



The Home Game.

*A new lifestyle quarterly for people who watch sport
from home, and refuse to think of it as a consolation.*

p.09 The Psychology of the Super-Fan — the long read.

p.15 Eight hours in a Norwich flat with a Liverpool fan.

p.06 The lost art of pie, mash and liquor.

p.04 Walking Southend's vanishing football geography.

01

FIRST ISSUE

On the *Bill*.

Eighteen pages,
one Saturday,
and the commonplace rhetorical
question of “Why do i bother”.

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“You don’t need a press pass to Wembley. You need a kettle, a sofa, and a point of view.”- *Will Harris*

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FROM THE EDITOR — ISSUE ONE

Three hundred miles from the *London Stadium*. *Will Harris, on starting a magazine for the rest of us.*



I was born twelve minutes from Roots Hall and I now live three hundred miles from the London Stadium. The maths of being a West Ham fan — properly, in person, with a season ticket — does not, as a Yorkshire-based student, work. The last home game I went to cost me forty-eight pounds for the ticket, sixty-two for the train, and one ruined Sunday morning for the journey home. The next time the same fixture came around, I watched it on a laptop, in a friend’s kitchen with a kettle on the stove and a cheese-and-ham toastie in the pan, and I had — and this is the bit I had not seen coming — a better afternoon than I had at the actual ground.

That, more or less, is the moment this magazine started.

For a long time I’d assumed I was failing at being a fan. The proper fans went to games. The proper fans had complaints about a left-back’s positioning that lasted a fortnight. I had Saturdays — twelve-hour Saturdays that began with making my own brown sauce and ended somewhere between Match of the Day and a long phone call with my dad about the same. I wasn’t watching less football than the people in the seats. I was watching it differently, three hundred miles away, with a different rhythm.

The data, it turns out, is on our side. Deloitte’s most recent fan survey found that for Gen Z and Millennials — me, and probably you — the live event is no longer the favourite way to consume sport. We watch from home, with friends, on second screens, while looking up an obscure 1986 West Ham squad because someone said something about Alan Devonshire. The average Premier League season ticket is £594. The Bundesliga’s is £179. Working out who priced whom out is left as an exercise for the reader.

This magazine is for people who watch from home and refuse to think of it as a consolation. The food page is the food we’ll cook on a Saturday. The travel section is the day out we’ll take when our team is away. The feature in the middle of every issue is a long piece about why we’re doing any of this. We’re not a fanzine. We’re not really a sports magazine, though we are about sport. We’re something we haven’t quite found the word for yet, which is, in our experience, usually how the good ones start.

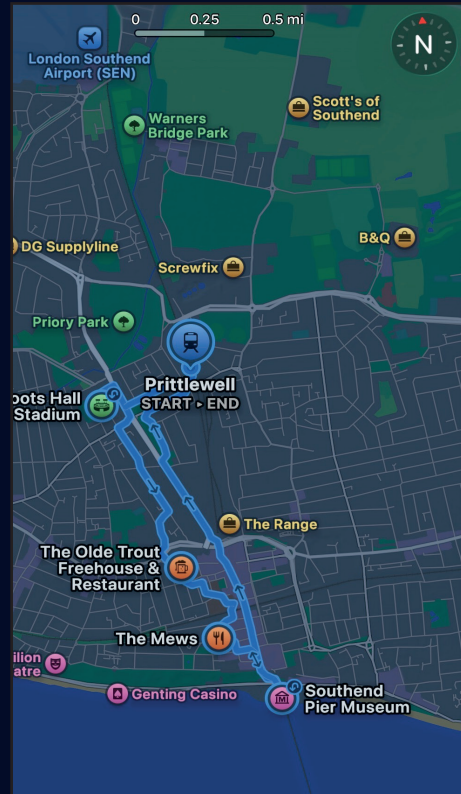
Issue One walks the football geography of my hometown, Southend, where Roots Hall is fighting for its life; gives an irresponsible amount of love to Pie & Mash; runs a long argument about why fandom isn’t ridiculous; and carries four interviews — with a social psychologist, a self-described super-fan, my friend Charlie (a Liverpool fan watching from a Norwich flat), and the chair of a non-league fan trust.

We made it for ourselves, which is to say, for you. Welcome to The Home Game. Get the kettle on. Kick-off in twelve minutes.

Will,
FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
HARROGATE, MAY 2026

The Roots Hall *Walk*

A pub, a freehouse, a doomed stadium and the longest pier in the world — a four-mile loop through Southend-on-Sea’s vanishing football geography, by a writer who grew up twelve minutes from the ground.



THE WALK, IN NUMBERS

4.1 mi

Prittlewell to the pier and back, allowing for two pubs and a long look at the sea.

03:37

Total time, including stops for around 2 hours. Less if the tide is out and you walk on the sand. Closer to ninety minutes if you don't sit down.

This walk is about going looking before there's nothing left to see. It's a four-mile loop, starts and ends at Prittlewell station, and is best done on a Saturday morning. From Prittlewell we cut west to Roots Hall, then south through the town to the seafront, and back up along the front.

Continued — Prittlewell, Roots Hall, and out to the pier.

Roots Hall, 1955–PRESENT?

Ten minutes west of Prittlewell station, Southend United have played here since 1955 - the only English ground named after the road behind it. It is also, at the time of writing, somewhere between a stadium and a memory. The club is in administration; the owner has spent five years trying to sell the land for housing. There are planning notices on the gates and grass growing through the steps of the South Stand.

I grew up on Boston Avenue, a few streets away. As a child I could hear the noise of a goal from my bedroom window before I heard it on the radio downstairs. The walk down West Road takes eleven minutes; I have done it once or twice. The last time, in February, the turnstiles were chained shut, and a man was photographing the chains. He had the look of someone whose job is photographing chains.

“I could hear the noise of a goal from my bedroom window before I heard it from Jeff Stelling on Sky” - Will Harris



Southend Pier

The Olde Trout is the kind of pub that has survived precisely by not changing - a proper freehouse, no TV barking over the bar, a guest ale that turns over too fast to predict. We stopped for one. The landlord, when I told him what I was writing, said the thing every Southend pub landlord says about Roots Hall: that the matchday trade was half his year, and that nobody from the council had asked him a single question about what happens to it when the ground goes.

The bit nobody tells you about football fandom is that it is, mostly, what you do with the people you cannot speak to about anything else - and that it holds up an entire economy of small rooms like this one. The Olde Trout, on a home Saturday, is the after-party for a thing that is about to stop happening. The Premier League could not, with all its broadcast money, manufacture this. Roots Hall was doing it for £18 a ticket.

The Mews, *and the sea*

We ate at The Mews, tucked off the front, where the menu is short and the windows look toward the estuary. Then the last half-mile down to the water and the Pier Museum, where the route ends – the pier itself a mile and a third of Victorian iron stretching out over the mud, the longest pleasure pier in the world, and the most Southend thing imaginable: enormous, slightly absurd, beloved, and quietly falling apart at the far end.

The Anatomy of *Pie & Mash.*

SERVES 4
90 MINUTES
BY WILL HARRIS

Before every West Ham trip myself, and our editor could manage, there was pie and mash - eaten standing up at a marble-topped counter in an eel-and-pie house, usually Tony's, which is older than the club. The mash slapped on with the back of a spoon, the green liquor poured over the lot. It is the most East End meal there is: cheap, beige-and-green, faintly absurd, and completely sacred. But you can make a version at home, the night before or three hours before kick-off, that does the memory justice. Here's how.

Method

INGREDIENTS

The Pies (makes 4)

- 500g beef mince (not too lean)
- 1 white onion, finely diced
- 2 tbsp plain flour & beef stock
- 500g shortcrust pastry, blind base + puff lid

The mash

- 1kg Maris Piper
- Splash of milk, butter, salt and pepper to taste

The liquor

- Parsley (a big handful)
- Butter, Flour and Stock (eel-stock, but veg is fine)

To serve

Chilli Vinegar (non-negotiable)

01

Brown the mince and onion hard. Stir in flour, then stock to a thick gravy. Season, cool. This is the filling – keep it tight, not soupy.

02

Line four pie tins with shortcrust, fill, lid with puff. The mismatch is traditional, not a mistake. Bake 25 min at 200°C until the lid is gold.

03

Boil the spuds, mash with butter and just enough milk. Keep it stiff – proper pie-shop mash stands up, it doesn't pour.

04

Liquor: melt butter, whisk in flour, add stock and a storm of chopped parsley. Simmer to a loose, vivid-green sauce.

05

Plate it wrong on purpose: pie one side, a spoonful of mash dragged across the plate, liquor over everything.

06

Chilli vinegar at the table. Eat with a spoon and fork. Never a knife.

The three things that *finish it.*

NO. 01

The Liquor

50g butter, 50g flour, 500ml stock (traditionally eel) handful of chopped parsley

Melt butter, whisk in flour, cook a minute. Add stock slowly to a loose sauce, then a genuinely excessive amount of parsley – it should be vividly green, almost alarming. Not gravy. Not pesto. Its own thing. Pour over everything.

NO. 02

Chilli Vinegar

300ml malt vinegar 2 tbsp dried chilli flakes (or whole dried chillies)

Warm the vinegar, add the chilli, decant into a bottle, leave a week. Every pie shop has a bottle of this on the counter, sticky-topped and unlabelled. A few shakes over the liquor is the whole point. Non-negotiable, as the recipe says

NO. 03

Jellied Eels?

A hard question best left to Manze's, Cooke's, or your nan

The honest answer: don't make these at home. Jellied eels are a thing you eat in the room they're made in, from people who've made them for a century. Buy them, respect them, or skip them. But know they're the third corner of the tradition, even if you never touch them.



WHAT TO DRINK, AND A MATCHDAY NOTE

A mug of tea, milk in last – the eel-and-pie houses never served beer, and there's something right about that. If you must, a pale ale. Time it so the pies come out of the oven as the build-up starts, not at kick-off; nobody wants to be plating mash during the warm-up. This is the meal *before* the trip, or before the telly – the one that used to come before the train to Upton Park, and now comes before the sofa. The ritual survived the move. So did the chilli vinegar.

Fan*alytics*.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND
A MAGAZINE FOR
FANS WHO STAY IN.

Every claim this magazine makes – that football has moved indoors, that the fan who watches from home is the rule and not the exception, that the industry hasn’t noticed – rests on a handful of numbers. Here are the three that matter most, and a few smaller ones that fill in the picture.

£74

BIG SIX AVERAGE - 2025

The price of being there.

The average ‘big six’ Premier League ticket in 2025 (BBC Sport) – two months of Spotify, or a good dinner for two, and a 19% rise on 2024. The Bundesliga’s average is under £28. No other major league comes close, and the gap is widening every season.

58%

GEN Z & MILLENIAL FANS

The share who still prefer it.

The portion of younger fans who say live events remain their favourite way to watch (Deloitte, 2023). For all fans it’s 71%. That thirteen-point gap is the most important number in this magazine – the distance between an industry’s assumption and an audience’s reality.

+51

MINUTES/DAY VS NON-FANS

What we do with the time.

Extra daily minutes fans spend on entertainment versus non-fans (Deloitte, 2025). Fans also spend \$71/month on streaming – 27% more. We are not casual. We are a market. The point is whether anyone treats us like one.

£594

Average Premier League season ticket. The Bundesliga equivalent is £179.

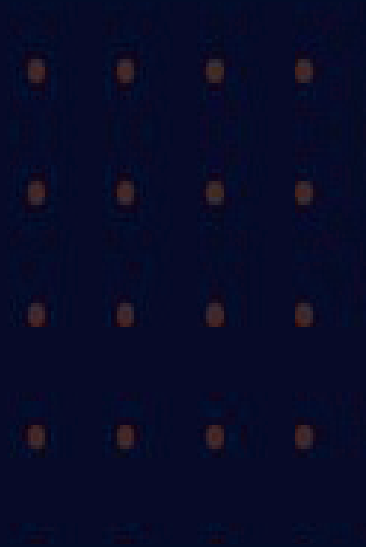
40%

Of UK fans now watch most matches via streaming rather than broadcast TV.

3.2m

UK adults who’ve attended a live game in a year – against tens of millions watching from home.

METHOD - FIGURES DRAWN FROM PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INDUSTRY RESEARCH, CROSS-CHECKED ACROSS AT LEAST TWO SOURCES WHERE POSSIBLE. TICKET DATA: BBC SPORT / PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON REPORT (2024-25) & SEATPICK EUROPEAN COMPARISON (JULY 2024). FAN-BEHAVIOUR DATA: DELOITTE ‘SPORTS FAN INSIGHTS’ (2023) & ‘DIGITAL MEDIA TRENDS’ 20TH ED. (NOV 2025). STREAMING AND ATTENDANCE GRAYBO (2022)



The Psychology of the *Super-Fan*

On *why* we are still doing this, and on a man called *Mark* who folds his coat the same way before every Norwich fixture, watches his side lose three-nil, and will do it again next week.

WITH PATRICIA GILGUNN
AND MARK ALLEN, NORWICH CITY FAN

THE BLACK HORSE

A rehearsed way of doing things, in hope of setting future events in motion.

On a sunny night in the summer of 2025, in a Norwich pub on called the Black Horse that’s not far from Carrow Road, I watched my friend’s dad, a man called Mark, perform what I can only describe as a small, private ceremony. The three of us were there for the League Cup tie: Norwich against Southampton, the kind of low-stakes fixture proper fans treat with deadly seriousness and everyone else ignores. Mark got to the pub first, sat at the table he always sits at before a game, folded his coat twice with the care of a man folding a flag, ordered a pint of Doom Bar, and read a programme from an earlier round cover to cover, including the adverts.

The scientific term for this is ‘magical thinking.’ The Norfolk term, more useful, is ‘doing the proper thing.’ I have known Mark since I was eleven. He has taken me to maybe a dozen games over the years, always with the same quiet choreography, and it took me until that night – notebook out, finally asking – to realise he had never once explained any of it. He just did it. So I asked him to.



Q. Why the folded coat?

If I don’t fold it like that, we don’t win. I know how that sounds. I’m not daft. But I also know the last few times I did it, we won, so I’m not about to stop now, am I.

Q. When did all this start?

Honestly? I couldn’t tell you the day. It builds up. You do something once, the team wins, so you do it again. Twenty-odd years later you’ve got a whole routine and you can’t remember deciding any of it. It’s like handwriting. Nobody chooses how they write an ‘e’.

Q. Does your family think you’re mad?

My wife thinks so and she’s right. But she touches the same bit of the door frame on her way out for work, so. We don’t discuss it. My son pretends he’s above it. He’s not. He sat in exactly the same seat as last round tonight, and don’t let him tell you otherwise.

What strikes you, watching Mark, is how little of it is superstition in the way a sceptic means the word. He doesn’t really believe the coat wins games. He believes – and this is different – that the doing of it is part of being a supporter, the way standing for a hymn is part of being at a wedding whether or not you believe a word of it. The ritual is the membership card. We finished the pints and walked down to Carrow Road in the rain, and he told me about the away end at Portman Road in 1985 the way other men talk about their wedding day.

THE BLACK HORSE

On losing, and why the ritual will almost always survive.

The ritual is the membership card. He doesn’t really believe the coat wins games, he believes the doing of it is part of being a supporter.

Q. It clearly doesn’t work — we lost three-nil tonight. Doesn’t that bother you?

Not in the way you mean. People think you do the routine to win. You don’t. You do it because it’s yours, and because thirty years of Saturdays have to be about something. We lost. I’ll still fold the coat next week. If anything you need the routine more when they’re rubbish – anyone can enjoy it when you’re winning.

Q. You could watch at home for nothing. Why still come?

Because the telly can’t do the bloke next to me I’ve sat beside fifteen years and whose name I’ve never once asked. You don’t get that on a sofa. Although, at these prices” – he laughed – “ask me again next season.

Q. What would you say to younger fans who only ever watch from home?

I wouldn’t lecture them. They’ve been priced out, not made lazy – that’s on the clubs, not them. I’d just say: find your own version of the coat. Whatever it is. The thing that makes a Saturday feel like a Saturday. You don’t need a turnstile for that. You just need to mean it.

Walking back through the wet after the 3-0, Mark wasn’t sulking, exactly - he was adjudicating. The first goal was ‘a mistake, you have to hold your hands up.’ The second was ‘just a good finish, fair play to him.’ The third ‘should never have stood, the linesman’s having a nightmare.’ Three goals conceded, three completely different verdicts, each delivered with the precision of a man marking an exam.

There, in those verdicts, is the entire architecture of being a fan: the granularity of the rules, the moral weight given to small differences, the sense that how you lose matters as much as whether you lose - and that the routine carries on regardless, the coat folded the same way next week, because it was never really about the result. The first conclusion of this piece, then:

Fan ritual is not an accident or an embarrassment, and it has almost nothing to do with the result. It is the engine, not the steering.

“The purpose of psychology is to give us a completely different idea of the things we know best.”

- Paul Valery

THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING

Years of research, and a relationship with hope.

Patricia Gilgunn is a retired psychologist and a University of Westminster alumna. She is not a lecturer and has never wanted to be one, her career was spent in practice rather than the lecture theatre, thirty-odd years of it, and the thing she keeps coming back to in retirement is ritual: why people build it, what it does for them, and why we are so quick to be embarrassed by it. I told her about Mark and the folded coat, and she nodded the way a clinician nods at a symptom they have seen a thousand times.



This is the part of her thinking that surprised me most. Gilgunn’s argument is not that fandom is a harmless eccentricity to be tolerated, but that it is doing genuine psychological labour, rehearsing us, every single week, in how to want something badly and then survive not getting it.

In thirty years of practice, she says, the people who coped best with disappointment were almost never the ones who had insulated themselves from it; they were the ones with a structure that let them feel it safely and move on. The routine is a kind of scaffolding. Mark, three-nil down and folding his coat for next week, was not in denial. He was, in Gilgunn’s terms, doing something rather sophisticated.

Q. What is fan ritual actually doing?

Giving you a stable structure of meaning in a world that increasingly doesn’t have one. The lucky shirt isn’t about luck. It’s about Tuesday evening having a shape.

Q. Should we be embarrassed by it?

No. The people I worry about clinically are the ones who don’t have any of this – no team, no church, no choir, no allotment, nothing structured and shared. The fans aren’t the problem. The atomised are.

Q. Does it matter that football is the vehicle?

That’s the silliest bit, and the most genius. Anything that lasts as a meaning-system has to be about something that doesn’t matter in the literal sense. Football lets you be wrong every week. It gives you a relationship with hope and disappointment that’s contained – bounded by ninety minutes and a final whistle. Real life isn’t bounded like that. That’s why it’s such good practice.

THE POINT, THE OUTCOME AND THE MEANING

Rediscovering the passion at home.

Q. Is there such a thing as too much?

Of course. When the team becomes the only structure – when a result can ruin a marriage, a week, a whole sense of self – that’s not ritual any more, that’s dependence. The healthy version is one pillar among several. The unhealthy version is a single load-bearing wall.

Q. What about people who stop and walk away from their club?

They grieve. I mean that precisely. The data looks like bereavement: the same stages, the same slow tail. They’ve lost a structure that organised thirty years of weekends. People underestimate that completely.

Q. And the fans who now watch from home, not the ground?

Same psychology, new venue. The ritual just relocates – the kettle, the same seat on the sofa, the friend who always comes round. The need it meets is identical. What’s changed is that the institution charging for it has become optional.

“The brain is built to change in response to experience”

– Richard Davidson

The point isn’t the outcome. The point is the structure of meaning, in a world that increasingly doesn’t have any.

– PATRICIA GILGUNN

That last answer is, in a sentence, the reason this magazine exists. Deloitte’s research suggests fans aged 14 to 40 watch as much football as ever, but differently: from home, on second screens, with fewer pints and more conversation, the score muted until they choose to look. As mentioned before, a Norwich fan put it to me, it is ‘the slow, quiet professionalisation of being a fan. We are deciding the limits ourselves now. The clubs aren’t.’

The structure Gilgunn describes, repeated ritual, costume, song, organised hope, tolerated disappointment, belonging without acquaintance - is, taxonomically, a religion. Not like one. One. That we don’t call it that is a small embarrassment of secular life; that it no longer needs a stadium to be practised in is something the clubs have not begun to reckon with. Mark will be at Carrow Road next week, coat folded twice. His son will watch the away games from a flat in Norwich with the curtains shut. They are, whatever the route, doing the same ancient thing - arranging themselves into a tribe so loose and so devoted that they don’t, most of the time, recognise it as one. They just call it Saturday.

THE RECALIBRATION

A generation working it out in real time

Fandom is not free. It can become an excuse for poor mental health, deferred adulthood, financial irresponsibility, and tribal aggression that, on bad nights, becomes worse than tribal. The truth is probably that fandom is a tool — good or bad depending on what you ask it to do. Asked to organise a Saturday and give you a manageable disappointment every week, it is miraculous. Asked to be the load-bearing wall of your wellbeing, it is structurally insufficient. The trick is knowing which you’re doing.

What I did not see coming when I started this piece is that we are, as a generation, in the middle of a quiet recalibration. Not abandoning fandom — recalibrating it. Deloitte’s research suggests fans aged 14 to 40 watch as much football as ever, but differently: from home, on second screens, with fewer pints and more conversation, the score muted on Twitter until they choose to look. As one Norwich supporter outside Carrow Road put it to me, it is ‘the slow, quiet professionalisation of being a fan. We are deciding the limits ourselves now. The clubs aren’t.’

Walking back through the wet after the 3-0, Mark wasn’t sulking, exactly — he was adjudicating. The first goal was ‘a mistake, you have to hold your hands up.’ The second was ‘just a good finish, fair play to him.’ The third ‘should never have stood, the linesman’s having a nightmare.’ Three goals conceded, three completely different verdicts, each delivered with the precision of a man marking an exam.

There, in those verdicts, is the entire architecture of being a fan: the granularity of the rules, the moral weight given to small differences, the sense that how you lose matters as much as whether you lose — and that the ritual carries on regardless, the coat folded the same way next week, because it was never really about the result. It almost certainly does something. It just isn’t doing the thing Mark thinks it’s doing. We have arranged ourselves into a tribe so loose and so devoted that we don’t, most of the time, recognise it as one. We just call it Saturday.

- ends -

SECTION 05 - EIGHT HOURS WITH...

Eight Hours with Charlie.

A Liverpool fan who has been to Anfield once since he was nine, a one-bedroom flat in Norwich, and the most committed Saturday ritual I have been allowed to watch.



08 : 30

Breakfast

On matchdays, Charlie will head down to The Street Cafe on Magdalen Street for breakfast. It’s a place he goes to fairly often each week. But match-days are a guarantee and are what makes it so special. A sausage and bacon bap is on the menu, with HP, not Ketchup.

10 : 30

Walk with Kenny

Between 10:30 and 11:00, Charlie takes Kenny, his Border Collie named after Sir Kenny Dalglish, around the neighbourhood. He says that, so when he returns home, the fixtures are usually just about to be announced. At this point, he slips into football mode; the 2005 Gerrard shirt appears.

12 : 25

Pre-Match

Charlie is parked on his preferred spot on the sofa, Fantasy Premier League open and ready. He prefers Walkers Cheese and Onion as a snack on match-days, which I found a bit conspicuous, but he reckons they’ve won a few recently, so why change now? I love it.

12 : 30

Kick-Off

Liverpool vs Chelsea begins, a big game for both sides. phone is face down, out of sight and out of mind.

14 : 30

Full-Time

The game ended in a 1-1 draw between Liverpool and Chelsea. I asked him what went wrong, which I meant in a psychological sense; however, I got an earful about how the ref might have had a bad day at work.

15 : 00

The Interview

After the dust had settled, I asked Charlie a series of questions, which included the last visit to Anfield and why staying at home is the move.

16 : 30

Hometime

After watching Charlie’s matchday ritual in full flow, it’s time to head home. Truly fascinating what some people do with their spare time.

The Post Match Conversation

SAT 09 MAY 2026
CHARLIE’S KITCHEN

PROFILE - CHARLIE HOWES, 23, PLASTERER. CONDUCTED BY WILL HARRIS

Q: Hi Charlie, thanks for letting me follow your matchday. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Hi mate, no worries. I’m a lifelong Liverpool fan living in a one-bedroom flat in Norwich. I’ve only managed to get back to Anfield once since I was nine. Now, matchdays at home are my Saturday ritual.

Q: Walk me through your typical matchday morning. What do you do first?

I go to The Street Cafe on Magdalen Street around 08:30 for breakfast—usually a sausage and bacon bap with HP sauce.

Q: And after breakfast?

Around 10:30 I walk Kenny, my Border Collie—named after Sir Kenny Dalglish. Back home, I put on my 2005 Gerrard shirt and get into football mode.

Q: What’s your pre-match setup like?

By 12:25 I’m on the sofa, Fantasy Premier League open, and Walkers Cheese & Onion crisps ready—lucky ones lately.

Q: Then it’s kick-off at 12:30. Liverpool vs Chelsea today — how do you watch the game?

Phone goes face down, out of sight, out of mind. I fully focus on the match. Big game for both sides.

Q: How did the game go?

It finished 1-1. Decent result, but I wondered what went wrong—especially mentally. Thought the ref had a shocker too.

Q: Why do you follow all these rituals so strictly every Saturday?

These rituals—breakfast, walk, same seat, same crisps—build atmosphere and help me feel connected to the game even far from Anfield. Doing things a certain way is comforting and helps me get into the right headspace.

Q: And why do you think we as fans bother with all this in the first place?

It’s more than just a game. Supporting Liverpool is a huge part of my identity. The rituals, nerves, hope, and even disappointment give us something to look forward to. It connects us with millions of other fans doing the same thing. In routine life, this passion and these traditions make everything feel more meaningful. Win or lose, it’s our club.

- ends -

The Last Word.

A REGULAR INTERVIEW
AT THE BACK OF EVERY ISSUE

Steve Wiltshire

CHAIR. BATH CITY SUPPORTERS CLUB.
21st MAY 2026

Steve Wiltshire chairs one of England’s longest-running fan-owned clubs, and has spent fifteen years arguing - mostly without applause, that English football has a structural problem most fans only notice when their own club hits it.

Q1. In one sentence — what has gone wrong with English football?

It’s been turned, over thirty years, from a community asset into an investment vehicle, and nobody running it ever once asked the people watching it whether that was fine.

Q2. When did you first notice it yourself?

2009. I’d been going to Bath City a decade. The club nearly folded. We bought it, supporters, raising the money in church halls and pub back rooms. That was the moment I understood that nobody is coming to save your football club. You either do it yourselves or you watch it disappear. And a lot of people are watching theirs disappear right now without quite admitting that’s what’s happening.

Q3. The Premier League average ticket is £74. Bath City’s is £14. Is your model the answer?

It’s an answer. Not for everybody, we’ll never win the Champions League, and I’m not pretending otherwise. But our average crowd is up 38% in three seasons. That’s not romance. That’s a generation that has done the maths and decided £14 to stand somewhere that needs them beats £74 to sit somewhere that doesn’t.

Q4. Is fan ownership romantic, or practical?

Mostly practical, which surprises people. They think it’s about loving the club. It’s about governance. We have an AGM. We have a vote. The chair, me - is re-elected every two years and can be turfed out. Compare that to a club owned by one man in another country who answers to nobody and can move your ground, your colours, your kick-off times, your soul, and never take a single question.

Q5. Most readers of this magazine watch from home. What can they actually do?

Pick a non-league club within an hour of where you live. Go to one game a season. Just one. Buy a pin badge, buy a programme, buy a pie. Stand on a terrace where you can hear the manager swearing at the linesman. You will leave with a better idea of why football matters than ten years of any broadcast will give you. And you’ll have put money somewhere it stays in the game, instead of leaving the country.

Q6. Why do this magazine’s readers matter to you specifically?

Because the fan who watches from home has been written off, by the clubs, by the broadcasters, by everyone. And that fan is, statistically, most fans now. If somebody organised them, they’d be the single most powerful interest group in the sport. Whether anybody manages to is, I think, the real question of the next decade. You lot reaching them is part of that, whether you meant it to be or not.

Q7. Does fan ownership scale? Could a Premier League club run this way?

Germany does it, fifty-plus-one, the fans hold the majority. So don’t tell me it can’t be done at the top level; it’s being done every weekend in the biggest league in Europe by attendance. The question isn’t whether it works. It’s whether anyone here with power wants it to.

Q8. Last one, what would you tell an 18-year-old fan today?

Find a club whose name you can say without flinching at who owns it. Go and watch them. Take your mates. Buy the programme. The Premier League is a television product now, and a magnificent one, but it’s a product. Football, the actual sport, the thing that matters, is still happening somewhere cheaper down the road, and the people there will be genuinely, visibly pleased to see you walk in.

House *Rules.*

THE UNWRITTEN LAWS
OF WATCHING FROM HOME

01

The phone goes *face down.*

From kick-off to the whistle. No scores, no Twitter, no notifications lighting up the room. The whole point of being here is being here. The group chat will survive ninety minutes without you.

02

Whoever's team is playing holds the *remote.*

Non-negotiable. It is their afternoon. You are a guest in their hope. You do not get to flick to the other game at half-time because yours has gone quiet.

03

Food is ready before *kick-off.*

Not during. People should arrive to the smell of something, not to you plating up in the eighty-eighth minute with your back to the only goal of the game. Cook early. Sit down. Watch.

04

No running commentary *nobody asked for.*

One considered observation per passage of play. You are not on the radio. If you must shout, shout at the screen, like everyone else, and not a beat after the thing has already happened.

05

You do not 'leave to beat the *traffic.*'

There is no traffic. You are at home. The defining luxury of watching from the sofa is that you stay until the fourth official's board has gone dark and the analysis has started. Earn it.

06

If you called the score, you may say so *once.*

Exactly once. A single, dignified acknowledgement that you predicted it. Repeat it and you forfeit the right to predict anything, ever again, for the rest of the season.

THESE RULES ARE OBSERVED IN THE EDITOR'S FLAT AND OFFERED WITHOUT AUTHORITY. YOUR HOUSE, YOUR RULES, BUT THESE ARE THE RIGHT ONES. DISAGREEMENTS TO WILLHARRIS2113@GMAIL.COM, WHERE THEY WILL BE NOTED AND IGNORED.

COMING IN ISSUE 02 · THE HALF-TIME ISSUE · SEPTEMBER 2026

THE FEATURE

Fan culture in Leeds, Sheffield & Newcastle.

THE TRAVEL

Walking Sheffield's seven hills, by way of Hillsborough and Bramall Lane.

THE FOOD

Slow-cooker brisket — the half-time meal, with a controversial use of celery.

THE LAST WORD

A Premier League TV producer on what the cameras refuse to show.