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TALK OF THE CITY

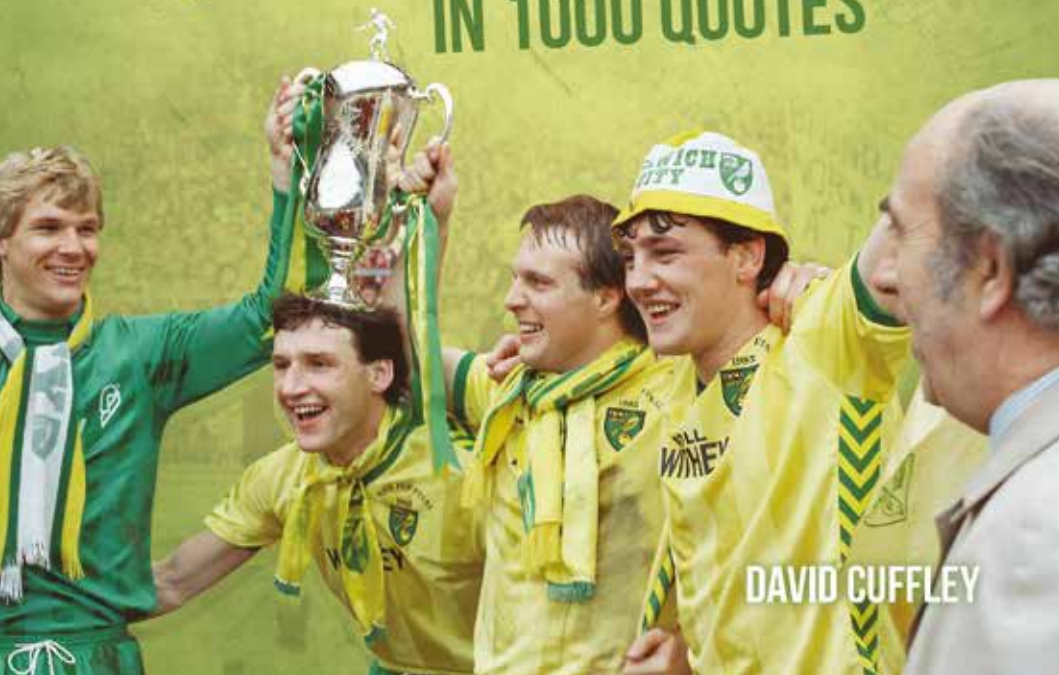


A HISTORY OF

NORWICH CITY

IN 1000 QUOTES

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DAVID CUFFLEY

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Introduction

I CLEARLY remember one of the first pieces of advice I was given when I started reporting on the fortunes of Norwich City nearly 30 years ago, ‘Not too many lunar orbits or poorly tropical birds, please.’

This was the 1980s and it was a reference to the trend in post-match interviews for victor and vanquished to describe themselves, respectively, as ‘over the moon’ or ‘sick as a parrot’.

There are various explanations for the origins of those phrases. The first has its most likely roots in a nursery rhyme that dates back 250 years. The second is also said to be centuries old, but is credited in more recent times to the former Liverpool defender Phil Thompson. Appropriate, you may think.

I was being warned, politely, to avoid phoning over the same old clichés when following up the traditional match report with the instant reaction of those involved. ‘Have you got the quotes?’ was the cry from a clutch of anxious reporters trying to do three things at once in the frantic first half-hour after the final whistle, as they compared notes and rushed to file their stories before the next deadline.

Among those hastily gathered words of wisdom from players, managers and even the occasional match official there was always the chance of eliciting the memorable one-liner or classic comment that would be remembered for years to come.

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Today's journalists and broadcasters could be forgiven the occasional grimace every time they hear that it is a 'steep learning curve', that every other match is 'huge' or 'massive', or that this is a 'must-win game'. As opposed to the games you simply must lose, perhaps? Or, worst of all, in the wake of a fearful drubbing, to be told yet again by the poor unfortunate nominated to meet the press that he and his team-mates have to 'take the positives'.

But we have reason to be grateful that despite the advent of media training, there are still footballers who are less guarded, more spontaneous and can give vent to their true feelings and innate sense of humour, and that there will always be those individuals – players, managers and fans – who stand out from the crowd on good days and bad because they are articulate, original, self-deprecating, even poetic or simply very funny.

Former City manager John Bond was a dream for the media because he had an opinion on everything and was never afraid to voice it. Always entertaining, many of his observations and predictions from seven years at Carrow Road are reproduced here, some of them prophetic and one or two that were rather wide of the mark, notably about seeing out his nine-year contract – he left two years after signing it – and the claim that with a few more players like Drazen Muzinic he could win the league title.

Bond's predecessor at Carrow Road, Ron Saunders, was a man of fewer words but when he spoke they were no less pertinent. There is little in this book more withering and to the point than his observation at Wembley, after steering Aston Villa to victory in the League Cup Final over Bond's Canaries, 'I am unable to smoke big cigars like some managers.'

I was fortunate enough to interview more than 20 Norwich City managers, former managers or caretaker bosses in nearly 30 years working on the sports desk of the *Eastern Daily Press* and *Norwich Evening News*, plus

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literally hundreds of players and past players, opponents, directors, supporters, broadcasters, referees and the odd celebrity fan.

Fresh from the glory of the Canaries' wonderful Championship play-off final win at Wembley, it is perhaps a paradox that the greatest triumphs do not necessarily produce the greatest interviews.

In much the same way that bad news very often sells more newspapers – or earns more hits on a website – than good news, so it is that some of the best-remembered quotes come from difficult or unhappy times for Norwich City, rather than days of great celebration or prosperity, and from unpopular managers or chairmen as opposed to crowd or media favourites.

The fans' disillusionment over the sale of star centre-forward Ron Davies to Southampton for a knock-down £60,000 in 1966 brought out terrace humour at its best after full-back Alan Black became new manager Lol Morgan's first signing for a more modest £9,000. With apologies to Los Bravos, up went the chant, 'Black is Black, we want Ron Davies back.'

Everyone remembers Robert Chase's assertion in 1994 that if striker Chris Sutton was sold before the start of the next season, the chairman would also be on his way out of Carrow Road – he was constantly reminded of it during the extra two years he stayed in office as the team that impressed so many in Europe was swiftly dismantled and the club dropped out of the Premier League and plunged into a financial crisis.

Nigel Worthington achieved notable success in saving City from relegation in 2001, taking them to the play-off final in 2002 and promotion to the Premier League as Football League champions two years later.

But arguably his best remembered quote came in 2006, just a few matches before he was dismissed, when he lambasted his team in a radio interview for throwing

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away a 3-1 lead at Southend by having ‘a flick, fart and a fanny’.

Glenn Roeder may have felt he was attempting a joke at the club’s 2008 annual meeting at Carrow Road when he told a critical shareholder, ‘Sorry, I must have missed your tenure as England manager.’ But the comment backfired badly and arguably hastened his exit, with dissatisfaction among fans and poor results contributing to his sacking two months later.

But what comes through these pages too, I hope, is very much the humour, the passion and the spirit of those on the inside – the players, managers, directors and officials – and those looking on, the supporters, reporters and broadcasters.

Within these pages you can find out, if you have forgotten, the identity of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Milk Tray man, Albert Tatlock and the Red Devil, who also happened to be the manager on ‘gardening leave’ with no garden. And you can discover which ex-Canary claimed he was turfed out to pay for the club’s undersoil heating.

I hope you enjoy the selection and here’s to more memorable Talk of the City as they return to the Premier League.

David Cuffley

Some Things are Better Left Unsaid

‘If I had three or four more like him I could start talking about winning the First Division.’ **(John Bond hails Drazen Muzinic’s debut against Southampton, September 1980)**

‘He had a pretty good scoring record against us when he was at Liverpool. It would be nice to think that he could be scoring for us.’ **(Ken Brown signs striker David Fairclough, February 1985)**

‘If Chris Sutton is not here at the start of next season, neither will I be.’ **(Chairman Robert Chase, who promptly sold Sutton for £5m but stayed in office for two more years, 1994)**

‘The really good players only start to play in February and March. That’s when cup competitions and league titles are decided.’ **(Manager John Deehan, 1994, before a run of one win in 20 Premier League games relegated City)**

‘Mark is happy to continue working hard for Norwich City and trying to win a first-team place. For my part, I’m happy to bring him back into the first-team squad.’ **(John**

Deehan, 24 hours before Mark Robins is sold to Leicester, January 1995)

‘I am hoping that sooner rather than later results on the pitch will entice those who are staying away from Carrow Road back to the ground.’ **(Martin O’Neill, eight days before resigning as manager, December 1995)**

‘Norwich are sensibly running a tight ship. Chase has taken hard decisions now rather than when the club might have become overstretched.’ **(David Miller, 1995)**

‘Now we’ve got a win under our belts we can concentrate on what is, effectively, a 20-game league.’ **(City boss Gary Megson gets his first win at Sunderland to move into the top six in the First Division, January 1996)**

‘The lads think we are more suited to playing with two wide men in midfield.’ **(Mark Bowen leaves himself stranded on 399 City appearances by questioning manager Gary Megson’s tactics, 1996)**

‘Now we can relax a bit and build for next season. Everyone’s been getting a bit anxious recently.’ **(Mike Walker on the 5-0 home win over Swindon, April 1998, five days before being sacked)**

‘The future for the club looks really exciting. I’m delighted to be part of it and to be able to help deliver the Norwich City vision.’ **(Bob Cooper becomes a City director, 1998)**

‘We’re delighted to welcome Bob Cooper on to the board. His footballing knowledge will be of enormous benefit.’ **(City chairman Barry Lockwood, 1998)**

‘At the back end of 1997/98 we tried out the stilt-walkers and clowns with a reasonable amount of

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success. We have decided to concentrate the clowns where the kids are so we're looking for entertainment for the adults.' **(City communications manager Steve Greenall discusses pre-match entertainment, 1999)**

'We've got Bryan Hamilton, who is regarded as one of the best coaches in the world.' **(City chairman Bob Cooper, 1999)**

'Our plans for the Academy are ambitious. We want it to become the technical centre of this country.' **(Bob Cooper, 1999)**

'He's tall, very quick and got a beautiful left foot.' **(City boss Bryan Hamilton on £225,000 Dutch signing Raymond de Waard, March 2000)**

'Bryan Hamilton was my first choice right from the very beginning. I just lost out on the vote.' **(Delia Smith, May 2000)**

'Nigel Worthington has been fantastic. I'm very pleased with the way he's settled in.' **(City boss Bryan Hamilton, August 2000, four months before Worthington replaced him as manager)**

'We've got high hopes because we've been playing well recently and scored six goals in our last two away games. We have sometimes conceded sloppy goals but I'm sure we will not do that on Sunday.' **(Mathias Svensson, 48 hours before a 6-0 defeat at Fulham relegates City, May 2005)**

'It is going to be an experience that will shape lives for years to come. Hopefully it will be an "I was there then" moment to tell the grandchildren about, not an open wound that will weep and fester for years to come.'

(Columnist Man in the Stands, the day before the 6-0 defeat at Fulham)

‘If we’re all pushing in the right direction I’m sure it will be a joyful ride and hopefully one of these days we’ll be saying fasten your seatbelts and let’s go, let’s get going back to the Premier League.’ **(Peter Grant becomes City manager, October 2006)**

‘Peter Grant is absolutely clear he wants to win the Championship and that is also our objective as a board.’ **(City director Andrew Turner, 2007)**

‘I’m very pleased to be given the opportunity to get back into Championship football. I’ll be working for a very good club and manager and look forward to helping get Norwich City Football Club back into territory that it’s more familiar with.’ **(City goalkeeping coach Stuart Murdoch arrives, then leaves four days later, January 2008)**

‘Pablo Counago recommended Norwich to me. He said it was a top club and a nice city to live in. He gave it his full recommendation.’ **(City signing Juan Velasco before the first of his three games for the Canaries, 2008)**

‘I’m glad the season is over and we’re not relegated. Leicester have gone down and they’ve spent millions. Leeds went down not so long ago so it proves it can happen to anyone.’ **(Defender Gary Doherty, a year before Norwich followed suit, May 2008)**

‘I think our supporters are going to like all of our signings. I know it’s taken a long time to bring them to the club, but anyone can sign five or six bad players in one day, then five or six bad players the next day. There are hundreds of bad players out there looking for clubs.’ **(Glenn Roeder, July 2008)**

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‘We can most definitely challenge for promotion. I wouldn’t have come here if I’d have thought otherwise. I spoke to the gaffer when I came here and he had the same sort of plans and I want to be part of that.’ **(New signing Sammy Clingan in positive mood, July 2008)**

‘I want people to look at me coming out of the training ground or coming out of Carrow Road and think “Fotheringham looks like a Premier League player”.’ **(Skipper Mark Fotheringham, July 2008)**

‘Sorry, I must have missed your tenure as England manager.’ **(Glenn Roeder to a critical shareholder at club’s annual meeting, November 2008)**

‘Let’s stop living in the past – let’s move on. I would make the same decision today. Football is all about opinions. And the bottom line is that the football opinion that counts at this football club at this moment in time is mine.’ **(Glenn Roeder defends his decision to release Darren Huckerby, annual meeting, November 2008)**

‘The lads here, the boys on loan as well, should feel privileged to play for this team because there have been some great players down the years played for Norwich. And a guy with Bryan Gunn’s experience, it’s not bad having a guy like that in charge here.’ **(Mark Fotheringham, February 2009, three weeks before Gunn dropped him for good)**

‘I still think we’ll be all right. It’s a good side out there and I think we’ve got the right credentials to get out of trouble. There are going to be nervy moments, we aren’t going to win 12 on the trot but I think we have enough and it’s important we all believe that.’ **(Striker Jamie Cureton forecasts Championship survival, February 2009)**

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‘I come from a winning mentality and that’s what we need here at Norwich to get ourselves back up. I suppose Aussie mentality is all about winning and that’s what football is about. I look forward to setting new goals and achieving them with this club.’ **(Goalkeeper Michael Theoklitos signs for City, July 2009)**

‘I believe Micky Theoklitos has got character and that’s the reason I brought him to the club. I’ve never seen him let seven goals in before.’ **(Manager Bryan Gunn, August 2009)**

‘I think that it is massive that to be a winning team you don’t get too hung up on results that don’t go your way. At Exeter we got hammered at home to Chesterfield 6-1.’ **(Midfielder Matthew Gill, speaking just before his debut, the 7-1 home defeat by Colchester)**

‘The Norwich board have acted appallingly towards our club recently and I’m sure I have never wanted to win a game of football so badly.’ **(Colchester chairman Robbie Cowling before his side’s 5-0 home defeat by Norwich, 2010)**

‘I’ve always felt I was good enough to play in the Premier League and I’m just delighted it’s all been sorted now. I’m just really looking forward to getting on the pitch and showing everyone what I can do next season.’ **(Jacob Butterfield signs for City, July 2012, but never makes a Premier League appearance)**

‘I cannot wait to play my first game for Norwich. I am really happy about having the chance to play in the Premier League, it is brilliant for me personally and for my career.’ **(Striker Luciano Becchio signs from Leeds, January 2013)**

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'Ricky's profile is a perfect fit for us – he's young, ambitious and a proven goalscorer.' **(Manager Chris Hughton confirms signing of £8.5m striker Ricky van Wolfswinkel, 2013)**

'I played a few games against English clubs in the Europa League and scored against English teams so I know what I have to do and I know what I can do in the Premier League. It is the only competition I really wanted to play in.' **(Ricky van Wolfswinkel signs from Sporting Lisbon, 2013)**