middle managers) filling the new houses being built in Welling and Bexleyheath during this period would regard £5 a week as a good middle-class salary.

Soon, we are told, the great moment arrives. Due to an injury the young player sees his name on the teamsheet and experiences "the roar of the crowd" as he runs on to the field.

The crowd is illustrated by a photograph of a packed East Terrace and one lad standing on the back of another to see the game over a fence (this picture may not be from Charlton as it was possible to sneak into the ground in the 1930s and later).

From its hypothetical example, the article turns to a real Charlton player. At age 17 Eric Lancelotte is seen signing on, watched by Seed. We see the young forward out on the field, heading the ball. His debut came

at home to Grimsby on September 6th, 1937, at the age of 21, having joined the ground staff in 1933.

The article concludes: "The new star is born... international honours and the rest may follow."

Unfortunately for Lancelotte, like many players of his generation his career was interrupted by the war. Described by *The Valiant 500* "as a very useful squad player", he made 41 appearances for the Addicks (21 in the 1946/47 season), scoring seven goals.

He then had two good years at Brighton before playing non-League football, including a spell as assistant manager at Bexleyheath and Welling. At 48 he was still playing occasionally for a Woolwich team. He moved to Whitstable in 1988 and was interviewed on Sky at the beginning of the current season.

The article makes the point that grooming a player may cost a club between £1,000 and £4,000 (over £300,000 in today's money): "Professional footballers draw crowds totalling millions. They are more written about than theatre stars, more criticised than cabinet ministers."

In the 1930s, of course, they earned far less than either stars or politicians, now they usually earn more. What is interesting about the article is that *Picture Post* chose to base it on Charlton.

This reflects the prominence of the club in the 1930s and an awareness of the need for good media relations.

Today, Charlton are once again prominent, noted for their good youth policies and get more than their share of media coverage. Much has changed, but some of the essentials of success remain the same.

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