



# SKY BLUE HEROES

THE INSIDE STORY OF COVENTRY CITY'S 1987 FA CUP WIN  
FOREWORD BY JOHN MOTSON

STEVE PHELPS

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# The Cast of 1986/87

*The squad:* Steve Ogrizovic, Brian Borrows, Greg Downs, Lloyd McGrath, Brian Kilcline, Trevor Peake, Dave Bennett, David Phillips, Dean Emerson, Michael Gynn, Cyrille Regis, Keith Houchen, Nick Pickering, Steve Sedgley, Graham Rodger, Paul Culpin and Steve Cockerill.

*The management team/club staff:* John Sillett, George Dalton, John Poynton, Graham Hover and Jenny Poole.

*The opposition:* Terry Gibson, Lee Dixon, Micky Adams and Chris Hughton.

*Mercia Sound:* Stuart Linnell, Mike Liggins, Ian Woods, Rob Gurney and Ian Bolton.

*Radio WM:* Ian Winter/Ian Bolton.

*BBC 1:* John Motson.

*Coventry Evening Telegraph:* Neville Foulger and Steve Evans.

*Central News:* Bob Hall, Gary Newbon and Jimmy Greaves.

*Midlands Today:* Steve Lee.

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*Sheffield Wednesday matchday programme contributor:* Alan Biggs.

*Coventry City matchday photographer:* Andy Scaysbrook.

*'Go For It City' songwriters:* Steve and Heather Taylor.

*A selection of fans:* Andy Turner, Geoff Foster, Jim Brown, Calvin Urquhart, Neil White, Dean Nelson, Mike Young, Kev Monks, Matt Partridge, Matt Kerr, Blake Waugh, Danny Finlay, Lee Corden, Rob Summerfield, Gavin Clifton, Neil Jones, Moz Baker, Bob Eales and Frank Pritchard.

**JIM BROWN:** In August 1986 I, like many City fans, wouldn't have believed that their team would have its best league campaign for almost ten years and nine months later lift the FA Cup at Wembley. Under the new managerial partnership of George Curtis and chief coach John Sillett the early weeks of the new season were heartening with an opening-day defeat at West Ham being followed by a seven-game unbeaten run which took the team to fourth place in the First Division table. Then, a couple of sloppy defeats reinforced the view that the form was a flash in the pan. What convinced me that the season was going to be something special was a hard-won home victory over Nottingham Forest in November. Brian Clough's team had always been a bogey side for the Sky Blues and would continue to be for several more years but John Sillett had done his homework and a Nick Pickering goal was enough to knock Forest off the top of the table. The new £40,000 signing from Rotherham, Dean Emerson, in only his fourth league game, was superb in midfield. The famous 4-3 victory over Tottenham at Christmas was unforgettable and reinforced my optimism of a top-six finish as we turned the corner into 1987...

**LLOYD McGRATH:** Dean and I complemented each other really well, he was a quality player. John signed him from Rotherham after we played them in the Littlewoods Cup. I was given a man-to-man marking role on him and he got the better of me, that's why he was signed. We were both different types of player but worked off each other well and made the midfield solid.

**DEAN EMERSON:** At Rotherham we played Coventry over two legs, late September and early October. We played

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well at Highfield Road in a 3-2 defeat and then in the return at Millmoor Brian Kilcline's header won it for them. A couple of weeks later Rotherham manager Norman Hunter told me Coventry had come in for me and asked if I would want to go. 'Of course I would' was my reply. They were in the top division and I signed straight away after meeting John and George. I made my debut on a Sunday against Wimbledon when we won 1-0 and six days later Oggy scored in the draw at Sheffield Wednesday.

**NICK PICKERING:** The penultimate game of 1985/86 was at home to Luton. We beat them 1-0 and I scored. It was a massive win, and then the last game against QPR we won 2-1 to ensure survival. George and John had taken over after I'd only been there for seven or eight games under Don Mackay and they brought Keith Houchen and David Phillips into the squad in pre-season. They had a chat with the older pros, Cyrille, Greg and Trevor. Cyrille was the main man, a fantastic player, a lot of people thought he liked the long ball but he didn't. He liked to spin and turn, he's not that big but a great athlete. I was on the left with Greg and Dave Bennett was on the right with Brian Borrows. It was into feet, spin, turn and cross it, you had a lad in Keith Houchen who was as brave as a lion.

**BRIAN BORROWS:** My first season at the club, 1985/86, was a tough one and then John took over from Don Mackay towards the end of the season. I couldn't have envisaged what happened in '86/87 with us reaching the cup final and having quite a comfortable season in the league. John simplified the playing style, it was get it to Cyrille who'd hold it up and we'd go from there. There was nothing

complicated about it. John and George Curtis built a team spirit, we got momentum and the team had better players than people realised.

**GREG DOWNS:** When I first arrived at the club the management asked me to play a style I'd never played before. I'd left Norwich and John Bond after 11 years, renowned for playing good football, and was now whacking it long into the channels. I'd never played that way in my life and had a torrid time, my game was about overlapping and getting crosses in. George and John put the smiles back on our faces. 'Benno' showed what he'd got, Cyrille displayed his strength when the ball went into his feet and we knew it would stay there so I could overlap and bring Nick Pickering into the play. We had a team that could rise to situations and battle their way through. We were a bloody good team, we could knock the ball about and, when George and John took over, John had a chat with Cyrille and asked, 'How do you want the game played?' He replied, 'I want the ball to my feet.'

**DAVE BENNETT:** We had a bit of steel in the side, a squad with a sense of humour and a character that, if we weren't going to win the game, we weren't going to lose it. We were as good a team off the park as we were on it, doing well in the league and enjoying our football. From where we were the previous season to where we went, with the same group of players, to have a turnaround like that was remarkable. We were holding our own and not losing many games.

**STEVE OGRIZOVIC:** We had two people in charge, George and John, who were great at creating the right atmosphere within a football club making people feel good

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about playing for the club and it was all really enjoyable. The way they united the squad, we were quite a tight-knit group at that time, we still meet up now, that's the great thing about sport, the friendships that you form even though you don't see people for years on end but pick up from where you left off. We all have one thing in common — that great year of 1987. The Coventry fans are great, in adversity or success they turn out, we'd had a couple of relegation battles in years previous, Highfield Road was full in 1984/85, how we ever managed to stay up that year I don't know (we beat Stoke, Luton and champions Everton to stay up and relegate Norwich City). A lot of the players in those formative years had been bought by Bobby Gould and were getting better, more used to playing at the top level and improving. You could see the character and steely resolve in them having come through the Stoke, Luton and Everton games and 1985/86 saw us win on the final day to stay up too. We were improving and when it mattered we managed to produce results. It then all blossomed when George and John took over, we had a really good league campaign in 1986/87, confidence was high and everyone was gelling, starting to fulfil their footballing potential at the top level.

### **Coventry City Matchday Programme, Thursday 1 January 1987:**

'Feet on the Ground' is the motto with which John Sillett will be aiming to improve on the high standards so successfully achieved by the Sky Blues up to the turn of the year. The chief coach says: 'We shall be looking to carry on the good work, the foundations for which we laid in the weeks up to Christmas. We know the history

### THIRD ROUND BOLTON WANDERERS

of recent seasons and we don't want the same thing to happen again. We have got a super draw at home to Bolton Wanderers in nine days' time and I am looking forward to it. The FA Cup gives you a little tingle more than any other competition. Hopefully we can do even better than we did in the Littlewoods Cup.'



As the city of Coventry welcomed 1987 to their hearts on a freezing cold New Year's Eve the first team squad were tucked up in bed to await the visit of John Moore's Luton Town. The Hatters were infamous for their artificial pitch and controversial ban on away supporters which led to their expulsion from the campaign's Littlewoods Cup. They restricted ground entry at Kenilworth Road to holders of a special membership card for which only home fans were eligible. Moore had been promoted from reserve team duties in the summer of 1986 to replace David Pleat who had departed for Tottenham Hotspur and they sat eighth in Division One as they visited Highfield Road.

The Sky Blues' 1-0 victory at Kenilworth Road the previous season saw them become the first visiting side to triumph on the artificial pitch which had no doubt contributed to Luton's ninth-place finish. Former Sky Blues Les Sealey and Ashley Grimes returned to take the points on a day when nothing went right for the Sky Blues. Brian Stein's low drive was enough to separate the sides as, on the final whistle, Sealey cartwheeled across the pitch to rile the City faithful as the jubilant visitors celebrated.

Two days later an even colder St James' Park, home of Newcastle United, welcomed City in front of 22,366

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passionate, loyal Geordies. Dave Bennett and Cyrille Regis scored for the Sky Blues on a day made memorable by Brian Kilcline leading the side out of the dressing room... and into the car park! Once the laughter had subsided it was business as usual as the points returned to an only slightly warmer West Midlands.

With his goalscoring account for Coventry finally opened in the 4-3 victory over Tottenham, Keith Houchen looked forward to a brighter 1987. A pre-season injury, when he trod on a piece of glass, sidelined him for six weeks and left him behind the squad in terms of preparation, quickly followed by a stomach bug.



### ***The Pink, Saturday 3 January*** **1987: Houchen: Year of hope**

‘After what I’ve gone through since the summer, things must get better in 1987. I suffered so many injuries I was beginning to think it wasn’t meant to be. It reached a stage where I was almost frightened to knock on the treatment room door and physiotherapist George Dalton used to laugh when he saw me walk in. It was great to be back in the side for the Spurs game and even better to score a goal in such a tremendous match. The big thing is stopping in the team because there is such fierce competition for places. It is strange for me to have as few goals at this stage of the season. Normally, I have scored ten or 12 by Christmas but perhaps 1987 will be my year. I hope so.’



Across the country temperatures plummeted to leave training grounds treacherous and stadium pitches frozen. Not every club had under-soil heating and even this was no guarantee of a surface fit for professional football. With Ryton's training ground in no fit state for training, John Sillett and George Curtis took the squad away to warmer climes – Fuengirola, Spain. Bob Hall, then ITV's chief sports reporter in the Midlands, takes up the story, 'The winter of 1987 was very cold. Ice and snow prevented training and caused many postponements, so much so that when Coventry City found themselves drawn at home in the FA Cup to Bolton Wanderers on 10 January, their joint managers John Sillett and George Curtis decided a few days of warm weather was the perfect preparation, Spain to be exact.

'When news reached the sports desk at ITV in Birmingham, editor Jeff Farmer decided we should go too. I needed no second bidding and, together with a three-man crew (camera, lights and sound) headed for the Costa Del Sol. At Malaga airport we went to collect our booked hirecar, an estate, ideal for the gear, baggage and four of us. The girl on the desk apologised, "Senor, no car like that, we give you this instead." Her dazzling smile had me signing the documents in a flash.

'The vehicle was an 18-seater minibus, with column gear change. The crew and I stayed at the splendid five-star Don Carlos in Marbella, Coventry City stayed at the 2-star Los Pirameds in Fuengirola, the sort of concrete tower hotel you saw in Cosmos and Horizon holiday brochures of the time. I mention this only to explain why, what happened next, happened.

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‘We had arranged to go to the team hotel at 9am the following morning to film training. John Sillett was waiting at the hotel door for me, “Robert – good morning – have you heard of a health spa nearby called Byblos?” I confessed I hadn’t so he took the crew to the beach to film training and dispatched me to “sort it out and see if we can all go for the afternoon”. Byblos guest relations soon, sensing publicity, granted us use of the facilities. As I approached “Schnoz” (I had my ITV colleague and one-time team-mate of John at Chelsea, Jimmy Greaves, to thank for my knowledge of John’s Chelsea nickname) with the good news he was smiling, “I knew you could do it, see you at 12.30 for lunch after training, be our guest, oh and in return, you can take us all there.” It transpired the film crew had told John about our minibus and he had worked out we could all get in the minibus – and I could drive them.

“Look at it this way, Robert, you’re in a posh hotel getting access to all this so it’s the least you can do.” I nodded in agreement.

‘What I hadn’t realised was just how far up a mountainside this place was, how bad the road was, how difficult the drive would be or how uncomplimentary the players would be about my driving. The rest of the trip was excellent and the bond established.’



As the build-up continued to the third round clash, Bolton player-manager Phil Neal gave his thoughts on the tie and task his side faced:

***Coventry Evening Telegraph,***  
**Thursday 8 January 1987:**  
**'Nothing to fear' Bolton boss**  
**Neal tells players**

'I spotted one or two weaknesses in their armour [referring to the 2-2 draw at Highfield Road with Manchester City on 21 December]. I was impressed by the Coventry playing style but have told my players they have nothing to fear when they visit Highfield Road. The pressure is on Coventry to come out and win the game and, hopefully, it will become a test of footballing ability. That's what we like. We have put in a lot of hard work this week on sorting out what has gone wrong in recent matches and I think we have come up with the answer.'

For Sky Blues right-back Brian Borrows the tie pitted him against his former club:

**Borrows: My old club will raise  
their game**

**'It's not going to be easy and if we start thinking it is we could be in trouble. For Bolton the match will be their cup final and they'll be giving it everything they have. There is no real pressure on them because no-one expects them to win. I'm sure we have the ability to do well in the competition but you have to rely on a spot of good fortune as well. But if we do have the luck of the draw I fancy our chances.'**

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Bolton were expected to bring 1,000 supporters to Highfield Road as City projected a crowd of around 12,000. Despite the widespread frost they were unable to switch on the undersoil heating as a fault in the boiler in the run-up to the fixture caused a series of bursts in pipes laid nine inches below the surface and any repairs would need to wait until the season's end. The undersoil heating system cost £40,000 when it was laid back in 1980 and City were one of the first clubs to install it. Along with Coventry, Manchester United's system had also recently failed.

One of the highlights for a young supporter is to fulfil the role of mascot. To lead the side out on to the pitch with their heroes is a memory no one can take away from them. Calvin Urquhart was selected as one of the two Sky Blues mascots for the visit of Bolton and says, 'Further to a phonecall from the club requiring confirmation that I had the kit (as they no longer supplied this) the letter arrived stating I was to be the mascot for my beloved Coventry City Football Club. This was to be the mascot for the FA Cup third round against Bolton Wanderers – being honest, I was gutted it wasn't one of the "big boys from the First Division" as they were in the Third Division at the time.

'I went to the Main Stand reception and it was all very informal. We were led to a small side room which wasn't the experience that I had in mind. However, due to my excitement this was quickly overlooked while getting changed into my replica kit made by Triple Sports (I still have the shirt to this day as a memento). I was then told by club officials to wait by the entrance to the tunnel and watch the players finish off their warm-up prior to the final

team talk before I could lead them out on to the hallowed turf (well, it was in my eyes, anyway!). I had dreamt of being on this pitch while watching the team from my season ticket seat in the Sky Blue Stand. My nerves were starting due to having just asked my hero, “Big Cyrille”, as he left the pitch for his autograph, of which he was happy to oblige.

‘Suddenly, “Killer” appeared from nowhere and said, “Right lads, come on, let’s go!” Bolton had already gone out first and they went towards the West End. I thought to myself, “You can’t do that, that’s City’s end!” During the warm-up I had a kickabout with Dave Bennett and I was also waving to my dad’s friend who was standing on the Kop. We then went to the centre circle to meet the opposition captain, Asa Hartford, for the coin toss and pre-match pictures. The referee asked us to leave the field of play as the match was due to commence.’



**City:** Steve Ogrizovic; Brian Borrows, Brian Kilcline, Trevor Peake, Greg Downs; Michael Gynn, David Phillips, Dean Emerson, Nick Pickering; Cyrille Regis, Dave Bennett. Subs: Steve Sedgley, Keith Houchen.

**Bolton:** Mike Salmon; Derek Scott, Mark Came, Dave Sutton, Jimmy Phillips; Asa Hartford, Julian Darby, Warren Joyce, Mark Gavin; Steve Thompson, Tony Caldwell. Subs: George Oghani, Mark Winstanley.

**Referee:** Mark Scott.

***The Pink, Saturday 10 January 1987:***

**Nice 'n' easy!**

**Gynn stars as City stroll it**

**Coventry City 3 Bolton Wanderers 0**

**(Downs 15, Regis 18, Bennett 45)**

**Att: 12,051**

Take-it-easy City cruised through into the fourth round of the FA Cup at Highfield Road today in front of 12,051 supporters. They booked their place at the expense of Bolton with first-half goals from Greg Downs, Cyrille Regis and Dave Bennett. For City it was just the sort of start they wanted as they hoped for a good cup run. In difficult conditions – the pitch was hard and slippery after all the frost – the scene was right for a giant-killing act. The Sky Blues made sure that wouldn't happen with a positive, aggressive opening which left Bolton flattened as Downs and Regis scored in the 15th and 18th minutes. Bennett made sure by scoring his ninth of the season right on the stroke of half-time after a bad error from goalkeeper Mike Salmon. The majority of the players found the conditions difficult and tricky but they were made to measure for the Sky Blues' little midfield man Michael Gynn. He revelled in them and Bolton could never come to grips with his lightning-fast runs which always created panic and danger in their defence. City seemed content to coast their way to victory in the second half and the game lost most of its excitement or sparkle.



Neville Foulger was the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*'s chief football writer in 1987 and also the author of *Coventry City: The Complete History Of The Club* published in September 1979. His match reports could also be found in *The Pink*, the sports paper produced by the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* which would be delivered, 6pm on the dot, by a man in a van who drove around Coventry at breakneck speeds to throw bundles of the paper into newsagents' doorways to await fans eager to read how City had performed that day. *The Pink* was an institution and part of your matchday experience as was the 'Foulger Match File' where Neville rated the players out of ten for their matchday performance and gave a brief analysis of the game.

**FOULGER MATCH FILE:** 'It's a tribute to City's improvement this season that they were able to defuse so easily a potentially dangerous cup tie. Bolton were never given a chance to explode so the game didn't take off in terms of excitement or entertainment. In the FA Cup, though, only the result matters.'

**NEVILLE FOULGER:** When Coventry set out on the cup run on that freezing day at Highfield Road against Bolton I remember shivering up in the press box. When they beat them you thought, 'We're through,' but there was no reason to expect anything special with the draw to follow.

**ANDY TURNER:** I was part of the 'Class of '86' at Leeds University studying communication and cultural studies. The matches I could make were limited to the occasional trip back to the Midlands so the earlier rounds passed me by and were followed from afar until the quarter-final.

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MICHAEL GYNN: George Curtis said to me, ‘You’re the first name on the team sheet today,’ as the pitch was like a skating rink. They probably wouldn’t have played the game in this day and age. It was really slippery and conditions suited my low centre of gravity.

George said after the game, ‘You played really well today,’ which was great to hear. It was my conditions, treacherous for everybody else, but great for me. It suited me and I’ll always remember the tie.

GREG DOWNS: The first goal in the cup run was mine, I hit it quite well although I think the keeper helped it in a bit. It was a worked free kick with fellow full-back Brian Borrows’s neat back-heel on a pitch that resembled an ice rink.

TREVOR PEAKE: The fact that Greg scored – his first for the club – was quite unusual. In those days full-backs did get forward but didn’t get many goalscoring opportunities. At that point, the third round, you’ve got no idea if you’re going on a cup run. I was in my fourth season at the club, the previous three cup runs and the ones after saw disaster quite early on so just getting through was an achievement even though they were Third Division at the time. It looked a comfortable tie for us on paper but, because I’d been there the previous three seasons, I knew never to take anything for granted.

STEVE OGRIZOVIC: At the start of every cup run, certainly when I played, third-round day could be a bit of a banana skin. We’d had some bad weather at the time of Bolton’s visit, we won it comfortably but Bolton were not an easy side to face. It’s always good to get into a

competition, you want to get through the first few rounds because, if you don't, you feel like you've failed. It was a game we expected to win and we did a professional job.

DEAN EMERSON: We played well. Bolton were in the Third Division and we were favourites to win. It was a comfortable victory for us.

CALVIN URQUHART: The club kindly gave my family tickets to watch the match from the Main Stand of which I remember the game being absolutely freezing, however, a 3-0 victory helps you to forget! At the time I was so grateful for being allowed the opportunity to run out with my team, never even contemplating to think this would be the start of a victorious campaign. I do still believe that, to this day, I was a lucky mascot!

IAN BOLTON: I started working in radio while I was a student at Warwick University. I'd seen this little advert on the student station noticeboard that said, 'Local radio station looking for someone to prepare and read the 10:30pm sports bulletin'. After years of trying to get into broadcasting, suddenly a door opened for me. I made a tape, sent it off to Stuart Linnell at Mercia Sound, and got the job! Having finished the course at Warwick in the summer of 1985, I decided to give radio a go, rather than return to my previous career in engineering. I spent the 1985/86 season reporting on Nuneaton Borough in the Gola League on a Saturday afternoon with Richard Tanner who worked for the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*. By the start of 1986/87 I was on a contract at Mercia and I remember Stuart saying he'd like me to cover Coventry City. I recall the opening game, a 1-0 defeat at West Ham. I

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spoke with Greg Downs afterwards, I doubt he remembers but he was always very approachable. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* headline when the third round draw was made in early December read 'Bolton at home'. Someone in the office at Mercia pinned it up and, before I left, I took the headline and pinned it to my bedroom door. I did on-air score updates from the match, with an off-air commentary, and then two reports at full time. There was one on the final whistle and another more considered report later on the Bolton victory on a freezing cold day at Highfield Road.

**JIM BROWN:** Bolton were easily beaten with the help of a great free kick from Greg Downs, his first goal in a City shirt.

**KEV MONKS:** When the third round draw was made, City were not playing particularly well. The FA Cup may have lost its magic in recent years nowadays with the likes of Manchester United and Arsenal fielding weakened sides but back in 1987 it was still the competition to win and when it came around, Bolton Wanderers at home, it was an important game as all ties were at the time. City pretty much breezed through with a 3-0 win.

**ROB SUMMERFIELD:** A bitterly cold day, I was under the weather, yet City shone through the winter gloom, mainly memorable for Greg Downs's free kick. Three up by half-time, it was a comfortable if low-key start.

**DEAN NELSON:** Two signings had been brought in, David Phillips and Keith Houchen, and it seemed the fun element had been restored as the players seemed more relaxed and united. Gates were still only just getting into double figures but the football was pleasing on the eye with

a better balance to the side. It was bitterly cold that day as I took my place on the Sky Blue Terrace with the pitch frozen in places. Greg Downs's indirect free kick helped to warm us up followed by goals from Regis and Bennett to take us into round four.

LEE CORDEN: It wasn't easy being a City fan in Exhall in 1986. My journey began as City took on Liverpool in the Littlewoods Cup on a Wednesday night in November. There was a kid in the year above at school who 'supported' Liverpool and gave me stick every time he saw me in my Cov shirt. Under George and John, City had started 1986/87 reasonably well and I decided to call this kid's bluff and offer him a bet that Coventry would beat the mighty Reds that evening. It was probably only for a quid but that, to a schoolboy, was enough to mean something was riding on it. I wasn't at the game but, by all accounts, City did okay and had a 0-0 draw to show for their efforts which wasn't bad against the team who had dominated English football from the late 1970s. I know for a fact this kid wasn't at the match either. When I say he 'supported' Liverpool, he basically wore the kit and took the proverbial out of anyone (there weren't many of us) who did the right thing and supported their home town club. We agreed the bet would carry over into the replay which City duly lost 3-1 as Jan Molby scored a hat-trick of penalties. From the angle I watched them from on TV they all looked dubious so I refused to pay up. My dad and I were at Highfield Road for the Bolton tie as Regis, Bennett and Downs scored.

MOZ BAKER: In 1987 I worked for the DHSS on the counter, a bit like the TV series *Bread* but without the

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comedy. I sat in the Main Stand at Highfield Road as I reported on games for the local service for the blind. We did a weekly update on all things Coventry-sport related and reported on home matchdays doing interviews afterwards. I'd be in the press box at the back of the stand for home games then for away games be on the terraces with everyone else. There was no real inkling that this was the start of something great, it was a routine third round win and we moved on to think, 'Who will we get in round four?'

MATT PARTRIDGE: I have lots of memories from 1987, some more cloudy than others after all these years! The abiding memory from the Bolton tie was the cold, the FA Cup Final ticket vouchers in the matchday programme and Greggy Downs scoring his first goal for the club and celebrating in front of the West Terrace.

ROB GURNEY: The first game I went to was Coventry against Spurs in late 1979. I chose City because they were my local team and I should get behind them and had a chance of watching them regularly. We then had a season ticket for a few years before I started work at Mercia Sound. I then stopped going as I was always doing other things at the radio station on a Saturday trying to make myself useful with non-league football and the like. In 1987 I was 18 years old and went to the Bolton game. I was covering Nuneaton in the Conference so it was rare to be free on a Saturday but the weather ensured Borough was postponed that day. For Manchester United, Stoke and Sheffield Wednesday I was covering Nuneaton matches at various places and followed via the commentary on the radio.

BLAKE WAUGH: In 1987 I was in the second year at Finham Park, along with the author, the only Cov fans in our class and my school books were covered in City posters from *Match* and *Shoot* magazines. I was in the West Terrace for the Bolton tie, an expected win but nothing to get too excited about.

BOB EALES: In 1987 I was in my 11th year of my 24 in the Royal Navy. At the time of the Bolton game I was at sea in the Iceland Faroes gap, a place I was to see a lot of during the cup run. The trouble when you are at sea is you only have the radio and at that time we could only get the results and the one game that was on the radio. There were no newspapers so there was no real knowledge of the game apart from the result. I was happy with beating Bolton and so convincingly but the usual thought for me was, 'Oh well at least we have got through one game in the cup,' as a pessimistic fan.

ANDY SCAYSBROOK: I've been watching City for the last 43 years. In 1983 I'd begun my photographic career and was looking to leave the company I was working for and break out on my own. I had always wanted to create the moment of my first ever game, a night fixture against Wolves, when I walked into the ground and saw the most incredible sight of my young life – the players were out warming up and the sight of the sky blue shirts against the lush green of the illuminated pitch struck me like a lightning bolt. I had never seen a photograph of the ground taken at night so I decided to approach the club and see if they would let me shoot a picture of Highfield Road at night from the floodlights. I wrote a letter to George Curtis

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and a week later I had a reply. My heart was beating as I picked up the letter which had a Coventry City Football Club stamp on it. How I had dreamed of this moment as a kid, of the letter reading 'Coventry City would like to offer you a position in our central midfield', but I was equally as excited just by the fact the club had written to me. It was from George and he invited me to Highfield Road to talk further about my ideas.

I knew I had to make a good impression and cannot remember being as nervous as I made my way up King Richard Street to the reception. I swear the light disappeared as his huge muscular frame appeared in the doorway bearing that huge smile he wears so well, 'Hello Andy, I'm George, come in.' I sat down, looked him square in the eye and blurted out some words which, to this day, I can't remember what they were. I showed him my portfolio and spoke about my desire to be a press photographer. He smiled and said, 'I think it's a great idea, let's get it done!' George made me feel so welcome and said, 'I tell you what Andy, I will get this sorted for you and, if you like, you can have a press pass and cover some matches for us, we give you the pass, you give us some pictures for the matchday programme which will help you get some work for the newspapers. What do you think?' I couldn't believe the words he was saying, the smile on my face could have lit up Coventry for a year! I shook his hand and thanked him from the bottom of my heart for his time and generosity. He smiled and said, 'It's a pleasure, I look forward to seeing your work.'

I started shooting for the programme, the first time I saw my picture on the front cover was a moment I will never forget. You want to see your work used well and

the buzz you get from a front page exclusive or a really good spread in a magazine never really leaves you. I've been fortunate to have my work published worldwide as well as in every UK newspaper but I can honestly say the biggest buzz I ever got from seeing my work in print was that programme cover as it was the start of a 30-year career as a press photographer. The picture was of Micky Adams and it appeared in the 1984 season against West Ham at Highfield Road.

By the beginning of the 1987 season I was getting regular covers and had become well known around the club on matchdays. I was friends with a number of players who treated me so well, there was none of this prima donna rubbish about these days. I had a great relationship with Cyrille, Benno, Killer, Lloydie and Peakey who was a great bloke always happy to help out. I would shoot the home games and also travel away mainly to shoot for my portfolio and other newspapers. I remember well the third round game at home to Bolton as I got a great shot of Greg Downs's goal. It was a straightforward win and I was delighted to get such a great shot from it.



ITV's *The Big Match* showed highlights that evening of Manchester United's 1-0 win over Manchester City, Arsenal's 3-1 victory at Reading and Caernarfon Town's goalless draw at home to Barnsley. Due to the freezing conditions the final tie of the round to be completed took place three weeks later on fourth round day as West Ham beat Orient 4-1. The highlight of round three saw Luton victorious against holders Liverpool after a second replay,

albeit on the artificial pitch at Kenilworth Road while Tottenham defeated Scunthorpe United 3-2 at White Hart Lane.

***Coventry Evening Telegraph,*  
Monday 12 January 1987:**

**Britain in grip of  
Russia's icy blast**

Britain today shivered in the grip of bitterly cold weather carried by winds from northern Europe and Russia. Many areas were experiencing their coldest day for years. Yesterday was the coldest in Coventry for 21 years and by mid-morning today the temperature in the city had reached only -7.5C.

**It's United away  
Tough but good chance says Peake**

Unlucky Coventry City must travel to Old Trafford in the fourth round of the FA Cup. They have been paired against back-to-form Manchester United on 31 January – for the second time in three seasons. Central defender Trevor Peake was confident that they could still win through, ‘Obviously we would have preferred a home match and this one at Highfield Road would have been a cracker. But we have no reason to fear taking on United at Old Trafford. There are worse places to go and I believe we