

# ROY ROVER OF THE

## Roy Race dreams of playing for his hometown club, Melchester Rovers. First, though, he needs to get scouted! In this awesome extract from Tom Palmer's new book, young Roy faces a tough test for his local team

Roy Race read in a magazine that to be really good at something you have to practise doing it 10,000 times.

Ten.

Thousand.

Times.

Inspired by what he'd read, Roy had dedicated his summer holidays to working on his footballing weakness, something he wanted to make into a footballing strength.

Volleying.

And now the moment had come for the practice to pay off.

Sunday morning in mid-September. Time for the first game of the season, which was always a big game. But, for Roy, it was an even bigger game. Today Roy was making his debut for the Grimroyd Under-18s.

The Moor had once been wild heather-smothered moorland above Melchester, Roy's home city. Now it was half a dozen waterlogged football pitches, where every autumn, the eight teams who used the pitches as their home ground played out a pre-season cup competition.

There was even a trophy. The Moor Cup. Round one. Grimroyd v

Low Moor. Within minutes of kick off Roy realised that practising alone in his back yard had been poor preparation for playing against the city's eighteen-year-olds. His coach – Yunis Khan – had told him to play up front, just behind the main striker. Coach wanted Roy to receive the ball, back to goal, then play the midfielders in as they surged forward.

That was the plan. On paper. On the pitch it was different.

The first time Roy did what he was asked he felt a painful jab in his back and found himself on the floor. The second time, his defender went straight through him. Roy stood up, dusted himself down and looked up into the eyes of the six-foot-three giant who was marking him.

'You're out of your depth, sunshine,' the giant growled.

Roy smiled at the defender, noticing his arms were thicker than Roy's legs.

One chance, Roy said to himself. I just need one chance to show you I'm not.

Roy Race wasn't the only one being hammered that morning on the pitch. His friend, Lofty Peak, was being

punished too. And there was reason for that: Lofty had been on the books of the city's Premier League team, Tynecaster United, since the age of six. But, at the end of last season, he'd been released. Lofty's history – and being six-foot-five – made him a marked man, with everyone desperate to prove they were better than him. Which was why Lofty was on the grass writhing in agony after an elbow to the throat.

Half time arrived. Roy gazed out across the other pitches. Rusty goal posts with ragged nets. An old man with his dog, watching the action. Roy knew him. The man was Fred. The dog, Rover.

'This is tough,' Roy said, his attention back on Lofty.

His friend looked miserable. 'Get used to it,' he scowled. 'It's part of the game. They're bigger than you. They've got more muscle. They'll use it, however good a player you are.'

'So that elbow in the neck was just part of the game?' Roy asked.

'It was,' Lofty said, gingerly touching his skin where a bruise was forming.

Suddenly a shadow blocked out the sun. But it wasn't a cloud. It was Vinny Sampson, the Grimroyd captain. Vinny looked like he was in his late twenties, even though he was only eighteen. His eyes had something wild about them.



# THE ERS™



'Boys,' Vinny growled. 'You two might think you're all grown up now you're in my team, but you're playing like five-year-olds. Get it together, understand?'

**Turn over to read our wicked interview with the author who wrote *Scouted*, Tom Palmer!**