

The colourful story of how the Arsenal playing strip has evolved over more than 100 years

1930



1935



1950



1955



1957



1963



1970



1978



1980



1983



1989



➤ The origins of Arsenal's kit tell a great and unusual story.

In 1895, two years before the Club became professional, a small group of Nottingham Forest players, Fred Beardsley, Bill Parr and Charlie Bates, joined Dial Square FC, (the Club's first name) and brought their old red kit along with them.

Working to a tight budget, the Club decided the most inexpensive way of acquiring a strip was to kit out the team in the same colour as the ex-Forest players. This original kit comprised a dark red shirt with long sleeves, a collar and three buttons down the front. The shirt was worn with white knee length shorts and heavy woollen socks with blue and white hoops. The goalkeeper wore the same attire apart from the shirt, which was a hand knitted cream woollen polo neck jumper. It was this dark red kit that

the team wore during their first season at Highbury in 1913/14. Beardsley, Parr and Bates' generosity in providing shirts and inspiring the Club to play in red encouraged several other teams to follow Arsenal's lead. One of the most famous examples is Sparta Prague whose president, Dr Petric, visited London in 1906. He returned home to Czechoslovakia after having watched Woolwich Arsenal and was so inspired by the kit that he demanded his team play in the same colours. Today, Sparta Prague continue to play in the same dark red kit, not dissimilar to Arsenal's 2005/06 redcurrant.

It was the arrival of manager Herbert Chapman, the 'Great Innovator', in 1925 that launched the Arsenal kit as we know it today. Depending on which source you believe, Chapman either noticed someone at the ground wearing a red sleeveless sweater over a white

shirt or played golf with famous cartoonist of the day Tom Webster, who wore something similar. Either way, the 'look' inspired the manager to create a new strip combining a red shirt with white collar and sleeves. It also incorporated the Club badge, which was positioned on the left-hand side of the shirt.

In the 1950s a second kit was developed to combat any clash of colours with opposing home teams wearing similar kits. And, in around 1960, the Club moved away from the woven rugby shirt style to a new knitted cotton jersey.

The Club's famous cannon graphic appeared on the shirt for the first time in the early 1970s. It was with this shirt that Arsenal won their first famous 'double', both the League Championship and the FA Cup in the 1970/71 season. In the late 1970s, the shirt featured a kit manufacturer's logo for the first time, in

this case 'Umbro'. And in 1982 'JVC' became the Club's first shirt sponsor, eventually making way for 'SEGA' in 1999. Three years later and 'O2' replaced the games company before 'Fly Emirates' took up the sponsorship in 2006. A deal which will last for eight years. In the 2005/06 season, to commemorate the Club's final campaign at Highbury, the home of Arsenal since 1913, the Gunners wore a special 'redcurrant' shirt. Designed to honour the colour of the Club's set of shirts for the first season at Highbury, they were adorned with gold lettering and accompanied by white shorts and redcurrant socks.

For season 2006/07, the first at Emirates Stadium, a welcome return to the famous red and white was made – although the redcurrant remains to some extent in subsequent strips.

In 2007/08 the Club launched a white-shirted away

kit with redcurrant shorts, designed to pay tribute to the influence of Herbert Chapman on the Club, alongside a redcurrant and navy third kit which was believed to be Arsenal's first-ever striped effort. The Chapman-inspired kit sparked reminders that he first introduced white sleeves to the Gunners' shirts, and also pioneered the design of hooped socks – which he believed would help players recognise one another more easily. Last season, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of winning the title at Anfield, the yellow and blue away kit was modelled on that which was worn on that famous night on May 26, 1989. For 2009/10, the away kit features a 'midnight blue' design, including a polo collar inspired by those worn by the all-conquering side of the 1930s. In common with the current home kit, it bears the Club's motto, 'Victoria Concordia Crescit', inside its neck. ■

2009



2009



2009



2006



2005



2002



1998



1993



1990

