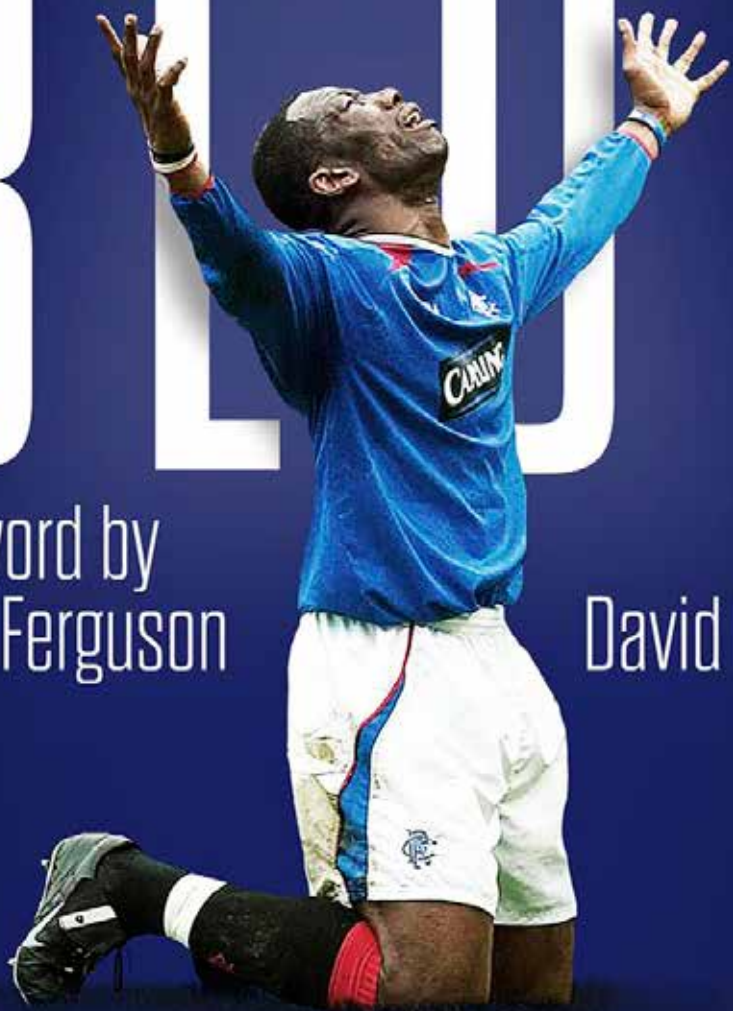


BELIEVER IN BLUE

Foreword by
Barry Ferguson

With
David Mason



MARVIN ANDREWS

Football, My Life, My Faith

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Chapter One

‘The Helicopter Is Changing Direction’

A PLAYER’S football career is rarely defined by one match, but I will always be remembered for the events of 22 May 2005, at least by the fans of Rangers FC. Rarely a week passes when I am not reminded of that pivotal moment in my life, when the club won the Scottish Premier League championship after few had given the team an earthly chance. That very special and fateful game took place at Hibernian’s Easter Road stadium in Edinburgh. The day would be forever known as ‘Helicopter Sunday’.

By then, I had already reached some important footballing milestones in my career, having played for the Trinidad and Tobago international side and gone on to represent them in World Cup qualifying matches. I had also helped Livingston achieve the greatest result in their history when they won the Scottish League Cup. However, no matter how significant these events had been in my career, nothing compared to that

day in Scotland's capital when a quite remarkable change of fortune unfolded over a glorious afternoon in the Edinburgh sunshine.

The drama had started for me eight weeks earlier, on 13 March 2005, when I sustained an injury in an important league match against Dundee at Dens Park. In the closing stages, I suffered an injury to my left knee that I knew was bad as soon as I was hurt in a challenge with Dundee's Steve Lovell. As we collided, he came down on top of my leg, forcing it to bend backwards.

I limped off the field and, when I got back to Glasgow, I was subjected to intensive and detailed medical examinations. The doctor and physios at Ibrox diagnosed a torn anterior cruciate ligament. More commonly referred to as the ACL, it is one of the ligaments inside your knee that joins the thigh bone (femur) to the front of the shin bone (tibia). The medical opinion was not encouraging, so Rangers referred me to external specialists to see what could be done. In fact, I would eventually go to see three consultants and had scans with each – two in Glasgow and one in England.

The specialists I visited in England had also been involved in the examination and treatment of similar injuries sustained by Paul Gascoigne and Alan Shearer. They were the best in the business. The news following all the assessments was not good. I was told that I would need surgery, with a lengthy period of rehabilitation afterwards. It was suggested that

I could be out of football for nine months, which would effectively end my season at the most crucial stage. In fact, going with their prognosis, it would be well into the next season before I would be ready. With only two years left on my contract at the season's end, it could even mean the end of my career at Rangers.

One match that I was certain to miss was the Scottish League Cup Final, which was due to be played the following week against Motherwell. It was a huge disappointment, especially since that tournament had brought me much joy when I won it with Livingston the previous season. I had to set that aside, because now it was all about getting fit again. A chance of a first medal with Rangers had gone. I could only watch from afar as the team went on to beat Motherwell 5-1, with Bob Malcolm taking my place in the defence.

I would also miss crucial World Cup qualifying matches as Trinidad and Tobago pursued a much-coveted place at the 2006 finals to be held in Germany.

Everyone in Scottish football knew that I had strong faith, but they were probably unprepared for the judgement I made in the aftermath of these medical opinions. I reported the specialists' advice to the medical team back at Ibrox, but I told them that God would heal my knee. I had considered what the doctors said, but I believed that my faith in God would see me through without resorting to such radical

intrusive treatment. I had experienced the power of faith in healing not long after I joined Raith Rovers in 1997 when I was diagnosed with an inflamed pelvis. The doctors said I would not be able to play again unless I had surgery. The procedure they recommended involved scraping away the inflammation and then an operation to insert a metal plate inside me. I was not going to do that, as I was convinced that it was not God's plan. I did not believe God created me to have a metallic plate inserted in my stomach!

I spoke with one of my Trinidadian team-mates, Anthony Rougier. He had come to Scotland in 1995 and signed with Raith Rovers, going on to help them win the Scottish First Division title in 1994/95. He had made such an impact in Scottish football that he was signed by Scottish Premier League side Hibernian in July 1997 for a £250,000 fee. His departure had come just a few months before my arrival in Scotland, so I never got the chance to meet and play with him at Stark's Park. However, we knew each other from playing with the international side, although he was more of a casual acquaintance at that time, rather than a close friend. He still lived in Kirkcaldy when I arrived, which gave me the chance to get to know him better.

I spoke to Anthony about my injury problem and he suggested I come to his church. Like me, he was also Christian and was a strong advocate of faith healing. He invited me to meet Pastor Joe Nwokoye, a Nigerian who

had come to the UK in 1986 and established the Zion Praise Centre in Kirkcaldy.

Pastor Joe had held healing services and told me that God would heal me. While I was a believer, I had not experienced that purpose and power of belief before. I felt that I had nothing to lose by attending and hearing what Pastor Joe had to say. He directed me to parts of the Bible where Jesus had healed the sick, restored sight in a blind man and performed other miracles. I had nothing to lose. The alternative was an operation. I prayed with him, then continued my own prayers. I found it edifying as we prayed together and I went on to pray with him almost every day. Gradually, the pain and problems with my injury subsided, so much so that I could resume playing.

The whole experience was enlightening for me. After going to Pastor Joe, my eyes were opened to the power of faith, especially in healing, and that strengthened my own faith in God. I had been brought up to believe in God from my childhood and I was already praying twice a day. The experience of my healing through the visits to the Zion Praise Centre had reaffirmed my beliefs in God, but also showed another aspect to faith that I had not explored previously. I know that God healed me. After I returned to the Raith Rovers team, that 1998/99 season turned out to be a fantastic one for me. Although Anthony had moved on to Hibernian from Raith Rovers, our relationship continued to strengthen.

I would often be invited to dinner with him and his wife and even today we keep in close contact, although he now lives in the United States.

Back at Ibrox, it would be fair to say that my decision to rely on faith rather than embarking on surgery caused some angst and surprise within the club. I still have the letter that Mr Paul Rae, the specialist surgeon who examined my knee, had written. He wrote that I had suffered an acute injury to the ACL and, critically, he added: 'I think this is a significant injury and I would advise against trying to play or train.' He was aware that I was averse to the operation he was proposing and he wrote: 'Ultimately, the decision does rest with Marvin, but I think it should be emphasised that there is a risk of severely aggravating the knee and making things worse.'

I am sure that these comments spooked the Rangers backroom staff. They were convinced that their medical advice was sound and that there was no way that I would be able to continue without going under the knife. They were so astonished, in fact, that they felt it necessary to put out a press statement, possibly partly to ensure that they were covered from an insurance viewpoint. After all, they were simply following the advice of the specialist who had advised me against playing or training. The statement read: 'Marvin Andrews sustained cruciate ligament damage to his left knee in the game against Dundee on Sunday, 13 March.

It is the medical opinion that he needs an operation. Marvin fully understands the advice he has been given, however he has declared himself fit and wishes to continue training and playing.'

I had a meeting with David Murray, chief executive Martin Bain, Alex McLeish, the medical staff and various other Rangers executives. The meeting was to discuss my whole injury situation and my decision. McLeish said after the meeting: 'We just wanted to let you know that, based on you rejecting our advice from the medical standpoint, we'd like to give you a disclaimer that you sign so that you take full responsibility if anything goes wrong with your knee from here on out.' The club reasoned that signing the disclaimer would mean I could not sue Rangers or make the club pay for my decision in any way if I damaged my knee or my knee collapsed in training or wherever. With the faith that I had in God, I said: 'No problem, I will trust God that he will look after me.' So, I signed the disclaimer and took full responsibility for any consequences of a collapse of my knee. There were risks, of course. A lot of people do not know that when I was playing for Rangers after the injury, I was not covered by the club's insurance. My insurance came from God.

The Rangers medical staff remained unconvinced that I could possibly recover and play before the season was out. Since I was injured, I could not train with the first-team

squad at first and went through various physical tests and a rehabilitation programme under the watchful eye of the Ibrox doctor, Ian McGuinness. These tests were to assess how practical it was for me to join in sessions with the rest of the squad. He had me doing various exercises, all putting pressure on my knee, like jumping on one leg to test its strength. Everything was geared towards assessing the condition of my knee and whether it would stand up to action on a football field.

I should add that I do not criticise the specialists and medical team at Ibrox in any way. I respect these highly trained people for the work they do. They have been blessed with the skills to help people. However, I just saw it differently and I did not feel it was God's will for me to go under the knife at that time.

When I came through these tests and rehabilitation, and convinced the staff that I was recovering, they reintroduced me to training with the first-team group and closed-door matches with my team-mates at Murray Park. These games were still somewhat artificial in that the players obviously knew of my knee issues and might have held back a little in the tackle. However, shortly afterwards, a game was arranged against Clyde at Broadwood Stadium. That was a real test for my knee and I came through it unscathed. By then, I think, Alex McLeish realised that I had returned to fitness and that perhaps I would be available for the crucial league

run-in after all, although I am sure he and his staff still had doubts about my knee.

Alex McLeish (Manager of Rangers FC) – *Our advice was that he needed an operation and even if he declared himself fit (as he did eventually), we thought that from a moral point of view it was important from his perspective that he got an operation. We didn't want him breaking down, but he said to me, 'I am taking that responsibility.'*

In my absence, the team had looked a bit vulnerable at the back, especially when we lost to bottom-of-the-table Dundee United at Ibrox on 12 April 2006. With that defeat, we surrendered our lead in the championship with just six games to go in the title race. Celtic had overtaken us and we were due to face them on 24 April 2006. It would be one of those must-win situations in which a defeat could effectively end our hopes. The manager knew he had a decision to make, since I was brought in particularly to combat the physical presence of the Celtic frontmen, most notably the burly John Hartson. If McLeish was ever going to take a chance in bringing me into a game, it had to be this one. He wanted my physicality and that was why I was at Ibrox.

The press speculation that I could return to the side was rife. McLeish conceded to the press that I was training as hard as ever, but it was not clear that I would be considered

ready to return. I had not played for almost six weeks and the manager almost certainly considered that match fitness, quite apart from physical fitness, was an issue. However, I felt fit and eager to play. I had been subjected to rigorous tests from the physios, examining my knee to determine whether it would stand up. It seemed fine but, as McLeish highlighted to me, none of all that physical testing and training could replicate the conditions I would experience in the match.

I knew he was concerned that if he selected me and it did not work out, his plans for the game would have been disrupted. I felt ready for it and was desperate to get back on the field, but I thought that the best that I could hope for would be a place on the bench. All that week, the media speculation continued over whether I would play. They all offered comment on the attributes I could bring for this game, highlighting the challenge I could add to Celtic's physical presence. Some also spoke about my value at set pieces, with my strength in the air. I would not know McLeish's decision until the day of the match. That was the protocol, as the manager usually revealed his team after we had lunch in the Cooper Suite at Ibrox.

On matchday, with the tension already building, we gathered inside Ibrox for lunch. Afterwards, we headed down the marble staircase and along the corridor to the dressing room. I sat down in my usual place on the bench just inside

the door and, with an hour until kick-off, we were all anxious to find out who would be playing. The manager came in and proceeded to use a flip chart, flicking over the top sheet to reveal his team. I immediately saw my name. There was no need to speculate any more – I was playing. I was nervous, not just because we were facing our biggest rivals, but because it seemed such a long time since I last featured in a game. In training, I had not experienced any pain in my knee, so I was sure it would be fine and would stand up to the rigours of an Old Firm clash, which was invariably physical. However, I realised that all eyes would be on me.

We came out of the tunnel to the usual incredible atmosphere of the Old Firm match, with both sets of supporters singing and chanting. Every match is important, but this one seemed especially so because there were only five games left in the title race. It was the first time in my life that I felt I had a camera follow me as I came on to the field and for the whole time I was on the pitch.

I had joined the rest of the team on the field for the warm-up before the sides were read out in the stadium, so the fans knew I was in the frame to play. The game kicked off with the usual deafening noise coming from all around the stands. After a few early exchanges in the opening minutes, I went in for a challenge with Celtic's Craig Bellamy and I felt my knee jarring. Many people inside the ground were no doubt anxiously watching to see if my knee would collapse.

I didn't go down, but I felt the intense pain and tried to run it off. I kept praying to God to help me through the match and gradually it eased.

We had a poor first half and lost two goals before rallying after the break. I felt I could have done more to stop Stan Petrov open the scoring. I was ring rusty and did not have the sharpness to close him down, but none of that was down to my knee. We rallied a bit in the second half. I hit the bar late on as we pushed to get back in the game, but it wasn't to be. I felt fine throughout the game, but was substituted after 83 minutes. It was not through the injury, but because I was tiring. We managed to pull a goal back near the end through Steven Thompson, but we could not get the equaliser. Despite us going down 2-1, it was generally agreed that I played well for my level of fitness, considering how long I had been out. Regardless, it was not the result that many felt we needed.

My knee had stood up to the most rigorous of challenges. Some suggested it was the strength of my quad muscles that provided support to my knee, providing compensation for the problems with my ACL. Perhaps so, but these are the muscles God gave me.

The result against Celtic put them into a strong position in the championship, with a five-point lead. Assuming we won all our matches, they only needed to win three of their last four games to seal the title. Barry Ferguson said in the

post-match interviews that we had little chance of winning the title and most of our players now doubted that we could win the championship. Everyone else, too, was writing us off, but I was interviewed afterwards and told the media: 'Keep believing! It's not over until God says it's over.' Almost every day I went into Murray Park for training, my teammates would ask: 'Are you sure we're going to win the league, Marvin?' I replied: 'Yes, guys, keep believing.' Some said they would come to my church if we won the title!

All we could do thereafter was keep winning games and hope that Celtic would falter. We had a difficult match at Pittodrie against Aberdeen the following week, but we were thrown a lifeline 24 hours before that game when Celtic surrendered a chunk of their lead by losing 3-1 to Hibernian. Ironically, the third and clinching goal for the Edinburgh side was scored by Scott Brown, who would go on to become a star with the Parkhead side.

The next day, we travelled to Pittodrie, which had traditionally been a difficult place for us to visit. Celtic's defeat put an extra spring in our step, but the match worried me because the pitch was sodden. Even Alex McLeish stepped in to ask Aberdeen to drain it at half-time, as the weather threatened an abandonment of the game. It was not ideal for our type of game, or for me if my knee was suspect, but there were no problems. We managed to win 3-1, with two-goal Dado Prso our hero. I was also singled out for

praise by Dons boss Jimmy Calderwood. We played well and the victory was comfortable, especially coming off the back of that Old Firm defeat.

The game was marred somewhat by an incident when Fernando was hit by a coin when taking a corner. Our players had been pelted with objects any time we went near the Dons fans. Fernando had been hit earlier in the season at Celtic Park and this time he called on the authorities to take strong action for the safety of players. The fixture with Aberdeen at Pittodrie had long been a cauldron of hate. Whenever I played them at their ground while with Livingston, I never endured any problems from the home crowd. But an indication of their antipathy with anything connected with Rangers came when I went back up to Pittodrie with Livi just after it was announced I would join the Ibrox club at the end of the season. I was barracked as if I already had a blue jersey on my back and not a Livingston one.

The win over Aberdeen put us within two points of Celtic and now we had a chance, although a slender one. We kept plugging away and another two good wins, against Hearts at Tynecastle and then Motherwell at Ibrox, kept us within touching range of our rivals. Ironically, I scored own goals in each of those games, although I could do little to avoid the first of them when our keeper, Ronald Waterreus, fumbled a cross. The second one came after I had doubled our lead against Hearts. In the dying minutes, I diverted a

free kick that slipped past our keeper. Neither mattered and the points were ours.

Despite those wins and us showing some good form against both Hearts and Motherwell, most remained sceptical that we could win the title. It would all come down to that final day of the championship race on 22 May 2005. By the end of the day, the winners would be celebrating and the cup, draped with ribbons in the colours of the champions, would be presented to the captain. Just a few weeks earlier, it seemed that our chance had gone. We had now closed to within two points of Celtic, but those who retained some faith that we could go on and win the title were few and far between.

Our final match would be in Edinburgh against Hibernian. What was certain was that we could not win the championship if we did not win that final game. That had to be our focus. Meanwhile, all Celtic had to do was win at Motherwell to guarantee the title. The Fir Park side had not performed well against Rangers in losing the League Cup Final 5-1 the week after I sustained my injury. We had beaten them 4-1 just a week before Celtic would go to Fir Park and they also had a number of key players missing. The drama of the final-day shoot-out was built up by the media and both our match and that of our Parkhead rivals would be broadcast live. The simultaneous transmissions would give fans the chance to keep in touch with the events at both grounds that would seal the destiny of the trophy. The authorities had arranged for

a helicopter to deliver the trophy to Fir Park or Easter Road so it could be presented on the field to the champions. Most expected it would be flying to Motherwell.

The title was Celtic's to win, but also to lose, although that seemed unlikely. Surely they would get the victory that would give them the championship. We were determined to go all out for a win just in case there was a surprise at Fir Park. We had already beaten Hibs three times that season, but this was different and nothing before would matter if we failed to take the points on this occasion. Of course, the Edinburgh side were confident they could turn us over, having beaten Celtic at Parkhead. They had an extra incentive for the game. They held a narrow goal-difference lead over Aberdeen in the chase for a UEFA Cup place.

I sensed that many of our team were not confident that we could win the title. We had travelled to Edinburgh the day before, staying at the Hilton hotel at Edinburgh Airport. We would normally have stayed at the Marriott, which was more expensive, but there was a bit of cost-cutting by the club and that probably gives some indication of how the directors thought the day might end. The atmosphere amongst the team was subdued. Many were anxious and worried about what seemed the inevitable outcome. There was a realisation and fear that even if we got a victory against Hibernian, it could all be in vain. In that old football cliché, it could be 'so near, yet so far'. Some of our players were far from motivated

to play. It is difficult playing a dead rubber when your rivals are enjoying the prospect of drinking champagne.

Manager McLeish sensed he had to lift the players and said to us: 'Regardless of the outcome at Motherwell, the one thing you cannot do is fail to win this game. If, for some reason, Celtic drop points and you don't do your jobs and win the game, you will regret it for the rest of your lives. You will wake up in the middle of the night with cold sweats.'

He wanted to make sure that we did all that was necessary at Easter Road and told us: 'If it's not to be, then we can say it was a great effort and we will still be hailed as a great team for only just losing out.' He stressed again that we had to make sure we won the game.

If our team wasn't exactly brimming with confidence, the sentiments were shared by a fair proportion of our fans, who also carried a bit of negativity. Just a week earlier at Ibrox in our penultimate game, some had seized upon the comments I had made urging them to 'keep believing' and had unfurled a banner with these words but that optimism appeared thin on the ground at Easter Road. Perhaps they were preparing for the likely disappointment, but it seemed that there were a few spaces in the Hibs ground, when normally it would have been packed to capacity in the south stand where our fans were traditionally allocated.

The strength of my beliefs told me that this was the perfect stage for God to perform a miracle. I told my team-

mates exactly that as they sat in the dressing room before the match. I even wore a T-shirt with the following words written on the chest: 'The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.' It was taken from the Bible, Luke 18:27, and seemed so appropriate here. I wore it under my jersey that day. Everything had been set up for God to perform a miracle.

I had collected several T-shirts with different quotes from the Bible and always wore one of these beneath my club jersey. I got them made myself, ordered from a small shop in Kirkcaldy. If I scored a goal in a match, I would reveal the message for the day. On that day at Easter Road, I decided on that specific T-shirt because the words in the scripture were so appropriate to the circumstances.

As we came on to the field for our day of destiny, led out by captain Fernando Ricksen, we received the usual tremendous welcome from our travelling fans and ran to applaud them. We had to dismiss from our minds any thoughts of the events unfolding at Fir Park. Our fans, many of whom seemed to have radios, would surely keep us informed of any important developments.

As the game kicked off, we were on the attack from the beginning, but things weren't happening for us. We just couldn't make the breakthrough and the first half seemed to drift past without incident and remained goalless. The fans had been quiet and we sensed that things were not going our

way in Motherwell, so we did not expect good news when we came off the park and headed back to our dressing room. The backroom guys confirmed that Celtic were a goal up, which did not help the general mood. Again, there was that despondency, but I later learned that McLeish had pulled a particularly low Barry Ferguson aside and told him: 'You can't be sitting there with your face tripping you. You've got to be rallying these guys.'

Barry was a dyed-in-the-wool Rangers fan and hated losing. His reaction to the half-time situation was inevitable and he couldn't hide the depth of his disappointment. I knew that I also had to do my bit to lighten the mood, so I went around telling everyone: 'Keep believing, keep believing.'

Alex McLeish (Former Rangers Manager) – *Marvin was hugely important to us in the lead-up to that match at Easter Road and also at half-time when others were a bit despondent. He is very much a 'glass half full' type of guy and I needed that to lift the players. I had lifted Barry Ferguson and told him I needed him to rally the players, which he took on board and responded by becoming very vocal with them. At the same time, Marvin was going around them all telling them to 'keep believing' and urging them on for the second half. I explained the importance of a win and told them they had to up the tempo of the*

game. The boys certainly responded, going on to get the win that was so vital to us.

The manager said that if we scored a goal and Motherwell got an equaliser, we would be champions. It was that simple. To many, it appeared fanciful, but it gave everyone a lift and we went out with a spring in our step and a little more urgency. There was nothing we could do but focus on our own match and that is what we set out to do.

The breakthrough in our game finally came with the goal we desperately needed. Thomas Buffel, who had missed an earlier chance, made amends by putting Nacho Novo through after 59 minutes. The little Spaniard did what he excelled at, sneaking goals, as his effort deflected in off Gary Caldwell. The match then entered a weird phase. Hibs would qualify for Europe if they did not lose heavily and, of course, we had the result we needed. So, both teams sat back, content with what they had. We knew that if we did not do anything stupid, the game and the points would be ours.

At one stage in the match, things opened up in front of me and I had a chance to break forward. As I galloped through the middle, I could hear the bellowing voices of McLeish and Alex Rae telling me to get back. I moved the ball along and returned to my central defensive position alongside Soti Kyrgiakos. There would be no more venturing over the halfway line for me.

From there, we were essentially playing out time, waiting, hoping and, in my case, praying that God would turn things our way. It was all rather surreal. Hibs hardly ventured forward and we were also content to retain possession, keeping things tight and holding on to what we had. Then, with just a few minutes remaining, there was an almighty cheer from our fans. We knew immediately that Motherwell had scored. The delight surged throughout our team, as we could hardly believe what was happening. With the excitement building at the end, I kept praying that we would not make a mistake at the back that could unravel the whole situation. We didn't! Then, a minute or so later, there was another massive roar. We thought that the game had finished at Fir Park with the 1-1 result which would have been enough for us, but it turned out Motherwell had scored again through Scott McDonald. It was 2-1 and there was no way back for Celtic. We would be crowned champions.

I thought to myself: 'Lord Almighty – you are so wonderful!'

When we had learned at half-time that Celtic were leading, we had thought the title was over, but it wasn't! I can't thank God enough for the miracle that he provided for me. I could not believe what was happening when we later heard that Motherwell had scored not just once, but twice. I remember Barry Ferguson jumping on Alex Rae's back with delight while Hibs still had the ball!

It was quite ironic that Gary Caldwell, who deflected the ball for our goal, and Scott McDonald, who scored these two vital Motherwell goals, would eventually end up with Celtic. Here they were playing such a big part in the events that turned the title our way.

After the final whistle, I dropped to my knees and looked skywards to thank God. It is an image that many people remember after it was captured by some press photographers. We were surrounded by our fans, who came on to the field to join us in celebration. The first one who came to me was in tears and said: 'I just love you so much. I believe, I believe!'

I then joined the rest of the players and we partied on the field while up in the sky, the helicopter that was once on its way to Fir Park with the trophy bedecked in green and white ribbons was rerouted to Easter Road. The ribbons were changed and were now red, white and blue. When it landed in the middle of the pitch, everyone in blue was ecstatic. What seemed so unlikely just 45 minutes earlier had come true. Not even our most fervent fan, kit man Jimmy Bell, expected it. He hadn't packed any champagne and we had to borrow some from Hibs, who had their own celebrations over the European place they had sealed.

Bob Malcolm (Team-mate at Rangers FC) – *Looking back on that fantastic time, Marvin's influence on us was so important. He was always jovial and positive in the*

dressings room and that began to rub off on us. Few of us believed that we could win the championship that day and most of the players felt that the game at Easter Road was a pointless rubber on a day when Celtic would win the league. Marvin kept us going with his 'keep believing' mantra.

One nice moment for me came when Alex McLeish came into the dressing room and said to me: 'Marvin, you are actually a god now at Ibrox.' It was special, particularly since I had been written off as a squad player by many when I first joined the club and here I was at the centre of one of Rangers' greatest successes.

After the match, the players headed back to Ibrox on the team bus, but I had a prior arrangement to attend the church service in Kirkcaldy that evening and I was picked up by Paster Joe Nwokoye. While the rest of the party headed westwards to Ibrox, I sat in a car headed towards Fife. It took ages for our car to get through the crowds of Rangers fans who surrounded the vehicle, banging on the windows and saying: 'You were right Marvin, we believe.' Others lay down in front of the car and said: 'Run over us. We'll be okay, because we believe.' They were rocking the car as we were engulfed with people. It was a fantastically delirious crowd.

Eventually, we got through the hordes and headed northwards over the Forth Road Bridge. When we arrived at

the church, everyone was there for the normal service. Much of it was devoted to my experience of winning the title in the most unlikely of circumstances. I gave my testimony, thanking God for delivering this wonderful experience in Edinburgh. Again, I praised the Lord for fulfilling our dream of the championship. After the service ended and I had spoken with the congregation for some time, I drove down to Glasgow to meet up with the rest of the squad. They had gone back to Ibrox where, remarkably, a crowd of 40,000 awaited to greet them. As I drove back to the city, I reflected on how happy I was and kept asking myself: 'Has this really happened?' A few weeks earlier, I had been written off because of my injury, but here I was celebrating a win on one of the best days of my life. I should not even have been on the pitch, by all accounts, but here I was and a major part of it all.

While I was back in Kirkcaldy, the players enjoyed their celebrations inside our ground. After taking the applause of the crowds and proudly waving the trophy in ecstasy, they had gone inside the stadium. I gather the celebrations continued at Ibrox for some time before the players got changed to head out into the city to a nightclub called Tiger Tiger. When I arrived to join them late in the evening, it was one of the most emotional experiences of my life. As soon as I walked in, everyone stood up and applauded. I was wearing another T-shirt with a similar script to that I had worn on the field, this time celebrating our win.

It was a fantastic day and it will always go down as one of the greatest in Rangers' history. Every Light Blues fan has a story to tell about what they were doing, wherever they were in the world, on Helicopter Sunday. Generations upon generations of Rangers supporters will be told the story of that day and I am so proud to have been involved.

We never gave up that season. After 38 league games, we were separated from Celtic by a solitary point, but it was enough. That phrase 'keep believing' was iconic and even today the fans remind me of it and how poignant and appropriate it was on that fateful day in Edinburgh. Even now, years later, fans call out to me: 'Marv, keep believing.' Many fans I meet still want to talk about Helicopter Sunday. Hopefully, some of those who experienced those dramatic events will reflect on their faith and note that those iconic words of 'keep believing' were not an empty sentiment.

I look back on my whole Rangers career with a big smile on my face and great joy. Helicopter Sunday was one of the greatest days of my career. It was a day when I was also on a learning curve, understanding what it was all about to play for such a great club in such an historic match. I am so proud that I was able to play at Easter Road and give the supporters one of the most memorable days in the club's history. Reflecting on that day, I feel so honoured and thankful to God for giving me the chance to play for such a fantastic club as Rangers.

After the celebrations ended in Glasgow in the early hours, I returned to my home in Kirkcaldy and had a quiet reflection on where it had all started for me, back in Mount Lambert, Trinidad. I again thanked God for fulfilling my prayers. I could not have imagined how life would turn out for me and how the Lord had charted my course. Importantly, I think my team-mates and many of the fans appreciated my 'keep believing' message, although they never did come to my church afterwards as they had promised. Perhaps they would rue that when things did not go so well the next season, but on 22 May 2005 we were in the moment.

Reflecting on that day, Rangers essentially won the championship in two minutes. It showed to me that God can wait until the very last to fulfil your desire. It is not about believing for five or ten minutes, but you should continue to believe that things will work out eventually. Belief in God is not for lifting and laying. Though the path may be painful, you need to trust in God to the end. I still pinch myself and try to get my head round the events that day in Easter Road. How did it all happen? It was a miracle and I thank God for it. The words on my T-shirt resonated and are worth repeating here: 'The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.'

Perhaps there is a little lesson for us all in that.