

Matt Eastley

Brian Moore

Saved Our Sundays



The Golden Age of
Regional Televised Football

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Televised Football

Foreword by
Chris & Simon Moore



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What Sundays Were Made For

‘IN THE name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’

The corpulent Irish priest, Father Joseph Coleman, clad in a green, red and white chasuble, looking vaguely like a kit a Greek second division side from the late 1960s might wear, peered above his half-moon glasses around St John Fisher Catholic Church scanning his flock. Father Coleman looked like a cross between Eddie Waring and Ted Heath if you can imagine that.

The date was 26 January 1975. Time: 8.30am.

Fleetingly, Father Coleman’s darting eyes rested on me – a fair-haired, restless, eight-year-old boy among the 100-strong congregation. I was with my mum, Mary, older brother Gavin and sister Elizabeth, called Libby. We never missed mass – and I mean never. The Roman Catholic equivalent of season ticket holders.

‘Amen,’ we all responded, some with more enthusiasm than others.

Father Coleman closed his eyes and intoned, ‘The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.’

‘And also with you,’ we murmured, half-heartedly.

This was the way every single 1970s Sunday started. By 8.32am I’d be checking my watch. My main concern was had mass kicked off on time? It had. Good.

Just under six hours to go.

Last night was a late one. FA Cup fourth round special on a brilliant *Match of the Day*. Main match, a see-saw thriller between part-timers Leatherhead and First Division Leicester, switched to Filbert Street with Motty commentating. Leatherhead stormed into a two-goal lead courtesy of the chirpy Chris ‘Leatherhead Lip’ Kelly and Peter McGillicuddy only to see the stunned Foxes recover to win 3-2. What a tie though. Meanwhile, the brilliant Barry Davies had been at Home Park where Everton beat Plymouth 3-1, thanks to two goals from Mick Lyons. Alan Weeks, best known for voicing ice skating and swimming, was brought out for early round cup ties and his urgent tones had broadcast from Ayresome Park where Jack Charlton’s Middlesbrough beat Sunderland 3-1 in another cracker. I was even allowed to stay up to watch *Parkinson* on which James Caan, of *Godfather* fame, was the main guest.

That, though, was last night. I was jolted back as Father Coleman said the penitential rite, ‘As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of Christ’s love, let us acknowledge our failures, and ask the Lord for pardon and strength.’

I acknowledged my failure that I was bored and asked forgiveness from the statue of the kindly looking, long-haired, bearded man gazing down sympathetically upon me, who I briefly thought looked like Bob Latchford. Or was it Hull’s Roy Greenwood?

We recited the words indelibly printed on our minds, ‘I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and what I have failed to do.’

Fortunately, I could mouth these parrot-fashion while thinking about football. There had been another massive story yesterday. Southern League Wimbledon had outdone even Leatherhead. They’d travelled to reigning league champions Leeds and returned with a 0-0 draw. I’d wondered if cameras had been there and if it might make the cut on *The Big Match*.

It was 9am. We lived in Bexley, on the Kent/London borders. At that precise moment, 14 miles away, a bleary-eyed

TV production team was putting the finishing touches to a programme which, come hell or high water, I did not miss.

Most of them had worked until 1am and, after just a few hours' sleep, headed back to the headquarters of London Weekend Television (LWT) near Waterloo station.

They included a fresh-faced, keen-as-mustard 23-year-old from Middlesex called Jeff Foulser, destined for great things.

The energy in the room was provided by Bob Gardam, 43, a garrulous, larger-than-life genius, the best director in the business, the forefather of modern televised football who, as producer/editor, was, quite literally, calling the shots.

Finally, they were joined by a Gillingham-supporting farm labourer's son from Kent, also 43, a former print journalist turned radio man. His name was Brian Moore and to all intents and purposes, the show they were adroitly putting together was his.

Back in church I was deep in thought about the TV bliss that lay ahead.

More eerie statues of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary stared silently down as the organist soft-pedalled.

Word was the Wimbledon goalie played a blinder. Name of Guy. Had a beard.

Father Coleman swept his eyes across the flock, paused, and said, 'May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.'

The musty smell of incense created a spooky, other-worldly ambience in the church, a mind-numbing soporific which, along with the soft electronic chords of the organ and the smiling, silent statues, lulled us.

But I wasn't 'lulled' enough to stop thinking about football. I knew the main match had to be an FA Cup tie played in London which could only mean Chelsea v Birmingham or West Ham v Swindon.

Thoughts turned to food. Best meal of the week was in the offing. Sunday lunch. Would it be the undisputed King of the Roasts – beef? Or would it be lamb – the pretender to

the crown? Beef, lamb, pork. That was my Holy Trinity. In that order.

Father Coleman was in his stride.

‘Lord have mercy,’ he said, looking at us all, somewhat beetle-browed.

‘Lord have mercy,’ we retorted back.

I wondered what the three featured games would be. Another Holy Trinity.

‘Christ have mercy,’ said Father Coleman. ‘Christ have mercy,’ we parroted.

‘Lord have mercy,’ said the Irishman.

‘Lord have mercy,’ we mumbled back.

‘May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.’

‘Amen,’ we said.

Back on the South Bank, the LWT team was dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s. There was a special studio guest, making his first live TV appearance.

He was all over that morning’s papers. He was the man with the beard.

The editing was finished. Now they were adding polish. Captions, voiceovers, inserts, sound.

In Bexley, we had reached the Lord’s Prayer.

‘Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.’

The other game could be Arsenal at Coventry or Villa v Sheffield United.

‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.’

It could be Ipswich v Liverpool with Gerry Harrison. Pudding. Lemon meringue? Apple crumble?

Sneaky look at the watch.

‘Lamb of God. You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

‘Lamb of God. You take away the sins of the world. Grant us peace.’

Wouldn’t mind lamb. We were on the home straight.

Moore, Gardam, Foulser et al were happy. A decent show was shaping up.

Twenty past nine. Holy communion complete. Father Coleman looked over the congregation one last time before saying, 'May almighty God bless you, the father and the son, and the Holy Spirit.'

This time the 'Amen' was expressed with more gusto. We knew seven beautiful words were coming, 'The mass is ended, go in peace.'

'Thanks be to God,' we said with smiles and palpable relief.

Then we shuffled out shaking Father Coleman's hand as we passed him. It was over.

We passed the Ford Escorts, Mini Clubmans and Austin 1100s for our final routine before heading home in our four-year-old Austin Maxi.

A one-minute walk to Bexley Village High Street where every shop was shut except JF Rivers newsagent.

It was owned by a fast-talking, amiable Londoner with a thin, kindly face and dark, crinkly hair who wore sleeve garters and moved busily in simian fashion, half-stooping as he hovered over the array of newspapers, magazines and comics on display.

Headlines leapt out. Jane Stonehouse, daughter of vanished Labour MP John Stonehouse, adorned the front page of the *Sunday Mirror* revealing the 'anguished secrets' of her intimate diary. Flipping the paper over we saw the headline 'Great Guy' and a picture of a bearded goalkeeper holding up two outstretched hands. Dickie Guy, Wimbledon's hero. Flicking to the TV section, the paper revealed our main match was West Ham v Swindon. Chocolate bought. Walnut Whips and Fry's Five Centres.

By 9.45am we were home. Routinely – because we knew there was nothing for us – we turned on the Pye colour telly we'd owned for almost a year. Clunk. Something too dull for words on BBC1. Clunk. *Open University* on BBC2. Clunk. Some religious programme on ITV. Clunk. Off it went.

Kitchen radio on. Paul Burnett. Bachman Turner Overdrive – ‘You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet’. This was true. We hadn’t seen *anything* yet.

Chocolate eaten by 10.30am, and then football in the woods behind our house. An hour later, in and switched on the telly again. *Seeing and Believing* on BBC1, *Open University* still on BBC2, something called *On Reflection* on ITV. All unwatchable. Clunk. Off it went again.

Radio off, stereo on. Gavin was emerging from a three-year David Bowie obsession when *Hunky Dory*, *Ziggy Stardust* or *Aladdin Sane* were rarely off the turntable. Now it was all Deep Purple, Genesis, Yes and Black Sabbath. Libby had moved on from one David – Cassidy – and now only had eyes for another – Essex. I heard the strains of *Selling England By the Pound* from my brother’s room – ‘The Battle of Epping Forest’.

Good things were happening. Mum – and it was always Mum back then – was in the kitchen preparing lunch. Beef. Mums all over Britain were being asked the same question: what time will dinner be ready? Ours is one o’clock. This is a good time.

Another hour of stultifying dull telly. *Open University* still dragging on with a man with thick-framed glasses and unkempt hair chalking sums on to a blackboard. On ITV, the unmistakable soaring keyboard riff and crashing drums of ‘Nantucket Sleighride’, signalling the start of *Weekend World*, fronted by Peter Jay and, later, Brian Walden. This was heavy stuff, both the music and the programme’s content.

Brilliant theme tune but unwatchable telly for an eight-year-old. The heavy political talk typified these stultifyingly dull Sundays. But we were getting closer.

Back on London’s South Bank, that afternoon’s edition of *The Big Match* was ready and, exhausted, Moore, Gardam and Foulser headed home.

By 12.15pm the irresistible aroma of roasting beef began wafting in from the kitchen. The roast spuds were

on and I watched as Dad mixed the Colman's mustard before taking the Frank Cooper's horseradish from its jar and spooning it into a small white bowl which nobody then called a ramekin.

Every 1970s Sunday the same. Church, sweets, football, papers, dull telly, lunch. By now we were salivating like Pavlov's Dogs but, though Mum had said when lunch would be ready, we *always* fretted it would overrun.

Ours was a scenario being played out in millions of homes across Britain on Sundays whose occupants were going stir crazy.

Finally, the glorious, tell-tale sound of Mum taking plates from the cupboard, Dad sharpening the carving knife and the sizzle from the roasting tin as the joint was removed from the oven. The smell was divine. It still is.

I watched Dad hunched over the joint, carving pinky/red slices of meat, as the dog hovered for scraps, Mum making the gravy, scuttling around the kitchen doing ten jobs at once. We took our seats, clasping our cutlery expectantly. We were in business.

Sunday lunch never failed to deliver. The perfect combo of meat, gravy, Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes, carrots, peas and the slightly random marrow because it grew in our little garden, as did rhubarb. It was the only time of the week all five of us ate together and, for that reason, it was precious.

I'm not sure where my lifetime habit of eating way too fast came from but I'm certain it was not abetted by wolfing down Sunday lunch to ensure I got pole position for *The Big Match*.

Lemon meringue pie or apple crumble wouldn't touch the sides as it became a race against time. I still get pangs of guilt when I note I did precisely nothing to help with either the preparation of our always delicious Sunday lunch or the post-prandial clearing up.

Instead, I scoffed, scarpered, nabbed the best seat and made myself comfortable. Fifteen minutes to go. Perfect timing.

Adverts: Twix – The Longer Lasting Snack; Skol Lager – It's The Taste That Makes You Do It; and the classic 'Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet. The mild cigar from Benson and Hedges,' accompanied by Bach's 'Air on the G String'.

Ads over, there was a momentary pause, brimming with expectation. By now I'd been joined by Gavin and Dad. Football-hating sis upstairs listening to 'Gonna Make You a Star'. This is it. What we've been waiting for. What Sundays are made for.

All over Britain, football fans were doing the same with different programmes, with different theme tunes and formats, made specially in their area.

That included our priest, Father Coleman, who, after saying two more masses, had settled into his armchair with an Embassy cigarette and a Scotch. Big United fan was Father Coleman.

At home, in the Sittingbourne area of Kent, future top commentator Peter Drury, then just seven, was also ready. 'Brian Moore coming on was just so exciting,' he remembers.

'In my childhood thrill it really didn't matter what the game was. I was entranced. I can still smell those Sunday afternoons. The roast dinner cooking, the sweet spot of childhood.'

Elsewhere around the country other programmes were starting too. In the Leicestershire town of Syston, another top future commentator, Nick Mullins, then just nine, was hurrying his parents back from their weekly Sunday lunchtime drink in the Malt Shovel in Barkby to ensure he didn't miss the start of *Star Soccer* and Hugh Johns.

In Derbyshire, Derby County fan Neil Sandars was having his Sunday dinner before also watching *Star Soccer*. 'While my two brothers and I watched it, we could hear our dad mumbling at the kitchen sink something about needing help with all the washing up. Great innocent days, long gone,' he says.

In nearby Chesterfield, Spireites fan Alan Roe was a viewer caught in the middle of two regions – Yorkshire and ATV – and though he loved his Sunday football fix, the fact cameras took years to visit Saltergate irked him.

Further north, Malcolm Morris was ready for *Kick Off Match*, ‘I grew up with Gerald Sinstadt and Granada which was essentially the Manchester and Merseyside big guns in rotation. My team Bolton got on about once every decade but it was still an essential watch!’

Peter Hart, growing up in the Kent village of Higham, could – on occasions – receive three different football programmes, ‘Our Sunday football was divided between *The Big Match* and Southern TV. Most of my pals supported Charlton, other London teams or Gillingham and it wasn’t unknown for those who could only pick up Southern to pop round to mates who could pick up LWT. We could also tune in to a very clear Anglia TV and the brilliant Gerry Harrison.’

In Cambridge, Tim Edwards was preparing to watch *Match of the Week* on Anglia TV with Ipswich v Liverpool, a game also being shown on Granada, ‘As a kid, *Match of the Day* was on far too late, so *Match of the Week* was my fix. A local game always featured but, for many years, local to my home also meant Lincoln and even Hull. To this day, Ipswich fans of the right age still refer, ironically, to games v Lincoln or Hull as a local derby!’

In South Wales, Newport County fan Chris Shingler was also in front of the box, ‘*The Big Match* was like a beacon of hope on boring Sundays. I loved watching it after Sunday lunch. As much as I liked *Match of the Day*, *The Big Match* always seemed less stuffy and more fun.’

Yorkshire’s main match was Leeds v Wimbledon with Keith Macklin, which was also being shown by Tyne Tees, where Newcastle fan Derek Gibson was waiting, ‘I loved watching *Shoot!* on a Sunday afternoon presented by George Taylor. I remember thinking he had a plum in his mouth and that he spoke so posh for our region.’

Across the water in Dublin, Philip Reilly was ready too, 'Back then we'd get LWT on Ulster TV but on a sunny clear day in warmer weather we could get Border TV from the north-west so I could see my beloved Everton ... oh just to see the highlights then was a thrill. Compared to now, we were starved of football back then.'

At 2.10pm on the dot, a clever little blue, white and orange LWT ident with the developing letters vaguely forming the shape of the River Thames played out over a five-second jingle of vibraphone, French horns, trumpets and timpani written by LWT's head of music, Harry Rabinowitz.

Then a moment of expectant silence before THAT music. 'La Soirée'.

Except that day, 'La Soirée' didn't play, at least not immediately. Instead, our screen was filled with a close-up of those huge hands we'd seen in the paper and the great Brian Moore intoning, 'The hands of the guy who saved the penalty for Wimbledon at Leeds.' It was on!

As the camera zoomed out to reveal a smiling, bearded man with a grey suit, Moore continued, 'Dickie Guy is with us on *The Big Match* today.'

It was a great, unusual and unexpected start to the programme. *Then* Wolf and Mader's fantastic theme tune started and we were off.

The opening images – unashamedly tabloid – included a Frank Lampard piledriver, Frank Worthington clowning about, Bob Wilson raging at defenders and Terry Mancini sporting a comedy wig from the 1974 Christmas show.

Then the man himself, Brian Moore, appeared. Wearing a blue suit, with crimson tie over a creamy/yellow shirt, he shone the same familiar smile that said all was well with the world, if only for the next hour, and we embarked on a special episode which would deliver unrivalled drama and topical controversy.

There was always something so effortlessly comforting and reassuring about Brian Moore. Like a kindly uncle

or your favourite teacher at school. His relaxed, smiling face radiated warmth and cordiality, exuding trust and respect.

As its main offering LWT, like Westward, Southern and HTV all showed West Ham v Swindon which ended 1-1 but delivered a highly controversial moment which, in today's game, would be a surefire red for the Hammers' Tommy Taylor, but then just earned a booking and stern talking-to from Treorchy referee Clive Thomas. The incident would be discussed in length next week by Brian Moore and studio guests Alan Ball and Emlyn Hughes but because in Moore's words the programme had 'cleared the decks' to include plenty of FA Cup action, that would have to wait.

More adverts: KP Skips – 'Give a Zip to Your Tastebuds'; Worthington E – 'That's Beer'; 'Bring Out The Branston'.

Having whetted our appetite at the top of the programme it was time for Wimbledon's heroic exertions at Elland Road, concentrating on the final, nail-biting stages of a match which has lived long in the memory.

There was nothing more dramatic in that game than Dickie Guy saving a penalty from Peter Lorimer, regarded as having the fiercest shot in football. In truth, Lorimer's was a poorly taken, underhit effort and Guy saved it easily but that hardly mattered – part-timer Dickie Guy, a finance clerk by day, saved a Peter Lorimer penalty in front of the cameras at Elland Road.

As Keith Macklin – giving the commentating performance of his life, which will be explored more in the section on Yorkshire TV – described the aftermath, a small inset of a slightly bashful Dickie Guy appeared in the top-right corner of our screens, grinning shyly as he saw pictures of his team-mates engulfing him.

Straight after, Brian Moore conducted a respectful and entertaining interview with the diffident Guy who told us he'd decided the week before to dive to his right if Lorimer got a penalty.

Moore was at his best in these situations, probing in a gently authoritative manner, conscious that his subject was unused to such limelight. Respectful to a tee, he was to demonstrate even more generosity to Guy later.

Finally, on that epic edition of *The Big Match*, a trip to blustery Highfield Road for a 1-1 draw between Coventry and Arsenal with the magnificent Hugh Johns behind the mic, perfectly capturing the atmosphere of a feisty tie.

Sunday had now definitely been saved. It had been a great edition.

Following *The Big Match* were three programmes I never watched but their respective theme tunes always transport me back to Sunday afternoons in the 1970s. I was not then interested in the playboy antics of Tony Curtis and Roger Moore in *The Persuaders* but John Barry's dulcimer-dominated, minor key theme tune was masterful. Tony Macaulay's 'Apple Splitter' – signature tune for *The Golden Shot* – was less memorable but still evocative. Guests that day were ventriloquist Ray Allan with the monocle-wearing sot Lord Charles as his dummy and Lena 'One Day at a Time' Martell.

Finally, does anyone not like 'Galloping Home', the brilliant theme to *The Adventures of Black Beauty*? The Denis King-penned tune – if not the programme itself – remains as much a part of Sunday afternoons for me as *The Big Match*'s themes of Mansfield and Wolf/Mader.

Then, at 6pm, it was time for the *Chart Show* on Radio 1 with Tom Browne and the top 20 countdown. This was also unmissable. On 26 January 1975, Edinburgh band Pilot were still at number one with the aptly titled 'January', a song I loved back then, mainly because of Ian Bairnson's sparkling guitar riff, while other numbers to enjoy were the Glitter Band's 'Goodbye My Love' (no Gary Glitter on this one) and Sparks' stutteringly brilliant 'Something for the Girl With Everything'.

Those 1970s Sundays always came alive after lunch and this was down to Brian Moore and *The Big Match*, the

programme representing a dramatic gear shift, changing the whole tenor of a day mired in boredom up to that point.

Moore and *The Big Match* made it bearable. It lightened our mood. Gave us exciting or controversial moments to talk about at school the next day and impelled us to put on our boots and kick a ball about ourselves.

Earlier I'd mentioned the generosity of Moore and how his warm-hearted politeness to Dickie Guy would continue. Brian's older son, Chris, told me he remembered Guy not only joining the family for Sunday lunch after guesting on the show, but also watching the programme itself with them.

I was put in touch with Dickie by Ivor Heller, life vice-president of AFC Wimbledon, and the former keeper confirmed the story.

'After we filmed the show, I told Brian our telly had packed up,' remembers Guy. 'He immediately phoned his wife, Betty, and asked her to set two extra dinner places for my wife Josie and I. So, we went there for lunch and then all watched the match together.'

Chris said, 'I'd never heard of Dickie Guy before but I knew he'd saved this penalty from Lorimer. I remember watching him pour gravy on his dinner. I was looking at his hands and said suddenly, "Mr Guy. Which hand did you save the penalty with?" And he held up this big right hand. It was a moment I'll never forget.'

Nor would Guy ever forget Moore's kind invitation, remembering, 'It was a lovely thing for him to do. Brian Moore was a really great bloke.'

It was a gesture typical of Brian Moore. A fine man who saved our Sundays.