
Growing old disgracefully in football

Posted by Bored Of The Dance - 25-04-2008 10:35

When I first started playing football, I, like most people, had exciting proper football-ish injuries - sprained ankles, pulled hamstrings etc. I even had a broken rib at the same time as Beckham got his against Wales. I carried on playing for an hour after getting it though.

Now I am old, I have noticed that the injuries are all of the bad hip/bad back variety. I haven't even jumped on the "metatarsal" bandwagon because I am so old (and have pre-war football boots, probably)

I was hoping that Teddy Sheringham would fly the flag for us oldies and have to have a lay-off for arthritis or gout or something but no such luck.

Happily, I am hanging onto my youth somewhat as I have, for the second time in two years, picked up a dead leg, which not only appears to be enjoying a comeback as a fashionable injury for pro footballers but also has a thrilling air of children's football about it.

Suffering a dead leg from football is much like suffering a Chinese burn or a wedgie or being on the bottom of a bundle or something.

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Re:Growing old disgracefully in football

Posted by Pan Tau - 25-04-2008 16:34

(and have pre-war football boots, probably)

I stopped playing in a team when I was 23. So a couple of years ago, my son's school put on a game for parents, for which I enlisted. So I had my 1992/93 Man Utd replica shorts (which came with the jersey, and which I never wore), and a decent enough t-shirt. And then I dug up my trusty old Puma football boots, which on the tongue bear the legend "Made in West Germany". I'm the original retro man.

Good pair of boots though.

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Re:Growing old disgracefully in football

Posted by Bored Of The Dance - 26-04-2008 00:25

That is incredible. When was the last time you were able to buy any sports shoes that were made in Germany let alone West Germany

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Re:Growing old disgracefully in football

Posted by Harry Lime - 26-04-2008 01:59

It's a cruel mistress football. I used to play a bit, only local league level but I was actually quite decent, I always saw myself as a thinking mans player akin to Dalglish or Litmanen only with a nifty turn of pace.

I had to work at it to an extent because I was really small and slight but if I kept my fitness up and worked at my strength in the gym or whatever I could just about compete physically.

I had a few injuries - I ruptured tendons really badly in both ankles on the pitch - but I always imagined that when my pace bid it's final adieu I'd be able to just drop back a bit and carry on from there.

It never happened. First my stamina went at about 32, but I never adjusted to that because if I didn't tear around the pitch I just couldn't get into the game, so I'd gradually burn myself out. Then my pace went and suddenly playing became a chore.

The worst of it was, without a peak level of fitness or speed I found myself being shrugged off the ball by oafs much bigger than me who previously I'd have just about outfought and easily outplayed and I hated that.

I stopped playing, blaming it on the ankles which even now occasionally twinge and play up but really I resented the fact that I'd gone so crap so quickly because, and this was the real killer, I didn't have the footballing brain to be able to carry on dictating things regardless. Ego issues, possibly.

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Re:Growing old disgracefully in football

Posted by Bored Of The Dance - 26-04-2008 23:43

I find this a lot. Players that are far better than me give up because they can't play at the level they are used to, can't do what they are used to or haven't got the speed they used to have.

I have seen genuinely gifted players give up like this while I, being crap, trundle on.

I put this down to, what I call, the Carl Dale effect. When asked whether he felt he had lost pace at the end of his career, Dale said that he hadn't because he never has any in the first place.

I get by in football by actually being slower than I look. I sort of creep up the wing in a dawdling manner.

I always remember asking my Dad, who had trials for Cardiff and St Helens at rugby when he was younger, if he was quite pleased that he didn't take them up as carried on playing and enjoyed rugby until he was 50 while a lot of ex-Wales players retired early to tell their anecdotes. He thought for a minute and replied "Don't be bloody stupid, I would have loved to have played for Cardiff"

I sort of feel the same but am glad that I wasn't good enough to play Sunday league as I had no ambitions and am still enjoying just playing football. I have managed to play with a couple of ex-pro players including one of my childhood heroes and played games in Europe so I am happy

Slightly related, music is similar, I am a rubbish musician who has to work hard at it but I have carried on longer than a lot of more talented musicians who gave up when they didn't reach the level they thought they should. I am too stupid to quit, I guess

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