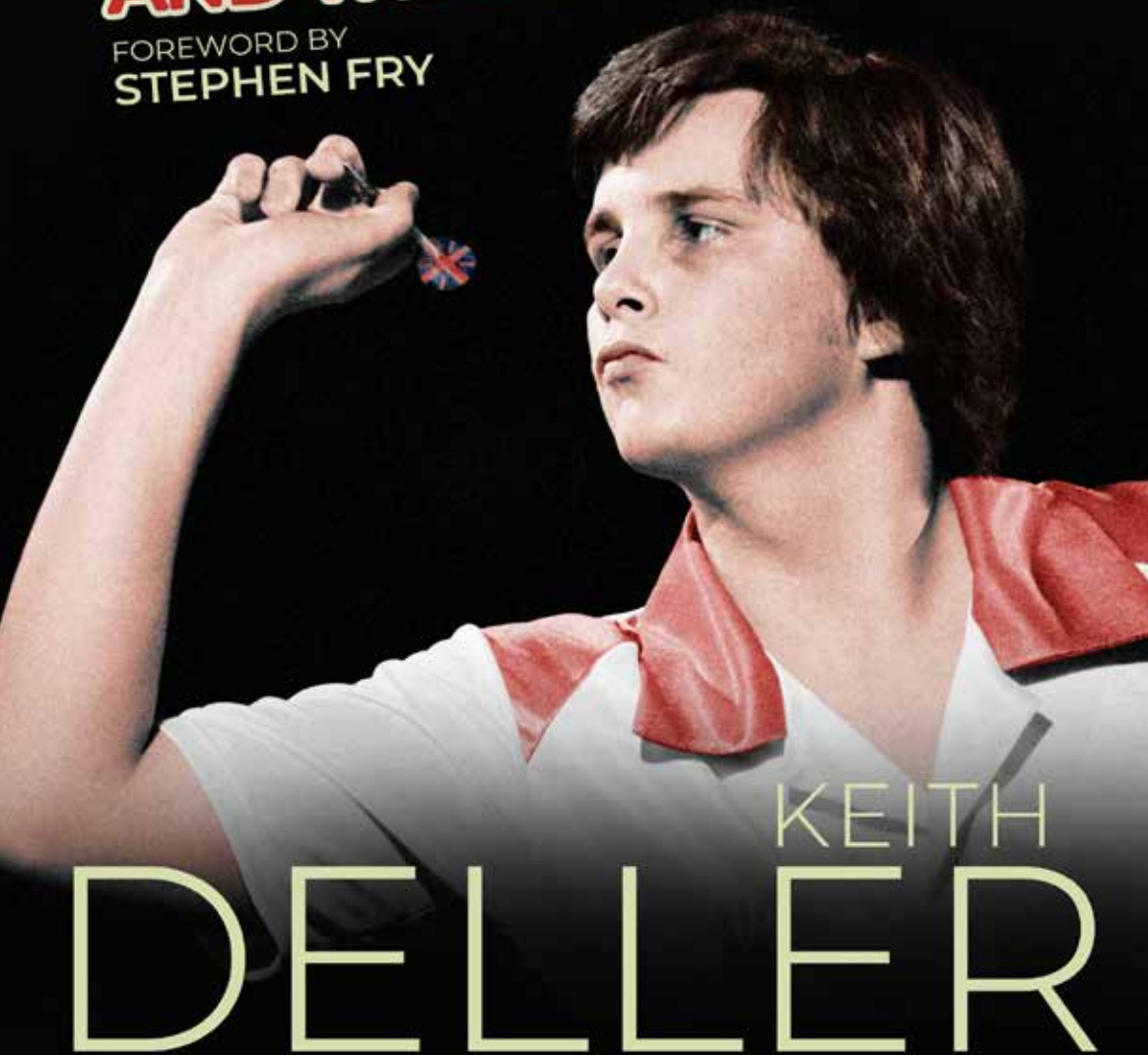


# 138

## GAME, SHOT AND THE MATCH

FOREWORD BY  
STEPHEN FRY



KEITH  
DELLER

WITH EDWARD COUZENS-LAKE

# 138

**GAME, SHOT  
AND THE MATCH**

KEITH  
DELLER

WITH EDWARD COUZENS-LAKE



# Contents

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Foreword                          | 11  |
| Introduction                      | 13  |
| Co-Author's Notes                 | 14  |
| Prologue                          | 17  |
| 1. The Family Way                 | 21  |
| 2. Lightning Never Strikes Twice  | 40  |
| 3. World Affairs                  | 72  |
| 4. 138 – Game, Shot and the Match | 96  |
| 5. In the Spotlight               | 118 |
| 6. Mr and Mrs Deller              | 141 |
| 7. Changes                        | 177 |
| 8. Making a Comeback              | 189 |
| 9. Characters                     | 221 |
| 10. The Spotter                   | 247 |
| 11. More Stories                  | 259 |
| 12. Darting Ahead                 | 269 |
| Acknowledgements                  | 285 |

## The Family Way

*I can't imagine any of the current England players  
mucking in with the kids on his local park!*

IT WAS anything but a quiet family Christmas for the Dellers in 1959. And that's entirely my fault because, just as most people would, finally, have been starting to unwind come Christmas Eve and looked forward to the festivities ahead, I was keeping Mum fully occupied by making my big entrance into the world, minus, on that occasion, any sort of walk-on music, as their very own Christmas baby.

There were four of us in total. My dad, Derek Deller, was one of those blokes who pretty much kept himself to himself, a quiet man who thought nothing of walking three miles to and from work every day. He was an engineer who, for most of his life, worked for two big companies in Ipswich, one of which was called Ransomes, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery as well as a producer of general engineering products. Ransomes

has always been an important part of Ipswich and is, I'm happy to say, still around to this day. He also worked for a different big local company called Cranes, another engineering company. He worked at nights while he was there so I didn't used to see him very much at all then as I'd be at school while he was getting some much-needed sleep at home then as, by 7pm, he'd be off to work. So we ended up like two ships passing in the night really for a while, my dad and I!

We soon got used to his unusual routine though because that meant he was in work and able to provide for the family, something which was always very important to the Deller family. Dad was a believer in working hard and looking after your family; simple but hugely important values. He'd do whatever it took in order to provide and to keep himself active. His last job was with Suffolk County Council and it was, you might say, a fairly humble one as he was a street cleaner. But he put as much energy and commitment into that job as he did everything else he did and, believe me, his 'beat' was always clean. He enjoyed it as well, saying on more than one occasion that it kept him fit and that he loved walking anyway, so it was the perfect job for him. He led by example and we lived a quiet and simple life, determined, at all times, never to let the family name down. Dad might have been a fairly unassuming chap but he was hugely proud of his family which was, by far, the most important part of his life.

Dad and I had a very good relationship. It was one that was very much based on respect. He was the breadwinner for the

family which meant that he'd earned and deserved that from all of us. He used to remind me, all the time, to treat people with respect as well, and to always, for example, remember to say 'please' and 'thank you'. If I forgot to do so then, quite simply, I'd do without and, for all the fuss I might have made if this was the case, Dad and Mum would respond by looking me in the eye and saying, 'Keith, it costs nothing to say please or thank you.' They were right, of course, and I've never forgotten that.

We'd get a holiday every year. The destination never changed; it was always the holiday centre at Caister, which is near Great Yarmouth. Not that I minded, I loved it there and would throw myself into all the activities on offer. The excitement began, for me, with the drive there. Dad had an Austin Cambridge which he absolutely loved. It took about an hour to get to Caister in it from our house and I'd get more and more excited as we got ever closer. We'd go for a week and have the time of our lives although, funnily enough, I always used to dread the last night of that week as it meant saying goodbye to a whole load of new friends I'd made who I knew I'd never see again.

\* \* \*

We lived on a council estate. People immediately think that it must have been a bit rough there but it wasn't at all, the people were friendly and there was a large green where all the children could play. By the time I was seven, I was very keen on playing football and would always be up there having a kick-around with my mates. I couldn't, mind you, head up there until I'd done my

homework but, as soon as that was completed, on would go my football kit and I'd be off. We'd also congregate for a game in a park that was a bit further away at the bottom of the road. We'd play football there as well and, on occasion, would be joined by Kevin Beattie, the famous Ipswich Town and England centre-half who'd happily have a kick-around with us. I can't imagine any of the current England players mucking in with the kids on their local park.

I also enjoyed going to the pictures on a Saturday morning. That was always a treat and, in our day, it was one of the events of the week that you really looked forward to. Then, on Saturday evenings, we'd all go to visit Nanna and Grandad, Dad's parents, before heading off to a pub called the Margaret Catchpole. No prizes for guessing what Alan, my older brother, and I got up to there. Yes, we'd end up playing football with the children of all the other parents who were there. It meant a bit of peace and quiet for all the grown-ups I suppose, with all of us outside chasing a ball around while they had a drink and a natter. Mum would make sure we had a bottle of Coca-Cola and a packet of salt and vinegar crisps each, so we were happy. Saturdays were great as we always ended up going to bed late, which suited me.

I had the usual bumps and bruises as I was growing up, but nothing serious. I did, however, have a squint or, as it's referred to now, a lazy eye. I had an operation when I was five and it was successful, although the recovery time was long and, as a result of that, I had to give up my piano lessons as it made reading the music difficult for me at the time. Yes, in among

all that childhood mucking about and playing football, there'd been time for me to get a bit of culture and learn the piano as well. I started having lessons when I was three, I only had to go to the next road to us for them, which was Woodpecker Road in Ipswich. I could read music by the time I was five and, who knows, maybe a different career beckoned? But then I had the operation and that was that, although it didn't, of course, ever prevent me from playing football. My eyesight improved as I got older and, over time, my left eye 'learned' to work harder to compensate for the fact my right eye was never going to be as good as it could be, even though my vision was fine. It's not really noticeable now unless you know, and Bobby George certainly does. He once said that looking at me was like a football match, 'one [eye] at home and one away'.

Dad particularly enjoyed his Saturdays as there would always be horse racing on TV in the afternoons, including, if you remember, the ITV Seven on *World of Sport*, the programme that was introduced by Dickie Davies. Dad would be up (despite not having to go to work) at 7am every Saturday to get his paper from the local shop so he could spend a happy three hours or so checking the form before spending the afternoon sat in front of the television. Dad loved his telly; his favourite programmes were *Laurel and Hardy* and *Dad's Army*. I found both of them funny as well and would often sit with him and watch them when they were on. Mind you, he nearly ended up appearing on TV himself once when he popped outside only to find there were TV cameras all over the place. The BBC were using a



back street in the centre of Ipswich to film part of an *Only Fools and Horses* episode, the one where Rodney is employed by an undertaker as the chief mourner and ends up taking the hearse up a one-way street. The makers must have thought that road in Ipswich looked a little like Peckham in London as they used the junction of Seymour Road and Rectory Road for filming.

Dad wasn't always stuck inside though, and he liked to play a spot of sport at times. His was bowls and he'd regularly play at the Margaret Catchpole bowls club with his brother Roy.

\* \* \*

Christmas was always a happy time. Dad and Mum might not have had much to spend but they made it special every year. It was an especially exciting time for me of course, as my birthday is on Christmas Eve, so I got presents two days running. That sounds great until you realise, of course, that's it for the rest of the year. On one particular birthday, I'd had such a good time that I couldn't get to sleep, no matter how much I tried. It was the same for Alan so, when Dad, dressed up as Father Christmas, came into our bedroom later that evening with all of our presents, we knew it was him and both said, 'Hello Dad.' I think that he was actually quite happy to hear us say that, as it meant he'd never have to put that big old red and white suit on again!

Dad may have been glad he didn't have to wear the Father Christmas outfit again, but one item of clothing I was always ready to wear and at any time of the year was a football shirt.

My life revolved around playing football or talking about playing football, or watching football. I loved all the different kits and, although Ipswich Town were very definitely my team, I also liked West Ham and loved their claret and blue strip. But it was always Ipswich for me. We had a great time through the 1970s and 80s. Bobby Robson, who was the team's manager, knew a good player when he saw one and we had plenty. Mick Mills was as good a defender as anyone, and he played in the 1982 World Cup finals for England as did Terry Butcher and Paul Mariner, who sadly passed away while this book was being written.

We also had the two Dutch midfield maestros, Arnold Mühren and Frans Thijssen, who came over to play in England when having a continental player in your team was still a rarity. Both were quality and I loved watching them play. Town would often feature on *Match of the Week*, which was Anglia TV's weekly football programme. Watching that show was a bit of a ritual for us all on Sunday afternoons and we'd make sure we finished our dinner in time so we were all cleared up and ready when it came on. Mum would spend all of Sunday mornings making a lovely roast dinner for us all and, being a lad who liked his food, and with the football to come, it became one of my favourite days of the week. That is, I should add, unless there was kippers for tea. I absolutely hated them but not half as much as I hated liver and bacon which she'd make sure we had at least once a week. On those days I'd either have beans on toast or go out for fish and chips. I must have eaten a lot of beans on toast mind, as I'd also have them on Shrove Tuesday because, guess

what, I don't like pancakes either. As for liver and bacon, don't even get me started on that (because I won't and would rather go hungry). Fish and chips does me fine, it always has done, so whenever Mum and Dad were having something for tea I didn't see eye to eye with, it was off to the chippy for me.

Like all youngsters at the time, I looked forward to the ice cream man coming round in his van. Mr Softy would regularly oblige and Mum and Dad would always make sure that we got an ice cream from him. On one occasion, however, I was so excited to hear his van's distinctive chimes outside that I kicked my football through the living room window. I knew straight away that my chances of getting an ice cream after doing that were not particularly good, and I was right. I did get a smacked bottom and was told I was grounded.

If I wasn't playing or watching football, then it's fairly safe to say that Alan and I would be laying on the floor playing the Subbuteo football game. We took it very seriously and even had the floodlights, which weren't cheap to buy at all. I'd enjoy playing that but only if I was winning as I was, as Alan found to his cost, a very bad loser, so much so that, if he beat me at a game, I'd break a few of his players in retaliation.

\* \* \*

When I was eight years old, I remember Dad saying he wasn't feeling very well, which was unusual for him. He told us that he had bad indigestion but, seconds after he said that, he started to behave very strangely, so much so, that Mum called an

ambulance. He was then very sick. I was holding a bowl for him to be sick into but could see that he was bringing up a lot of blood, which was very scary. I actually think we were close to losing him at one point and all I wanted to hear was the sound of the ambulance's siren as it pulled up outside our house. I had to be strong for Mum but also for Alan, who was so upset that he got into a terrible state. Mind you, I felt pretty helpless myself but tried my best to comfort Dad. He got to the hospital just in time where a duodenal ulcer was diagnosed.

That was all a bit touch and go as he'd lost a lot of blood. It remains, as you won't be surprised to read, one of the darkest and most upsetting memories of what was otherwise a very happy and contented childhood.

Mum, on the other hand, was a more outward kind of person, the sort who would do anything for anybody. She was a proper Suffolk girl and had met Dad during the war. She originally worked at the local butcher's shop along with her sister Irene on the Chantry Estate. She progressed from there to the local Sainsbury's where she ended up working for many years until she retired – and she didn't want to do that, she would have preferred to carry on working! She also had a little job that she used to do from home, called Shopacheck; people in and around the local neighbourhood would buy things from her and she'd do a weekly round where she collected their money. It was a team effort really as Dad would drive her to all the places that she needed to go to, which was a good idea, especially on the dark and cold winter nights as she'd quite often have a lot of money on her.

Dad wasn't from Suffolk. He was a 'furriner' as they say in East Anglia, a Londoner who was brought up in Fulham. He had a cousin who we called Uncle Mol, who lived above a bank at Seven Sisters tube station. If we happened to be there when Tottenham were playing at home, I used to look out of the window watching all the football fans and police horses coming and going, which was exciting for any young child just as the train ride down to London always was for me. Mum and Dad would also take us out on Sundays. We'd usually head down to Walton-on-the-Naze, which is a small town on the Essex coast.

We'd meet up with assorted uncles, aunties and cousins and have a big family day out, one that usually involved a lot of football (which suited me just fine) and cricket as well as copious amounts of fish and chips from one of the shops on the seafront which, surprise surprise, suited me down to the ground as well. I knew and got on with everyone in my extended family. The only members I never knew were Mum's parents as, despite their never having smoked or drunk in their lives, they both died when they were just 49. I also had an uncle who I never knew, one of Dad's brothers, who was run over by an army tank.

They were proper family days out, real happy times.

It wasn't all fun and games as I was growing up mind you. I don't want you thinking that life for the young Keith Deller was nothing but a rich mix of football, television and days at the seaside. No, there was also my education to take into consideration.

My first school was Gusford Primary which is on the Chantry Estate, a familiar sight and, I am sure, memory, for all the hundreds of kids who were born there. It was a fairly small school, so you never felt as if you were going to be overwhelmed there as you might at a bigger one, plus, and this was an advantage as far as I was concerned, it was only a ten-minute walk from our house. This was especially good in the mornings as it was all downhill but, by the end of the school day when I'd be tired and wanting to get back, repeating that same walk again uphill was something that I hated. Mind you, there was usually something to do in the evenings so I wouldn't be tired for very long. That included joining the Cub Scouts, which I did was I was seven, then, once I'd left Gusford, I joined a youth club that was part of the setup at my new school.

The natural route to take after you left Gusford was to go to the 'big school' from the age of 11 which, for me, was Chantry High School. It was comprised of four big buildings that were all marked out in different colours. Being an Ipswich Town fan, I was pleased to be allocated to 'Blue' building. I was never going to be a budding academic, though, and the only thing I tried really hard to do every day was to get a window seat in the classroom so I could while away whatever lesson I was in gazing out of it and on to whatever was happening in the world outside.

\* \* \*

That's not to say I didn't work hard. I did reasonably well at all of my lessons and was never really in trouble or anything, it was

just that my main focus was on sport. I had trials for Suffolk at basketball while I was at Chantry High as well as going on to represent my home county at table tennis, something that made me very proud. Yet, despite all that, the real love of both my school and sporting life was always football.

One of my mates at Chantry House was a boy called Terry Westley. We both played up front for the school football team and weren't a bad little combination. Terry went on to have a very decent career as a football coach and has had spells as manager of both Derby County and Luton Town. He was, until 2019, the academy manager at West Ham where, among others, he was responsible for coaching Declan Rice, who is now a full England international.

I bet he never thought he'd get that far in the game when we were getting kicked all over the place by opposition defences when we were both playing for Chantry High.

While I was at school, I was lucky enough to be selected as one of the ball boys for matches at Portman Road, home of, as if you didn't know, the one and only Ipswich Town. It was quite an involved job in those days mind you, as, apart from the obvious duties connected with the role, we also had to put the half-time scores up on a big board as there were no electronic scoreboards back then.

It was great fun though, especially as it meant you had access to, and saw things, that the average fan never came close to seeing. We'd be based directly opposite the away team's dressing rooms for example, as that was where the club's boot room

was. On one Saturday when Manchester United were playing Ipswich, one of their members of staff popped his head around our door and asked me to clean one of their players' boots – the late and very great George Best. I did the job and I must have ended up putting too much polish on them as, thankfully, he didn't score against us in that match.

On another occasion the great Leeds United team of Don Revie were in town. They used to have little tags that they tucked into their socks which had the players' shirt numbers on them. This was quite a revolutionary thing at the time as no other team did it, or, I think, has ever done it since. I was lucky enough to get hold of the tags that had been worn during the match by Mick Jones, who was their centre-forward, so they both had '9' printed on them. I couldn't wait to get home that afternoon and show them to my parents.

Mind you, it wasn't all fun and games being a ball boy at Ipswich. The hardest part of the job was if you ended up being situated in front of the away fans. They'd usually take delight in doing things like filling little paper bags with dirt or whatever they could get their hands on and throw them at me. That said, as we had such a great team in those days, we usually beat whoever we were playing, so I tended to have the last laugh most of the time.

As far as I am concerned, the greatest player to have ever worn the Ipswich Town shirt is the late Kevin Beattie, who, if you remember, would occasionally join all of us kids for a kick-about in the park at the bottom of my road. Kevin lived in a



house that was owned by the club and only a couple of minutes or so walk from my home. He'd sometimes see me at the bus stop opposite our house waiting for the bus that would take me to Portman Road and stop so he could give me a lift there, which made all of my friends very envious of me. Kevin and I eventually became good friends and I used to love watching him play. He was a genuine natural and a player who always looked so comfortable on the ball. Unfortunately for him and for football, his career was cut short by injuries and he started to find the going very tough indeed. I tried to help him in any way that I could and when, for example, I heard he was going to have to sell his FA Cup winner's medal in 1983 (I was at Wembley on that great day in 1978 when we beat Arsenal in the final), I knew I couldn't bear the thought of Kevin's medal going to a complete stranger so I bought it from him, took it home and kept it safe in a drawer. A year or so later, when Kevin was getting on a lot better than he had been, he happened to ask me about his medal and if I had sold it. I said there was no way I would ever have sold it and gave it back to him, saying I didn't want anything for it as we were good friends.

Watching Ipswich play as a youngster remains one of the great memories of my life and a very happy one. We had a magnificent team throughout the 1970s and 80s, winning, during that time, the FA Cup as well as the UEFA Cup, one of only five English teams to have won that particular trophy. We've taken on and beaten some great teams in European competition over the years including FC Cologne, Feyenoord,

Lazio, Real Madrid and Roma as well as running Barcelona mighty close on a couple of occasions.

Alan was a couple of years or so older than me and, as a consequence of that, he took on the responsibilities of having a younger sibling very seriously and would worry himself silly if, for whatever reason, I didn't come home on time. I rather think that shows him up as a typical 'people person', someone who cares as much for the welfare of other people as he does himself. He would have got that from Mum, who was always there if needed, and was ever ready to answer a call to arms if someone in the family or the Chantry Estate was in need of something or were just a bit down on their luck. Alan ultimately took his people skills into a professional setting and was, for a very long time, one of the porters at Ipswich's hospital.

Not long after I'd left school, Alan got me a job at the Tooks Bakery, which was on the Old Norwich Road in Ipswich. My job there was a very tedious one indeed as all I did all day was make the boxes that the cakes went in. For hour after hour after hour.

Still, at least it meant I was earning a little bit of money. I was lucky enough to have a cousin who also worked at Tooks and was one of the supervisors, so, after around six months or so of making boxes, I got promoted and was now entrusted to work on the ovens. I was responsible for stacking all the trays with the pre-baked goods, from sausage rolls to pies, up on to the racks in the ovens so they could be cooked. I soon had a way of getting this done really quickly but, if my cousin happened to

be around, we'd end up chatting about sport as I was working, so it wasn't unknown for anyone who might have been working in the ovens at the time to hear a loud crash as I dropped the occasional tray. I'd then have to stop the belt, get rid of all the mess and carry on as before, taking care not to do it again as I didn't want to run the risk of losing my job, boring as it was.

Christmas at Tooks saw the annual staff party, something that everyone would start talking about weeks before it actually took place – well, you couldn't be spending all of your time debating the finer merits of our sausage rolls. The company would book five coaches and they'd all be packed out as we descended from Ipswich to Felixstowe. It was always a good night out but, unfortunately, it also had the tendency to end with a massive punch-up as the mix of too much alcohol and the various relationships between different men and women started to provoke the usual aggression between people from the different estates in Ipswich. I never got involved in any of the fighting and always kept well out of it but, as time went by, I realised that neither the work nor the social life that Tooks had to offer was for me, and quit. I did have some fond memories of the place mind you and, after I'd won the World Championship in 1983 I called in to say hello to some of the people I knew still worked there, but didn't, sadly, get the welcome I thought I might. It felt as if that was down to plain old jealousy and envy at what I had achieved since I'd left, which was a shame as it had never been my intention to go there and do the old 'look at me now' thing – I just wanted to catch up with a few old mates.

One of my best friends also happened to be one of Alan's friends, David Goldrick, or 'Sos' as he was known to his mates. We'd all meet up on Friday and Saturday nights at a pub called The Kingfisher, regular as clockwork and always at 7pm. We'd stay there for a couple of hours or so before heading out on a pub crawl around some of the other good pubs in Ipswich and ending the night at the Tracey's nightclub where we'd all attempt to go 'on the pull'. I'd always put in a bit of extra effort on those nights, so out would come my best jacket which was a rather nice, if I say it myself, checked number so, what with that and my Brut aftershave, I saw myself as quite the potential catch – in my dreams at least. At the end of the evening and, of course, after we had all invariably failed to 'pull', we'd end up at the local Chinese restaurant for a meal and more laughs.

One nightclub I used to go to was called the First Floor Club, which was owned by a chap called Ken Beam. It was popular among the Ipswich Town footballers so, naturally enough, that meant it was somewhere I wanted to go to as well. Not long after I'd won the World Championship, I went there for a relaxing night out but it turned out to be anything but that, as Ken would announce over the club's PA, 'We have Keith Deller in the club tonight,' and he'd promptly put a replay of my final against Eric on all the screens which was a bit embarrassing for me.

But it was a great place to go to when I was younger and no one knew who I was. I couldn't be too hung over though as I played football for two different teams on Sundays, as well as for one on Saturdays. Of those games and the leagues we played

in, the Sunday morning match was, by far, the toughest one. All 22 players would, invariably, still be in a bit of a state from the previous night's exertions so there were always a few late and dodgy tackles flying in and you rarely saw out 90 minutes without at least one player getting sent off. I still enjoyed it though and only packed in playing as I was getting more into my darts so couldn't afford to have any sort of bad injury, especially, of course, to my arms or hands.

'Getting more into my darts'?

I blame Mum and Dad for everything. When I was about 13, they set up a dartboard in the house, just as thousands of parents must have done for their children over the years, hundreds and hundreds of thousands probably.

It was something for them to do when they couldn't go out, so it would keep them occupied. Plus, of course, it was something we could all join in with as well; another fun family activity for a wet weekend. It was good practice for them anyway, as they both played in league teams whose matches were played at The Kingfisher. So I started throwing darts around in our kitchen with them.

When I picked up a dart for the first time, it felt good to give the game a go, as well as watch Mum and Dad playing in the kitchen – and playing it very well from what I could see. I loved hitting the trebles and it felt great every time I did so, which meant I was getting more and more of a buzz for the game every time I picked the darts up and my enthusiasm and interest was growing. I soon started to hit the treble 20s regularly, which is

something that the very great majority of players simply cannot do. I then knew that not only was I improving at this game but did seem to be rather good at it.

So, quite unexpectedly, football suddenly had a rival for my sporting affections.