



GARETH  
DACE

# IS GASCOIGNE GOING TO SPURS IN THE 90s HAVE A CRACK?

MAGIC, MAYHEM  
AND MEDIOCRITY



FOREWORD BY  
JULIE WELCH

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# CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Foreword by Julie Welch . . . . .                 | 7   |
| Introduction . . . . .                            | 9   |
| Preface: Spurs In The 80s . . . . .               | 14  |
| 1989/90 – Local And National Pride . . . . .      | 23  |
| 1990/91 – When The Year Ends In One . . . . .     | 40  |
| 1991/92 – Managing The Eleven . . . . .           | 65  |
| 1992/93 – Hope Springs Eternal. . . . .           | 84  |
| 1993/94 – Ossie’s Nightmare. . . . .              | 105 |
| 1994/95 – Walking In A Klinsmann Wonderland . . . | 126 |
| 1995/96 – Is It Going A Bit Pony?. . . . .        | 158 |
| 1996/97 – Frustration! . . . . .                  | 184 |
| 1997/98 – Gross Misjudgement . . . . .            | 210 |
| 1998/99 – Spurs Are On Their Way To Wimbledon . . | 235 |
| 1999/2000 – A Thursday In Chisinau. . . . .       | 265 |
| Postscript (October 2023) . . . . .               | 287 |
| Acknowledgements. . . . .                         | 290 |
| Bibliography . . . . .                            | 292 |
| Appendices . . . . .                              | 294 |

# 1989/90 – LOCAL AND NATIONAL PRIDE

THORSTVEDT

THOMAS SEDGLEY MABBUTT VANDEN HAUWE

P.ALLEN GASCOIGNE HOWELLS SAMWAYS

LINEKER STEWART

## **HOW I SAW IT:**

This was my first full season following Spurs, and football. I loved the pre-season period and was delighted to be shown the back page of the newspaper one morning to see a smiling Gary Lineker in full Spurs kit on the pitch at White Hart Lane having joined us from Barcelona. However, one of the tabloids horrified me a few weeks later when it led with the headline ‘WADDLE SOLD TO FROGS’ to announce Chris Waddle’s sale to Marseille. At that point Waddle was my favourite player ahead of even Gascoigne and I was initially in denial, telling other kids at the summer holiday football camp I attended that it was not true.

Having had my appetite whetted the previous season I could dream of nothing else but going to watch a game at White Hart Lane. My first visit to see Lineker came in a midweek cup game against Southend. Dad and I sat at the front of the upper tier of the South Stand but we really struggled to beat the fourth division team 1-0.

Dad was fourth official quite regularly at Barnet, then in the Vauxhall Conference, and I regularly went with him to watch the games. Barnet became my second team but my focus was always on the Spurs score. I’d have to rely on the PA’s half-time score updates, though it always felt as if Spurs

were losing at half-time and this always seemed to generate an amused cheer from the Underhill crowd.

For the first time in my Spurs-supporting life, we beat Arsenal that October. It was a midweek fixture but I was on a family holiday in Florida at the time. There was no way of finding out the score until we got home nearly a week later. As soon as we landed at Luton Airport we phoned my grandad who told me that Spurs had won 2-1. Perhaps I needed to be 3,000 miles away from north London for every derby?

Not for the last time in my life Spurs ruined my birthday. Falling in the first week of January, my birthday invariably coincided with the FA Cup third round. We were drawn at home to Southampton and I was taken by Dad and sat towards the back of the East Stand. I spent £5.50 of my birthday money on a pair of replica home socks though never completed the kit. We were 2-0 down by half-time and never looked like getting back into it until Howells scored a good goal with ten minutes remaining. Dad insisted on leaving early to avoid the traffic and when we heard a huge roar as we walked along White Hart Lane, we both assumed the ferocity of it must have been for an equaliser. I can only liken the abject misery of learning, through BBC Radio's full classified check, that in fact it was Southampton's fans we had heard, to the modern-day disappointment at having a goal chalked off by VAR.

Better days lay ahead. At the start of February, we were at White Hart Lane to witness a Lineker hat-trick in a 4-0 win over Norwich, though my memories are equally vivid of finding that people were in our seats, this time in the West Lower. It seemed that the ticket office had duplicated the seats and so I spent most of the first half anxious that we would be thrown out despite having legitimate tickets.

When not at White Hart Lane, or Barnet, I consumed games at home via Teletext or increasingly by listening to Capital Gold Sport. Dad had once shown me how to access BBC Radio 2 on our old dial-up AM radio. By chance and having tuned through several foreign radio stations I stumbled across the very excited tones that I would discover belonged

to Jonathan Pearce, now of *Match of the Day*, in his very early years as a commentator.

Finishing above Arsenal at the end of the season was a big deal. I heard the final game of the season pan out on Capital Gold, fully anticipating that they would score a late goal to win at Norwich and leapfrog us at the last. Spurs were ‘The Pride of north London’ and by default I was ‘Pride of Class 3’.

## SEASON COMMENTARY

Spurs ended the previous season with great momentum winning nine of the final 15 games, which culminated in a sixth-place finish having sat bottom before Christmas. While all on the pitch appeared rosy, there were clouds circling the club’s financial situation and the relationship between key members of the plc and Football Club boards.

During the 1989 off-season, optimism among the fans spiked when Spurs completed the signing of Gary Lineker from Barcelona. The England striker, who had won the World Cup Golden Boot in 1986, had played for Venables in Barcelona but following the appointment of Johan Cruyff as manager in 1987 had been played out of position as a wide forward. He became surplus to requirements at the Nou Camp and was keen to move back to England. Venables, utilising his contacts at his former club, brokered a deal while also persuading Lineker to rejoin him in north London.

Gary Lineker may not have been new to English football, but his return after three years in Barcelona gave Spurs fans the chance to witness first-hand one of the game’s most natural goalscorers of a generation. It was evidence that Spurs still sat at the top table of English football and could attract the world’s best talent.

Lineker officially joined Spurs on 1 July for a fee of £1.5m that also included the permanent transfer of Nayim, also from Barcelona, who had impressed during a loan period in the second half of the 88/89 season. Even by 1989 standards £1.5m for Lineker alone would have been a bargain – he guaranteed goals and was already familiar with Gascoigne and Waddle whom he played alongside for England.

However, the deal was not met with the same level of joy in the boardroom as it was among supporters and Venables. In Scholar's 1993 book *Behind Closed Doors*, he revealed that having discussed the potential deal in a board meeting, the plc chairman Paul Bobroff had sanctioned the deal confirming that the money was available as long as money could be generated from subsequent player sales. However, according to Scholar, as soon as Venables left the room to conclude the deal, Bobroff advised that the money was not available in the club's accounts and the only way to meet the initial down payment of £600,000 would be for Scholar to personally underwrite it. Scholar describes the incident as the first time he became aware of the looming financial situation, which he claims was the fault of the plc board and not him, being solely responsible for the running of the football club.

Most supporters would still have been oblivious to the turmoil brewing in the boardroom. The prospect of a front three of Gascoigne, Waddle and Lineker was mouthwatering. Venables could call on an embarrassment of riches in attack with Stewart and Walsh also available as senior strikers. Stewart had endured a difficult start to his Spurs career, having missed a penalty on his home debut, but would go on to score a respectable 14 goals in his first season at White Hart Lane.

However, unbeknown to supporters and even Lineker, who himself had joined the club expecting to be supplied by Gascoigne and Waddle, the dream would be dashed when a deal to sell Waddle to Marseille was completed for a British transfer fee of £4.25m.

Scholar had been contacted by a French intermediary acting on behalf of Marseille owner Bernard Tapie. The call from Paris came just ten minutes before Lineker was unveiled as a Spurs player at White Hart Lane. Scholar claims that he never wanted to sell but that Venables could see the business sense in selling a 28-year-old if the club received an offer in excess of their valuation of £2m. They agreed to entertain talks, and were stunned when the French club were not put off by what they felt was a ridiculous price of £5m that would also include Paul Walsh.

Walsh was subsequently dropped from the negotiation, but a deal was agreed for £4.25m, with Waddle keen to make the move to the south of France. The move was confirmed before the end of July.

Daniel Wynne, who first attended games at White Hart Lane as a four-year-old in the 70s, was as disappointed by the sale of Waddle as any other player to have left the club before or since:

Hodde and then Clive Allen leaving meant that the great 1987 team had been broken up – from an attacking perspective Waddle was all that was left and he'd really stepped up to the mark in what was otherwise a very average team for a couple of seasons. He had all the attributes of an iconic Spurs player – creativity, flair – he was a mercurial talent and we had him at the peak of his career. He clearly formed a great bond with Gazza on and off the pitch so when we found out that Lineker was coming too – they all played together for England – there was a feeling of real excitement; the three of them would be unstoppable. But alas this was Tottenham Hotspur and during this period nothing good ever seemed to last very long. In this case it was literally a week. To say I was gutted was an understatement.

These were of course the days before social media so conspiracy theories, especially during the off-season period, weren't spread anywhere near as quickly but there was always a feeling that the news of his sale was deliberately kept back until after we'd announced Lineker's arrival.

Believing that the large fee for Waddle had significantly alleviated the club's debt, Scholar immediately invested money back into the team. Steve Sedgley joined from Coventry for just over £1m. The 21-year-old had grown up in Enfield but began his professional career at Coventry where he made his debut as an 18-year-old in 1986. He established himself in the



Sky Blues' team during the season and was unfortunate only to be an unused sub in the 1987 FA Cup Final against Spurs.

Also moving to White Hart Lane was full-back Pat Van Den Hauwe from Everton. The Welsh international, who had enjoyed success and gained notoriety as a fiercely competitive defender in Everton's great teams of the mid-80s, had won two league titles and the European Cup Winners' Cup and brought with him experience and a toughness that Spurs had lacked. However, the deal to bring Van Den Hauwe to Spurs for under £1m only caused further tension in the boardroom with Bobroff and Scholar clearly reading the financial situation differently. Scholar had approved the deal without the knowledge of Bobroff, who was adamant that the money should have been allocated to offset the plc's overdraft.

The incomings, specifically that of Lineker, helped identify Spurs as a team on the up. On the eve of the season Spurs were listed at 8/1 to win the league championship – joint third favourites alongside Manchester United and behind only Arsenal and Liverpool. However, this optimism didn't encompass the wider fanbase as a crowd of just over 17,000 turned up for the opening game of the season at home to Luton Town on 19 August, though this was in part down to the closure of the lower tier of the East Stand as building work continued.

Lineker, wearing the number 10 shirt, started alongside Paul Stewart in attack and Sedgley came on as a second-half substitute. Goals by Stewart and a second-half winner by Paul Allen gave Spurs all three points on opening day for the first time in three years although the victory was not convincing. Spurs' flaws were exposed when Luton equalised within seconds of the second half starting.

Despite the opening-day win, Spurs and Lineker suffered an indifferent start. There were no wins, or goals for Lineker, for the next three games, which included a draw at newly promoted Manchester City and defeats at Everton and Aston Villa.

Next up was a home derby against Chelsea who themselves had just won promotion back to the top flight. Far from the behemoth that they would become in the 21st century, Chelsea

had endured a mixed bag of fortunes during the 80s, spending half the decade as a second-tier team. Having been relegated in 1988 they came back up at the first opportunity with a then-record tally of 99 points and were even considered by some commentators as an outside bet for the title. The rivalry between the two clubs' sets of supporters was fuelled by anti-Semitic racism aimed at Spurs over nearly two decades. On the field the rivalry was largely one-sided with Spurs the more successful of the two clubs. Spurs had got the better of Chelsea, losing just one of their past 12 meetings dating back to the mid-70s. Only once in the last ten years had Chelsea finished above Spurs in the league.

Buoyed by their return to the top flight and decent start to the season, the Chelsea team travelling to White Hart Lane in September 1989 included two former Spurs heroes – Micky Hazard and Graham Roberts, who had both been part of the 1984 UEFA Cup-winning team. It proved to be a brutal afternoon for Spurs. Hazard, in particular, impressed in midfield and was involved in Chelsea's second goal. Spurs had briefly looked competitive when Walsh set up Gascoigne to reduce the deficit to 2-1 but two late Chelsea goals sealed an emphatic victory – their largest over Spurs since the mid-60s. Chelsea would go on to become Spurs' bogey team for the next decade. The defeat also dropped Spurs into 19th position – talk of a title challenge had dissipated within a month of the season starting.

The defeat proved to be the nadir of the season. The following week Lineker scored his first competitive goal for the club in a 2-2 draw at Norwich although it was frustrating that Spurs had led 2-0 at half-time and not held on for the win. The goal kickstarted Lineker's Spurs career as the following week, back at White Hart Lane, he completed a hat-trick to give Spurs a 3-2 win over QPR – their first victory since the opening day.

Moving into October Spurs were given an almighty scare by fourth-tier Southend in the League Cup second round. Having narrowly won 1-0 at White Hart Lane the return fixture at Roots Hall saw Spurs go two goals behind in 40

minutes. Quick-fire goals by Paul Allen and Nayim either side of half-time brought Spurs level but by that time Paul Stewart had been sent off. With a man advantage Southend retook the lead midway through the second half. It took the game into extra time but Spurs held their nerve to sneak through on away goals.

The near miss at Southend was incongruous with the fine league form Spurs enjoyed throughout October. Comfortable wins at Charlton and at home to Sheffield Wednesday provided six points and three more goals for Lineker but more significantly they sandwiched a midweek victory over Arsenal at White Hart Lane. It stopped a run of six straight losses in the north London derby with goals from Samways and Walsh, both in the first half.

Full of confidence, Spurs then achieved their most remarkable victory of the season, recording a 3-0 win away at Old Trafford in the League Cup third round. This was a Manchester United team languishing towards the bottom of Division One with Alex Ferguson still under huge pressure but such a comprehensive result coming a week after the north London derby win was a huge statement of intent. Spurs played with confidence and swagger at Old Trafford even without Gascoigne available. A first-half goal by Lineker gave Spurs the lead. Samways coolly slotted in a second immediately after half-time and then Nayim capped an incredible night with a crisp volley late on to seal an emphatic win.

David Howells was part of the Spurs team that won so convincingly at Old Trafford and recalls:

This wasn't quite the great Manchester United team that would go on to dominate for much of the 90s but going to Old Trafford always felt like a real test of our credentials. We were confident in ourselves having beaten Arsenal the week before, so much so that even Gazza being out with injury didn't dampen our enthusiasm. 'Links' was on a hot streak going into the game and when he opened the scoring it seemed to flatten the home crowd and that just galvanised

us further. Vinny got a second just after half-time – it was a neat move down on our right – and then Nayim's late goal was the icing on the cake. I don't suppose many teams recorded emphatic victories like that at Old Trafford and it proved to us again that we could beat any team on our day.

Winning at Anfield four days later in the league would have been an even bigger statement but Spurs found John Barnes in irresistible form and Liverpool performed with machine-like efficiency to record a 1-0 victory with Thorstvedt, Spurs' best performer, keeping the score down.

Having started the season so out of sorts, the October results helped to consolidate Spurs' position in the top half of the table. But a run that saw two wins, two draws and two defeats from the next six matches exposed the inconsistencies that existed. A win at Crystal Palace in mid-November lifted Spurs briefly into the top six. This theme continued through the winter months. December saw another three-game winning streak in the league, with the second of those coming again at Old Trafford. Lineker scored a very rare goal from outside the penalty area in a 1-0 win. It meant that Spurs had won twice within seven weeks at a ground where they would go on to wait another 24 years until the next victory.

The final game of the 80s on 30 December was a highly entertaining home match against Nottingham Forest. Lineker scored the first and last goals of the game but Forest scored three times in between to register a 3-2 win. It was a fitting end to the decade for Spurs with the match symbolising in microcosm the club's aspiration to entertain but ultimately falling agonisingly short.

The turn of the decade didn't provide immediate joy at White Hart Lane. By the end of January Spurs had been knocked out of both cup competitions. Southampton came to White Hart Lane in the FA Cup third round and found Spurs on an off-day. Having fallen two goals behind, Spurs were always chasing the game. David Howells pulled one back with 11 minutes remaining but on the break the visitors added

a decisive third. It meant that Spurs had not got beyond the fourth round in three years since reaching the 1987 final.

After beating Manchester United, Spurs had to rely on a replay at White Hart Lane to get past Tranmere of Division Three in the next round but moving into the quarter-final stage there was genuine optimism that Spurs could go all the way in England's secondary domestic cup competition especially with Liverpool, Arsenal and Aston Villa already knocked out. Spurs were given the hardest draw possible – away to Nottingham Forest – who had not only beaten Spurs at the end of December but were also the trophy holders, having won the competition in 1989.

The tie took place in late January and, much like the recent league match, proved to be an entertaining game. Forest settled quicker and found themselves two goals ahead before Lineker pulled one back on the hour mark. Steve Sedgley then scored his first goal for the club with a powerful shot from the edge of the area to bring the game level at the end of 90 minutes, resulting in a replay at White Hart Lane.

The replay, drawing a large crowd of 32,357, was just as thrilling as the league game had been 25 days earlier. Sadly, it produced exactly the same outcome with Spurs scoring the opening goal and last of the five but conceding three in between. There was no doubt that the best two teams left in the competition had played each other and Spurs would have fancied their chances of getting past Coventry in a two-legged semi-final and then Division Two Oldham Athletic in the final.

Being knocked out of both cup competitions denied Terry Venables's team the opportunity to compete for silverware in 1990 but perhaps more significantly deprived the club of much-needed income. Scholar revealed that during that spring period the overdraft facility was increased to £6.5m.

Going into February Spurs were in tenth, 16 points behind leaders Liverpool. The following season (90/91) would be the first since 1985 that English teams would be allowed to compete in European competition but this would be a phased approach with only the league runners-up admitted into the

UEFA Cup. The FA Cup winners would be entered into the Cup Winners' Cup.

Spurs hammered Norwich 4-0 with Lineker scoring a hat-trick. The following week Spurs were able to avenge the early-season home defeat by Chelsea by winning 2-1 at Stamford Bridge through a very late Lineker goal. The back-to-back wins pushed Spurs up into fifth, ten points behind Aston Villa who were second.

Any chances of catching Villa were extinguished when they came to White Hart Lane at the end of February and won 2-0, which started a run of three defeats from the next four matches.

This run included a disappointing 1-0 reversal at home to Crystal Palace but it was a memorable occasion for the Polston family. Brothers John and Andy, who had both come through the youth set-up, played, becoming Spurs' first siblings to appear in the same game since 1912. It would prove to be Andy's only appearance in the first-team, though older brother John played 28 times before moving to Norwich the following season. In this fixture, another youngster, Mark Robson, made his last of nine Spurs appearances.

Defeat at QPR on 17 March meant Spurs had dropped back down to ninth and the season appeared to be meandering. Nobody leaving Loftus Road that day would have seen what was coming.

For the first time since 1967 Spurs embarked on a six-game league-winning streak starting with a statement victory at home to Liverpool under the floodlights at White Hart Lane and live on ITV. It proved to be a good night for Spurs and for Paul Stewart who came off the bench to score the only goal of the game with a powerful header eight minutes from time.

It had been a difficult season for Stewart who had become marginalised in attack despite playing alongside Lineker. His most recent goal had come in the home game with Everton back in December and he then endured nine games without a goal before developing an injury in January keeping him out the team for eight weeks. His goal against Liverpool kickstarted the team's late-spring resurgence. Stewart scored in his next

three games with the highlight a thumping volley at home to Coventry on Easter Saturday that won ITV's Goal of the Month competition. During that game Spurs had fallen two goals behind but recovered to win 3-2.

Apart from a brief injury that kept him out of the team throughout January, Gascoigne had been an ever-present in the team all season though he hadn't scored for Spurs since November. As he found full fitness and form he was able to push his case to be included for England in the forthcoming World Cup tournament in Italy.

Knowing now what happened in Italy that summer it is bizarre to imagine there was any doubt that Bobby Robson would pick Gascoigne in his 22-man squad. Gascoigne had not started in any of England's five matches that season, only featuring as a sub on two occasions, and was behind established midfielders such as captain Bryan Robson and Liverpool's Steve McMahon, while David Platt had enjoyed a breakout season for Aston Villa.

Gascoigne's upturn in form for Spurs in spring culminated in an all-action display which provided a goal and an assist in a home win against Manchester United at White Hart Lane, perhaps spurred on by knowing that Bobby Robson was there in attendance and that England captain Bryan Robson (no relation) was his direct competitor in Manchester United's midfield. Gascoigne ran the show with a goal and an assist for Lineker (who in turn was the provider for Gascoigne) to cap a 2-1 victory – the third Spurs enjoyed over Manchester United in the same season.

It was enough to convince Robson to give Gascoigne a start in the subsequent midweek international friendly against Czechoslovakia at Wembley – the final game before Robson would name his World Cup squad. It was only Gascoigne's second start for the senior team but he showed no signs of nerves, transferring his club form to his country. Gascoigne set up two and scored from a trademark mazy dribble and powerful finish. The camera panned to a delighted Robson on the bench who must at this point have identified the role Gascoigne could play that summer.

The fact that Gascoigne and Lineker were to become a recognised partnership for both club and country generated positive attention to the club. Lineker's goalscoring exploits for his country and angelic persona on the field (he had the distinction of never receiving a caution throughout his career) meant that he was always held in high regard by supporters of all teams. Gascoigne was a player that all schoolboys wanted to emulate in the playground. For Spurs to have both at the same time resulted in a huge number of impressionable observers choosing to support Spurs.

Tyrone Foster, known as 'T' on the popular Spurs podcast *The Fighting Cock*, was in his early teens and although already fully invested as a Spurs fan remembers the adulation towards Gascoigne and Lineker.

From a young age I recognised how Spurs were a team made up of individuals, often quite brilliant ones. Arsenal were functional; Liverpool were the best team and had great players but it was Spurs who still had that tag as the real entertainers in the First Division. I always felt around this time, especially going into the World Cup though, that the national team was the biggest talking point in the media so having Gascoigne and Lineker who transcended both made Spurs a really big draw and it brought a lot of pride to us.

Going into the final fortnight of the season Spurs were up into third place, the highest they had been since Venables took over. With only two games remaining there was now a very real opportunity to finish third, above Arsenal.

The two rivals had exchanged places as highest-placed north London club through the early to mid-80s, though, Spurs' two FA Cups and UEFA Cup victory gave them the upper hand and bragging rights. Starting with the 1987 League Cup semi-final victory, however, the balance in north London had tipped well and truly in Arsenal's favour. League Champions in 1989, Arsenal had won six north London derbies



on the spin until the game at White Hart Lane in October but then won the return game back at Highbury in January.

To finish above Arsenal, as reigning league Champions, in 1990 provided a meaningful, even if intangible, success and was evidence of the direction that Terry Venables was taking the team in. To secure this Spurs needed to win both remaining games or hope that Arsenal would drop points in any of their remaining three matches.

Off the back of six straight wins Spurs travelled to Wimbledon on a gorgeous late-April day. Wimbledon had already beaten Spurs at White Hart Lane and relished the opportunity to cause an upset. An early goal by John Fashanu proved insurmountable as Spurs were finally beaten. Meanwhile Arsenal beat Millwall at Highbury to move within a point and with a game in hand. That spare fixture followed in midweek when Southampton made their first of two visits to north London in four days. Trailing to an early second-half goal Arsenal scored twice late on to win 2-1 and go ahead of Spurs with just one game to play for each.

Spurs therefore required Arsenal to drop points at Norwich knowing that they also needed to beat Southampton at home. There was a buoyant mood at White Hart Lane and the home team calmed any nerves by scoring twice in the first half without reply, through Stewart and Allen. Though Southampton would score a very late consolation, all attention was on events at Carrow Road. Arsenal trailed 2-1 at half-time but equalised with 15 minutes remaining. But couldn't find their customary late winner. Within minutes a delirious White Hart Lane crowd could revel in the joy of finishing the season in third place as north London's top club for the first time since 1987.

Looking ahead, it was difficult to conclude whether Spurs were about to mount a credible challenge to Liverpool or whether they would be able to maintain their position ahead of Arsenal. On their day Spurs had proved they were a match for both of those sides and the run at the end of the season, albeit when under no real pressure, had provided a glimpse of better things to come. There was a largely established pattern

of play and a starting XI which naturally focused around the partnership of Gascoigne and Lineker – the latter finishing the season as the First Division’s top goalscorer. There was cautious optimism that this was a team going places and that the 90s could deliver even more than the 80s had.

Away from the first-team, Spurs’ youth team, managed by Keith Walden, provided optimism for the future by winning the much-revered FA Youth Cup for the first time since 1974. Spurs were, by some distance, the most successful youth team in the south of England and had won the South East Counties League for the fifth successive season. Keith Walden and Pat Holland coached the team but were well supported by a highly networked group of scouts who scoured London and the south-east for the best young players. In an interview with the Spurs blogsite [superhotspur.com](http://superhotspur.com) in March 2022 Keith Walden recounts that his youth team was so good that they would regularly play against and beat the first-team during training sessions – so regularly that Terry Venables had to request that the younger year group come and take their place.

By modern-day standards the facilities available to Walden and his coaching team were primitive; the first-team’s rented training ground in Mill Hill was basic and doubled up as the base for the reserve team and senior youth teams. The 1990 FA Youth Cup, a replica version of the FA Cup that involves straight knockout rounds for under-18 teams from the professional and semi-professional leagues with an insistence that games be played at the main stadium, pitted Spurs against their Middlesbrough counterparts in a two-legged final in May. Up at Ayresome Park Spurs recorded a 2-1 win with goals from winger Scott Houghton and forward Anthony Potts. In the return leg at White Hart Lane Ollie Morah scored Spurs’ goal in a 1-1 draw that resulted in a 3-2 aggregate victory that saw captain Ian Hendon lift the trophy.

It was a glimpse of what might lie ahead, though any seasoned observers of youth-team football will attest to the fact that even at 18 years old there was no guarantee of a future career at the highest level. Potts was the team’s leading scorer with 30 goals that season. He was one of the most highly

rated talents in the country but succumbed to a number of devastating injuries in the years that followed and which resulted in his release by the club in 1993 before a brief stint at non-league Dagenham and Redbridge. Potts retired at 25 and becomes a tragic reminder of the number of highly touted youth-team players who for one reason or another aren't able to fulfil their potential.

Of the 1990 FA Youth Cup team, goalkeeper Ian Walker enjoyed the most successful career in the Spurs team – he would make his debut the following season. Defender Stuart Nethercott went on to make 62 first-team appearances while Scott Houghton and David Tuttle had brief spells in the first-team. There was plenty more to be hopeful about within Spurs' youth set-up though, with a number of other highly promising players progressing through the ranks who would have greater impacts on the first-team.

There seemed so much to be positive about – a third-place finish, the team, headlined by Lineker and Gascoigne, appearing to be on an upward trajectory and the youth-team success providing cause for further optimism for the future of the team.

However, still unbeknown to supporters, the optimism on the pitch became even more incongruous with the mood in the boardroom with the debt continuing to rack up to jaw-dropping proportions and strain on relationships between members of the plc and football club board. As the summer progressed, Scholar took a lead on securing new investment into the club that was urgently needed just to ensure that the final payment to Barcelona for Gary Lineker could be met in August.

Theo Delaney, co-host of *The Spurs Show* podcast, had been following Spurs since the early 70s and so had seen many successes but also the false dawns. Having got his first White Hart Lane season ticket in 1988, Theo describes the doubts he had about whether Spurs were on the verge of glory despite the brilliance of Gascoigne.

It was really only Spurs fans, who watched him every week, who knew how good Gazza was before

he exploded onto the international scene at the World Cup. The combination of him and Lineker was incredible to watch and we could all see that we were potentially onto something circa 1990 but the frustration, as has so often been the case though, was that there were a lot of average players around them so we really needed some further investment into the rest of the squad. The club's perilous financial situation was still unknown so in hindsight of course this was not going to be the start of something sustainable.

With the domestic season finished, all attention turned to the summer's World Cup tournament taking place in Italy. Spurs fans had the opportunity to follow their team by proxy as Lineker scored four times and Gascoigne established himself as one of the best midfielders in the world.