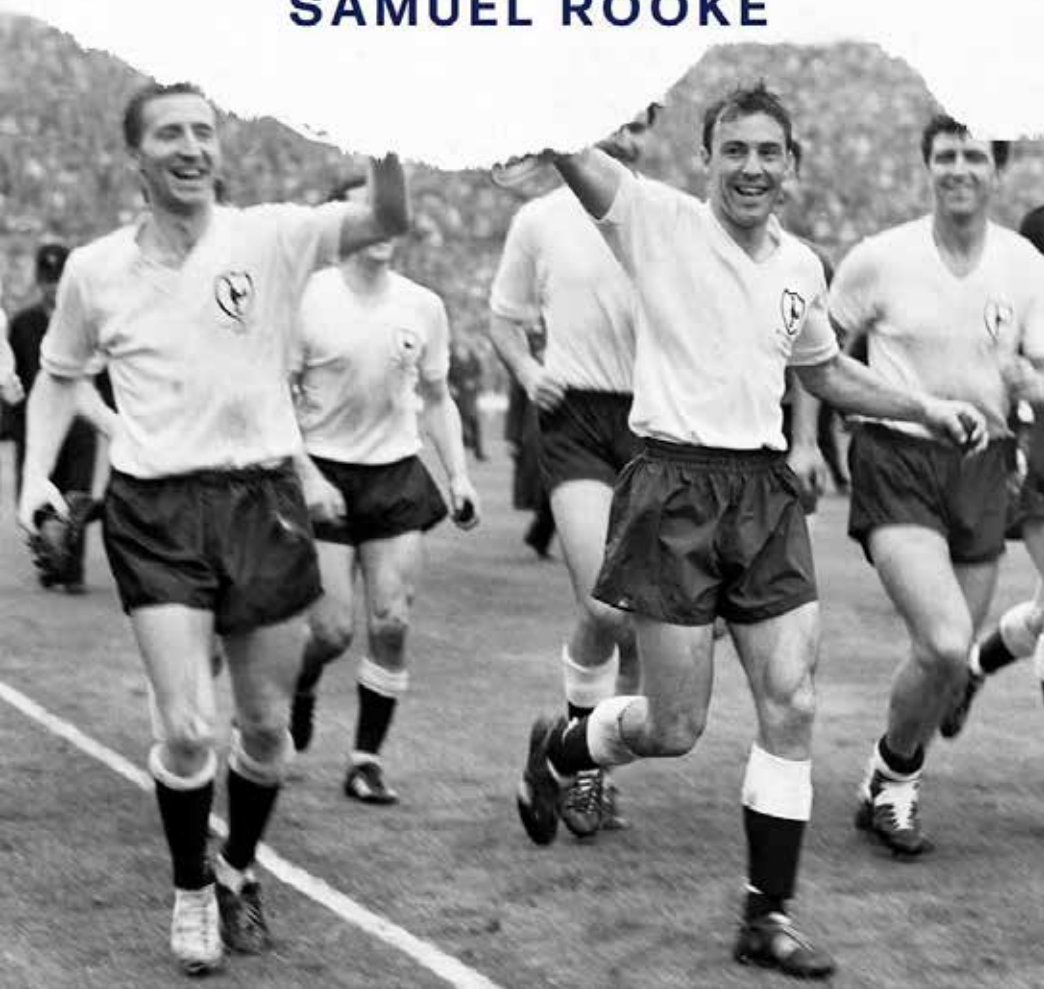


GLORY, GLORY, GONE

The Story of
Tottenham Hotspur's
Regression, Relegation and Rebirth
in the 1970s

SAMUEL ROOKE



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A changing world

THE WINTER of 1962 and into '63 had been the coldest for Britain in centuries. Only 1683/84 and 1739/40 had seen colder recorded temperatures. In January 1963 the average temperature for the entire month had been -2.1°C , and there was snow on the ground in London for three months.

The fountains in Trafalgar Square froze solid and, with undersoil heating not yet common in England, so too did football.¹

Spurs managed just one match between mid-January and March – a 3-2 win over Arsenal at Highbury – as the seemingly unending cold weather forced game after game to be postponed.

On 22 March, just two weeks after the first frostless morning of the year, the Beatles released their first album – *Please Please Me* – and changed popular culture forever.

Eight months later, *With the Beatles* would follow. Within 18 months of their emergence on the world stage, the pioneering musical icons would add *A Hard Day's Night* and *Beatles for Sale*.

Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and James Brown each put out a new album in 1963. The Beach Boys released three.

—

1 Everton had become the first club in England to install undersoil heating in 1958, costing the Toffees £16,000 before forcing them to redevelop the drainage systems and other elements of their pitch system.

Doctor Who debuted on British television, while James Bond's second theatrical adventure – *From Russia With Love* – was released.

In an instant, the dour, moribund 1950s were gone and a new, more colourful world emerged.

It was the year of films like *The Great Escape*, *The Birds*, and *The Pink Panther*, the big-budget epic *Cleopatra*, and the hit comedy *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Akira Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini and Alfred Hitchcock all had new movies in theatres simultaneously.

London, always a city of global importance, regained a glamour in this period that had been absent since the 1920s.

The shadow of the Second World War, still visible in bomb-damaged buildings and empty spaces where rubble – long since cleared away – had not yet been replaced, began to finally fade for good in this period.

Carnaby Street became a globally known fashion centre. Mods, Hippies, and other subcultures emerged. By 1966 London was crowned 'The Swinging City' by *Time* magazine.

The nation was changing, and trying to change. The United Kingdom failed in its bid to join the European Economic Community in January. French president Charles de Gaulle vetoed the application.

Harold Wilson rose to become leader of the Labour Party, a role in which he would enact profound change in the years to come.

Tottenham Hotspur both reflected and enhanced that glamour and modernity. They were the big-spending club that had done what no one else had done by winning both the First Division and FA Cup in 1961, becoming the first team since 1897 to claim the 'Double'.

This had been orchestrated by manager Bill Nicholson. Nicholson, a former Tottenham player, had the loftiest of

ambitions for his club. The Double win, though glorious, was not sufficient for him.

To the so-called 'Team of the Century', Nicholson had added £99,999 goalscorer extraordinaire Jimmy Greaves from AC Milan. He had broken the British transfer record to do it.

Now Nicholson had his sights set on another groundbreaking achievement – he wanted to win in Europe.

Rotterdam's Feijenoord Stadion was completed in 1936 and began hosting football the following year as a colossal new stadium befitting the already three-times champions of the Netherlands, Feyenoord Rotterdam.

Coal baron Daniël George van Beuningen bought the land for the new ground. Its more commonly used name, De Kuip, translates from Dutch as 'the tub' or 'the bowl', evidently a tribute to its then-modern overhanging design, which was inspired by numerous stadiums across Europe and the United States – notably Arsenal's Highbury.

The stadium was fortunate to survive the Second World War, with Rotterdam being extensively damaged. The port city was flattened as both the Allies and the Germans bombed the area heavily. By the end of the war, only the Medieval Grote of Sint-Laurenskerk remained standing in the centre of the city. The German army reportedly considered tearing De Kuip down to harvest the glass, concrete and steel from which it was made.

After the war, the four great light towers which define De Kuip's silhouette were added.

On 15 May 1963 at De Kuip, Tottenham Hotspur met Atlético Madrid in the final of the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup.

Spurs had finished second in England's First Division that season, admittedly well off the pace of champions Everton, and they were just two years removed from completing the first Double of the 20th century.

Spurs had beaten Rangers 8-4 over two legs in the first round, then smashed Slovan Bratislava 6-2 in the quarter-

final and saw off Yugoslavian side OFK Beograd 5-2 to reach the final.

Nicholson's team had lost the European Cup semi-final the previous year to eventual champions Benfica. Tottenham had hammered the Portuguese side in the second leg at White Hart Lane but lost 4-3 on aggregate, with many fans convinced that they'd been cheated by refereeing in both legs. Swiss Daniel Mellet overruled two Tottenham goals in Lisbon, before his Danish colleague Aage Poulsen cancelled another in London.

Nicholson had introduced that season a tweak which still lives on, instructing his kit man to prepare white shorts – instead of the usual blue – for Spurs' European matches.

Alan Mullery – who would captain Tottenham to European glory – remembered the impact that that change had on the players, saying, 'The thing that really stood out, for me as a player, was seeing the kit laid out in the dressing room, with white shorts. As a kid, when European football started, it was dominated by Real Madrid, all in white and us wearing white from top to bottom sent out a statement that we believed we were as good as that Real Madrid side. It was such a brilliant idea for us to play all in white, especially under the floodlights which picked the strip out so strongly. It felt like a different, unique experience, something we all wanted to savour and it did inspire us as a team.'

Before the 1963 final, Nicholson, as he so often did, flew out to Spain to personally scout Atlético, watching them wallop Hércules 4-0.

After his expedition, Nicholson felt he had identified a key weakness. He told wingers Terry Dyson and Cliff Jones, 'This will be your night. Take on the full-backs as often as you can. You can beat them.'

Atlético officials made their own scouting mission to White Hart Lane, watching Spurs dismantle Sheffield United 4-2 in May.

Jimmy Greaves scored his 37th goal of the campaign against the Blades, breaking Tottenham's all-time record for goals in a season. Dyson also scored that day, but Atlético's scouts did not heed the warning.

In the dressing room, right before the final kicked off, Nicholson gave a long and passionate speech about just how good Atlético were. He enthused about their strength, ruthlessness and power.

The energy and positivity drained out of the room as Nicholson went on. When the manager left to give the squad a moment, captain Danny Blanchflower – having felt the players deflating under the strength of Nicholson's speech – stood up and proceeded to lift the mood. He went around the room, pointing out the stars that made up Tottenham's mighty team. There was Jimmy Greaves – perhaps the finest striker in the world; Cliff Jones – a brilliant, goalscoring winger. There was Blanchflower himself, and many more besides.

This group of players were the immortal Double winners of 1961 plus Greaves; they had nothing to fear in Atlético.

Atlético were on a £360-per man bonus to win the final – a significant sum in 1963 – but they were taken apart by Tottenham's wingers as Nicholson had predicted.

Tottenham hammered Atlético 5-1. It was an historic victory, the first European trophy won by a British team, and marked the high watermark for Bill Nicholson's Spurs.

The end would come for Nicholson at the same stadium 11 years later.

Dyson, the man of the match in Rotterdam, was advised to retire immediately afterwards by striker Bobby Smith, who said, 'Terry, son, if I were you I'd retire now. You'll never play another match as good as that for the rest of your life.'

Dave Mackay, an icon in midfield and perhaps Spurs' most important individual player, missed the final with a stomach muscle injury, but inside-forward John White recovered from his own injury to make the starting line-up.

Four thousand Spurs fans had crossed the Channel to see their team's tilt at history, and were rewarded with a crushing victory.

Greaves got the opener, White made it 2-0 before half-time, then Dyson scored a brace either side of Greaves's second. Atlético converted a penalty just after the break but Spurs made history with their victory. More than that, and vitally for Nicholson, they had won it in the right way.

The reticent Yorkshireman was utterly committed to attractive football. Attacking, playing to win and entertaining the fans – the last point something that Nicholson repeatedly reinforced to his players – were his guiding principles.

This was the same man who, after his team beat Leicester City in the 1961 FA Cup Final to seal the historic Double, had told his players that he was disappointed in their performance. Nicholson's first stop after the match had not been to see his own players, but to visit the Leicester dressing room to tell them they had been the better team.

This was not a pantomime, some strategy to squeeze even more out of his squad. These were Nicholson's honest convictions. With that in mind, the nature of Spurs' win over Atlético – speed, movement, intelligence and goals – was of at least equal importance in his mind as actually winning the trophy. He was happy enough to make history, but delighted to do so playing his ideal football.

Newspapers the day after the match speculated that, despite his heroics, Dyson might be sold as Nicholson looked to overhaul his team.²

It wasn't the first time that Dyson had been considered surplus to requirements. Legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly loved to tease the famously dour Nicholson with an anecdote on the subject.

2 Dyson kept his place in the team but was sold to Fulham for £5,000 in 1965.

While Shankly was Huddersfield manager, Nicholson tried to sign Denis Law. The forward, who would go on to become an icon of Manchester United and the Scottish national team, was not yet 20 and Huddersfield were playing in the Second Division, but Nicholson had identified him as the attacking spark his team required.

He called Shankly to ask for Law, and offered Dyson in part-exchange. Dyson was still playing in the reserves at the time and Shankly wanted a first-team player to make the deal. Shankly also had concerns about the diminutive Dyson's ability to survive the physical side of the game.

As the conversation went on, Shankly remembered Nicholson getting more and more effusive in his praise of Dyson's toughness, heart and ability.

Ultimately, Shankly wouldn't budge and the deal fell through. Law went to Manchester City instead, eventually joining United two years later – via a season in Italy with Torino – and won the 1968 European Cup and the 1964 Ballon d'Or while with the Old Trafford club.

Dyson stayed at Spurs and was vital in the Double win, being named man of the match at Wembley as they beat Leicester to lift the FA Cup, as well as starring two years later in Rotterdam.

Nicholson, as ever consumed by the next challenge, said after the remarkable victory over Atlético that the defeat to Everton the previous midweek played more on his mind, and that improvements would have to be made to his ageing squad.

That first great team had reached its peak in Rotterdam. Injury, time, and tragedy would compel Nicholson to build another.