THE OFFICIAL MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

ROCKY

LIVERPOOL
SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2021 • 8PM • £3.50

Arsenal

Premier League

adidas

Emirates

Visit Rwanda

No room for racism
Travel with PEACE OF MIND

Dear Arsenal Fans

We, as a family, are honoured to be contributing to the programme for this evening’s Premier League match against Liverpool to celebrate our dad on what is the 20th anniversary of his death.

Arsenal was always Dad’s club and he had such a special bond with the supporters – one that I don’t think as his children we really knew the full extent of until after his death. Around this time of the year we are inundated with messages, pictures and memories – it’s become very clear to us how much the Arsenal fans loved our dad and what he stood for.

What’s so special is that much of that affection stems from his personality. He was at Arsenal during a very successful period, including the famous 1998 league victory that came at the expense of today’s opponents. He also won another league title, a League Cup, his 14 England caps all came when playing in red and white and he was twice in the PFA Team of the Year during his time at Highbury. He was an important player for the club under the guidance of George Graham. But off the field is where he seemed to have won the hearts of the fans, just by simple things such as always signing autographs, making time for people and treating everyone as equals – values him and our mother have always taught us.

Dad had to make it the hard way at Arsenal. He came from a working-class family in South London and as a teenager he had to travel on his own via public transport to get to training. He was given an opportunity at a young age and grabbed it with both hands – something many of his teammates from that era did – with some of them sharing their memories of him in this programme.

Tonight’s programme also consists of features with other players that have been handed the Arsenal number seven shirt – it’s a number that Dad wore with huge pride, knowing that he was following in the footsteps of other legends such as Liam Brady and Geordie Armstrong.

Arsenal vs Liverpool is usually one of the standout Premier League games. We have enjoyed some fantastic victories over them but in recent years they have certainly been on top since Jurgen Klopp arrived at Anfield. For Ryan it’s a particularly unforgettable fixture because he was the mascot in the 2001 FA Cup final when Liverpool beat Arsenal 2-1 just a couple of months after Dad’s death. Here’s hoping we can avenge that today, almost 20 years later, with three points.

CONGRATULATIONS

Melissa, Ryan and Monique

Fly Better

There’s no hiding our smiles, even with our masks on. Some things may have changed, but our warm welcome is still the same. Fly with us to your next destination with peace of mind knowing our highly trained cabin crew are there to look after your comfort and safety all the way.

Fly safer with Emirates

Emirates

Arsenal
MIKEL ARTETA

It’s so great to be back at the Emirates after a couple of weeks without a game.

The schedule this season has been so crazy that it feels strange not to have a game for this long, but we have used the time well, we’ve been training hard and we are ready for the final two months of the season.

The work hasn’t stopped over the past two weeks. Far from it. Lots of players have been away playing internationals, but those who have been here have been working, and we’ve been analysing our recent performances and looking at what we can do better. Our focus has been on this Liverpool game since the end of our last game, away to West Ham.

That was a crazy day and I have to say that the first half an hour was really disappointing, we just weren’t at the races.

We didn’t win enough challenges, we didn’t win enough duels, we were too stretched as a team, we didn’t show enough urgency – and when that happens, you get punished.

Their first goal was great quality to be honest, but the other two we conceded were completely unacceptable. Why was it a slow start against West Ham? I don’t like to use excuses. If somebody is not fit to play ‘Thursday to Sunday, he needs to say before the game ‘I am not fit’ because on minute one to ten, I’ve been there and you cannot put the blame on tiredness that early. After 60, 70 or 80 minutes, okay I understand because we are human beings. If that had happened at the end, then maybe we

@AFCProgramme
would have been closer to using tiredness as an excuse. But at the start of the game? No.

So we showed a face that we still have in those moments, but then after that, for the next 60 minutes, we probably played the best that I have seen us play considering the very tough conditions. That’s a moment when any team could collapse and start to blame each other, have bad body language and then concede four, five or six.

We did completely the opposite. We united, we did exactly what we had to do and we got better and better. It’s a shame because looking at the chances, we should have scored more and could have won the game.

But it’s down to me – it’s my responsibility to make sure we approach the game in the right way for the full 90 minutes. We have shown we can reach that level, now we have to stay there all the time.

That is where we are heading and we have to stop giving the opponents anything, because the last shot that West Ham had for example – when they hit the post – was from a throw-in where we gave them the ball and they went through, it’s too simple.

“I’M NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE CULTURE OR THE SPIRIT IN THE TEAM BECAUSE WE’VE COME SO FAR ON THAT”

What keeps me awake is why we keep giving things to the opposition. It has happened too many times, and at this level you cannot do that because the opponents are so good and the margins are not that big.

For the rest of that performance though, I was incredibly proud of the team. The way we played, the courage that we showed, how much belief we had that we could go on and win the game – and I sensed that at half time, which is not easy and it shows me as well how far we have come together.

We can work on the rest and we are working on it.

Now I’m not worried about the culture or the spirit in the team because we’ve come so far on that and I’ve seen so many positive things to back up what I’m saying. I am not worried about that. I am worried with the levels that we can show within a game and I think that’s where we are still far from the top teams.

That’s our challenge today. You know when you play Liverpool you simply cannot allow these mistakes. They are the champions, they have quality all over the pitch, and will hurt you enough without us making things easy for them. But also we should remember how we worked hard to beat them here last year, and also in the Community Shield and Carabao Cup earlier this season.

Finally I want to pass on my words of tribute to the great David Rocastle. We always remember Rocky at this time every year, and it doesn’t get any easier to think of how his life was so tragically taken away when he was so young. He was just 33, but his legacy lives on forever – through his family and through the football club.

He is a part of our history, but he’s also a part of our present and our future – because his name, and the values that he stood for – continue to live within the ethos of this club. And all of the young players that come through the system here are inspired not only by what he achieved, but also by how he behaved.

He remains a fantastic role model, we will always remember him, and we will always be grateful and proud to say that he’s a real Arsenal man.
It seems like it’s been a long time since our last game here at the Emirates, and now we are all fired up for the final two months of the season.

The last game here was in the Europa League against Olympiacos, and although we lost on the night, that was all about just getting through to the next round.

That’s what we did in the end, and we deserved it over the two games. Obviously we’d have liked to get the win at home as well, and I should have scored, but every game is difficult at this stage of the competition – any opposition can beat you and we saw some big results in the Europa League in that round.

We got through though, and now we’ve got a quarter-final to look forward to against Slavia Prague, who have already knocked out some big teams.

We worked hard over the two legs against Olympiacos and I don’t know, maybe that’s why we had a slow start against West Ham in the next match.

We could not get going at all at the start of the game, and in the Premier League you will always be punished when you play like that. It was so strange, because we had been controlling games well going into that match. We were confident and we spoke before about dominating the game again, starting well and not giving the opposition any time or chances.

You have to credit West Ham though, they came at us strongly and took advantage of our slow start. They are a very strong side who are having a good season.

But you know with our team that we are always going to show spirit and fight. Even at 3-0, we looked at each other and said this isn’t us – we can do so much better. It’s up to us.

Then we started to take over. Ceballos put in some good crosses all afternoon and Lacazette scored a great goal to get us back in the game. I can’t believe they said that’s an own goal. It should be Lacazette’s, for sure.

It was a great goal and a great time to score, and we could even have got another before half-time.

It really lifted us though because in the changing room at half-time we were all really positive and saying to each other that we can come back, and maybe even win it. That’s what we were thinking of.
RICHARD HALL’S
HOLIDAY IN
RWANDA

ARSENAL FAN RICHARD WON AN 8-DAY HOLIDAY FOR 2 TO RWANDA AT THE 2019 ‘VISIT RWANDA CHAMPIONS CHALLENGE’.

SPOTTING ELEPHANTS IN NAGERA NATIONAL PARK

“This has taken my breath away. Seeing the mountain gorillas in the wild.”

MARA & RICHARD VISITING MOUNTAIN GORILLAS IN VOLCANES NATIONAL PARK

MARA & RICHARD VISITING MOUNTAIN GORILLAS IN VOLCANES NATIONAL PARK

RICHARD & MARA ON THE CANOPY WALKWAY IN NYUNZI NATIONAL PARK

WATCH THE VIDEO AT: WWW.VISITRWANDA.COM

VISIT RWANDA

TOURISM PARTNER

@ARSENAL
@ARSCOM
@MARA_RICHARD

Calum put in another great cross for the second goal. I was waiting for it behind Dawson but it doesn’t matter how it went in – we just wanted that goal! Then the big man Laca scored a great header from Nico’s cross. You saw in the reaction and celebration how pumped up we were.

“But you know with our team that we are always going to show spirit and fight”

We still had time to win it, but afterwards you have to say we did well to come back from three goals down and get a point.

That was our last game but it seems a long time ago because a lot of us have been away in the past few days playing for our country.

I had a big game for Gabon against DR Congo and was so pleased to be able to help us qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations.

We won 3-0 and I got an assist and scored, but really I’m so proud of how the whole team did. It was a great performance – we knew what we had to do going into the game and we really deserved it.

It means we can look forward to going to Cameroon for the finals next year.

But now all of us are just thinking about club football for the next couple of months.

We’ve got some really big games coming up – hopefully we will be playing every few days from now until the end of the season. So we have to be professional, be prepared, get our rest at the right times and be ready to go on matchday.

Today’s game is obviously a huge one, against the defending champions.

Liverpool are a team of huge quality, even if they have had a difficult time lately. But that has mainly been at home, and we’ve seen them in a few games lately and they will always be dangerous with the players they have – especially up front.

They have proved that for years in the Premier League and we will have to be at our best again today to keep them quiet.

The gap is not too big to them though, we are four points behind, and this is a big opportunity for us to get even closer to them and the other teams above us. We are at home and we have to be really strong here now for the rest of the season.

Finally I want to finish these notes by talking about David Rocastle. Everybody at the club knows what a legend he is here and what he means to all of the fans.

Whether you are a player who has come through the youth team like he did, or someone like me who arrived later – every player at Arsenal knows about his legacy.

I’ve heard Wrighty talking about his friendship and about what a great player he was too. For me I think legacy and remembering legends is a big part of what football should be and should mean to fans. So I’m really proud that Arsenal continues to remember Rocky like this. It’s such a shame that the stadium isn’t full today to sing his name, but I can tell you that all of us here will be remembering Rocky, 20 years after his passing.”
First met Rocky in around 1980, he was 15 and I was 13, he came from Lewisham and I came from Dagenham. Every Monday and Thursday night we would kick lumps out of each other behind the Clock End where there was a sports hall that the Arsenal youth team trained in.

My development was a little bit quicker than Rocky’s, I was a bit taller although he was tough as old boots Rock – rock by name, rock by nature. He was tough but sweet and a tremendous talent — technically he could tackle, pass, dribble and run quickly. He had it all – we were very blessed to have him, Michael Thomas, Paul Merson, Martin Keown and Niall Quinn all from the youth team.

He was fun in the dressing room, always a smile on his face. But he was tough on the pitch, I remember him having a bit of a fight with a player and I was kind of mediating. I was holding him back whilst I was doing that, the opposition player hit him. He went ballistic, screaming at me ‘let me go skipper, I want to get after him’. That was Rocky in a nutshell – super competitive on the field but an absolute gentleman off it.

When he moved over to north London I was still living in Essex. After matches when we socialised he was never a big drinker like me – he didn’t take it to an extreme level although he would occasionally have a cigar and a rum and black. He introduced me to some very interesting swear words and Lovers Rock (a style of Reggae music). I was a little naïve boy from Dagenham – I didn’t know the music scene in those days, Rocky taught me how to listen to Lovers Rock.

A big difference between me and Rocky was that he got really lucky to meet a good woman like his wife Janet when he was young and that was certainly the making of him off the pitch. I always joke that Rocky found Janet too early and that we could have had an even closer relationship — she got in the way and stopped me dragging him to town!

To be honest I was a bit of a dog in those days off the pitch so I’m happy that I couldn’t always convince him to go out.

Tony and David — with Martin Hayes on that amazing night at Anfield

“I AM JUST SO GRATEFUL I GOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAY GOODBYE TO HIM.”

I didn’t have to worry about him as captain – he was one of my leaders. You need people that support you and I think he was someone I could call upon – he was one of my disciples. We grew up together so there was a bond even before we got into the Arsenal team. When you grow up with someone and you’ve been through some of the things we did as youngsters, your relationship grows to times stronger – you’re like brothers. I didn’t have to worry about Rock.

I am just so grateful I got an opportunity to say goodbye to him. We were playing Aston Villa away – I was injured and in hindsight I’m so glad I was because it allowed me to go to the hospital and give him a big hug. He died a week or so after that. It was extremely difficult to say goodbye to what was basically a 20-year relationship. He was courageous to the end and I have loads of memories but the emotion of that one has stayed with me. We had so many highs, on and off the field especially at Anfield in 1989 and him coming to my wedding but that final one of saying goodbye, just me and him, will stay with me forever.”
Wednesday marked the 20th anniversary of the passing of David Rocastle. It was a day that affected everyone associated with Arsenal Football Club as they remembered a magnificent footballer – and a wonderful man – who lost his battle with non-Hodgkin Lymphoma at the age of just 33.

Fans continue to mourn ‘Rocky’, who they hold with that special affection reserved for a player who they have seen progress through the youth ranks to first team superstardom. But his passing was of course truly devastating for his friends and particularly his family. And in close liaison with his wife Janet and children Melissa, Ryan and Monique, the Rocastle family have come together to not simply mark the anniversary of his death, but to reflect and commit to continue to grow his legacy and educate a new generation of Arsenal fans, staff and players about the player he was and the qualities he embodied.

As part of the commitment, Arsenal in the Community will annually work with seven young people to be guided and mentored via a leadership programme in David Rocastle’s name. The seven local youngsters will take part in regular one-to-one mentoring sessions over a five-month period with the aim of providing the participants with personal development opportunities and positive experiences.

The group will be an inspiring line-up of young people who are known to the Arsenal in the Community family and have a wide range of interests. Our staff will help the young people nurture their talents over this period by providing them with opportunities that are tailored to their needs.

The seven mentees, our very own ‘Rockies’, will also spend time as a group developing a community event: for local young people which will celebrate Rocky’s legacy.

David was an Arsenal legend on the pitch but meant so much more off it. His values of humility, class and hard work will form the basis of this programme and be key ingredients which will contribute to the success of the young people.

We are proud to announce this year’s intake of mentees.

**TODAY’S PROGRAMME**

As you will have read from the introductory page of this programme, the Rocastle family have been instrumental in the production of today’s issue, speaking to David’s former teammates – who are all family friends – for their tributes, selecting some of their favourite imagery of David and helping the editorial team forge ideas for other features. The club has been producing matchday programmes since our very early years when we were based in Woolwich – not far from David’s ‘manor’ of Brockley – and it’s highly unusual to dedicate an entire matchday issue to a single theme. But Rocky was a unique character with a special place in our hearts and it’s been a privilege for all those involved in the programme to be able to be a part of this extraordinary production.

**ANGIE**

Angie has been involved with our Girls Football Programme for six years. Initially starting with us when she was in secondary school, Angie is now studying football management at university and dreams of being a professional football manager in the future.

Angie is passionate about the role that football plays in supporting communities and is currently gaining experience as a youth football coach. Through this programme, Angie hopes to gain more football coaching experience and gain a deeper insight into both the professional game and community sport.

**JESSY**

Jessy has attended our weekly Football Plus sessions at Highgate Wood since the age of eight. Prior to joining the programme he also attended our half-term holiday courses, including a residential course. A valued member of our Junior Community Team that plays in the Regents Park Youth League on Saturday mornings, where he has played in a number of positions.

Jessy is passionate about football and has recently chosen to study physical education as part of his GCSEs at school. He is also part of a sports coaching enrichment programme at school. Quiet by nature, Jessy is a very hard-working team player who always tries to further develop existing skills, as well as acquire new ones. He is keen to gain an insight into the day to day life at Arsenal Football Club, and learn more about football coaching.
DON'T MISS WRIGHTY AND BUKAYO

Today's programme features a Magnificent Sevens feature, looking at the very special talents that have worn the No. 7 shirt for the Gunners – not least David Rocastle of course. Awarded that special shirt at the start of the current season, Bukayo Saka has made a huge impression since – like Rocky – graduating from the youth team as a 17-year-old. Ian Wright was keen to let Bukayo know all about Rocky and the Arsenal family who were on hand to film Wrighty telling Bukayo all about his former team-mate and lifelong friend. It’s a fantastic watch, make sure you find it on our YouTube and social media channels.

AND NOT FORGETTING...

Arsenal Independent Supporters Association (AISA) held a special Zoom event on Monday night to reminisce about Rocky – with some very special guests. Former team-mate and great friend Alan Smith was in attendance as were Rob Wilson, Benno Biston and Tom Watt – as well as David’s three children, Melissa, Ryan and Monique.

The Rocastle family were also heavily involved in Amy Lawrence’s excellent tribute to Rocky in The Athletic, available online and if you weren’t able to check it out. FourFourTwo also had a special tribute to Rocky in the national media over the course of the last week.

BRETT

Brett has been involved with Arsenal in the Community programmes for four years. A keen goalkeeper, he found his place straight away, going on to represent Arsenal in the Community groups at numerous events around the country, including at a Premier League event at the Manchester City training ground and visiting Old Trafford for the International Day of Disabled people.

Prior to lockdown, Brett took the decision to pursue his interest in the medical field by enrolling as a Matchday Volunteer with St John’s Ambulance, getting a thank you and good luck from Arsenal’s No. 7 Bend Leno. Through his volunteering with St John’s Ambulance, Brett has been one of the few people permitted at the Emirates this season, on hand for emergencies.

Through this programme, Brett hopes to gain a deeper understanding of medical practices within sport.

NAILA

Naila is a participant on the Arsenal Gap programme, having joined us last year to pursue a career in football coaching. Naila has gained experience of coaching in local primary schools, estates and parks. Although Naila’s experience so far has been disrupted due to COVID and the restrictions around grassroots football, she is determined to develop her community coaching career further.

Naila is passionate about working with young people who may have low self-confidence and particularly those who face barriers to taking part in sport. Having faced challenges herself when beginning her journey in football, Naila is interested in how we can encourage more girls from diverse communities to take part in sport.

TYLER

Tyler joined our Football Plus Programme at the age of 16, recommended by a friend and former participant with the aim of helping to enhance his awareness in football and gain coaching experience. After four years on the programme, Tyler has played a key role in the group, representing the programme in many ways, not just on the field but also on a cultural exchange trip to Cologne and being part of a youth leaders group, which has been set up to ensure that the participants’ voices are heard and help shape the project.

Tyler is passionate about sports and particularly sports choreography. He has had opportunities to take part in commercial campaigns and photo shoots previously and now hopes to gain more experience in this field.

Tyler also plays football and is challenging himself to reach the highest level he can whilst pursuing personal development opportunities off the pitch.

SIJOULA

Sioula is 20 years old and has been a participant on our Kicks programme for the past six years, taking part in activity sessions in Camden.

Sioula has also been a part of our Sunday League football team, where he won league and cup winners’ medals. He also stands out as an individual, having been voted Player of the Year by his teammates, as well as being voted Cuisson of the Year by the manager.

Sioula is currently attending college where he is studying accountancy and after completing his studies, hopes to move into a position in the accountancy profession. Through this programme, Sioula hopes to increase his knowledge of finances within football and gain practical work experience in this field.

GLEN

Glen is 20 years old and has been known to Arsenal in the Community over many years and has always been a part of the programme, playing in the various Kicks programmes for the past six years. Glen is now receiving support from Arsenal in the Community to prepare and search for employment opportunities.

He is a huge Arsenal fan and enjoys playing football and watching Arsenal matches.
20/21 TRAINING RANGE & ANTHEM JACKET

VOICE OF ARSENAL

MIKEL’S HALF CENTURY

This is Mikel Arteta’s 50th Premier League game in charge of the club. His first was a 1-1 draw with Bournemouth on Boxing Day 2019. His record for the 49 games so far reads: W49, D0, L0. He is the fourth different manager to reach a half century of Premier League games for us, following George Graham, Arsène Wenger and Unai Emery. It is the third time he’s taken charge of a league match against Liverpool, with one win and one defeat from the previous two meetings.

SEASON 2021/22

The Premier League recently confirmed that season 2021/22 will commence on the weekend of August 14, 2021. The final match round of the campaign will take place on May 22, 2022, when all games will kick off simultaneously.

SHOP NOW AT ARSENAL DIRECT
We would like to congratulate footballer Sope Diuguid on his nomination for the prestigious EE Rising Star Award at this year’s British Academy of Film and Television Awards (BAFTA). We’re looking forward to all the first-time winners, new faces and exciting young talents who have been shortlisted for BAFTA. Both of the categories: Film Rising Star and TV Rising Star can currently be seen on television live on Channel 4, with the results being announced on Sunday 9th February. The EE Rising Star Award celebrates the best and brightest new talent but it also highlights the importance of diversity in the film and television industries.

On the issue of diversity, we would like to remind everyone across the world that the #MeToo and Time’s Up campaigns have brought about much-needed change to the entertainment industry. The #MeToo and #Time’s Up movements were led by women but men have also been involved, and we believe that everyone has a role to play in creating a safer and more welcoming environment for everyone. It is crucial that we continue to support and empower women and other marginalized groups within the industry.

Returning to the theme of diversity, we would like to draw attention to the impact of representation in the media. It is important to have a diverse range of stories and perspectives represented in film and television, as it helps to break down stereotypes and promote understanding. We believe that this is essential for creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

We would like to highlight the importance of supporting talented individuals, whether they are actors, directors, or writers. We believe that it is crucial to recognize the hard work and dedication of these individuals, and we encourage everyone to support their work. By doing so, we can help to create a more diverse and exciting entertainment industry.

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that the EE BAFTA Film Awards will take place on Sunday 9th February, with the winners being announced live on Channel 4. We encourage everyone to tune in and support their favorite nominees.
THANK YOU JOE

Supporters will have read that Joe Montemurro will be leaving his position as Arsenal Women head coach at the end of the season. Joe has done a fantastic job over the past three years, leading us to a first Women’s Super League title in seven years in 2019, four cup finals and a Champions’ League quarter, built a talented and competitive squad AND led the club through a global pandemic.

He has decided to take a professional break to recharge and dedicate more time to his family. Joe said: “My three and a half years at Arsenal have been a fantastic adventure, the highlight of my coaching career.”

Read more from Joe in the Slavia Prague programme.

NOTICEBOARD

RAY WEEKS is 50! We can’t believe it! Happy Birthday for April 7. Love Mum, Dad, Liz, Paul, Imogen & Refus

MAURICE LAMBE – Happy 50th Birthday Daff! Love Eabha, Jenny & Seamus xxx

ALFIE HUMPHREY – Happy 1st Birthday! Gooner forever, continuing the Humphrey family tradition. We all love you very much. Mum, Dad & family xxx

TOTALISER: £638

ARSENAL REMEMBERS

ROBERT STEPHEN LAWRENCE – A much loved Gooner who will be sorely missed by all his family and friends. Rest In Peace.
DAVID ROCastle SPECIAL

ROCKY’S ARSENAL HONOURS
- ARSENAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR 1986
- BARCLAYS YOUNG EAGLE 1987, 1989

ROCKY joined Arsenal as a schoolboy on May 29, 1982. He signed as an apprentice on August 4, 1983 before signing as a professional on December 31, 1984.

ROCKY’S GAMES AND GOALS FOR ARSENAL

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ROCKY’S ARSENAL APPEARANCES & GOALS - SEASON BY SEASON

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ROCKY won 14 caps for the England senior team, two caps for England B and made 14 appearances for England Under-21, scoring two goals.

OTHER TEAMS PLAYED FOR

- LEEDS UNITED 1982-1983
- NORWICH CITY 1986-1987
- MANCHESTER CITY 1983-1984
- SHEFFIELD UNITED 1987-1989
- CHELSEA 1984-1985
- SABAH 1988-1989

5-1

He scored twice as we won the unofficial World Club Championship match, 2-1 against Argentinian side Independiente in 1989.

His last appearance was a 5-1 home win over Southampton in May 1992 – the final game in front of the old North Bank stand.
I remember becoming aware of a bunch of really good youngsters coming through the ranks. In the first team we started to talk about them a lot — but most of the whispers were about a guy called Dave Rocastle.

Dave then started training with us in the first team and it became clear that he was an even more outstanding talent than what was spoken of him. His love for the game always shone through with his training and dedication. His competitiveness was incredible along with his skill level. I felt from an early age that he was going to do very well. If you have love for something you can go far and when you combine that with natural ability — Dave was on another level.

I was from Dulwich and at the time there was no one else in the changing room from South London — they were all from other parts of the country. All of a sudden there was Rocky and Mickey who were south London boys and I thought, wow, these guys grew up close to where I did. It’s then when you knew someone came from your area, you felt connected to them and they were black guys as well, so I knew about some of the struggles they’d have endured.

I’d say it was a mixture of an older brother/uncle type of relationship. I was five years older than Dave so I like to think he saw me as a bit of a role model. I wanted to be able to support all of our players, but in particular the young black lads that were coming through from the same part of town as me. It made me feel good that I was someone Dave thought he could look up to, but to be honest he could look after himself. He’s a London boy, so trust me, he could look after himself on and off the pitch, but people just loved him in terms of his personality and his enthusiasm.

I must say the connection was always strong with that team we had under George Graham. We were able to mix the older group of guys who weren’t from our part of town with some of the younger guys and also the black and white players formed good relationships. I think Rocky was particularly good at making sure team spirit was positive and he could get on with absolutely everyone.

Rocky left a huge impression on all Arsenal fans and especially the black community. I look at the fanbase of Arsenal now and it’s one of the most diverse in the Premier League and I put a lot of that down to Rocky, Mickey Thomas and later Kevin Campbell. I feel very proud of what myself and them boys did in terms of coming through at a massive club like Arsenal and making it to the first team. The odds would have been against them back then but they did it and did it with class.

I feel privileged that I got to know Dave, his wife and his kids. We were so close that I even got to know people like his wife’s mum. We did a lot of social events together but also things like christenings and weddings.

The fans loved him, always singing his name first. The day he passed we played Tottenham and I remember a few of us were worried about the minute’s silence. To the Spurs fans’ credit you couldn’t hear a pin drop during that minute and I think that showed just how loved and respected Rocky was amongst the whole footballing world.
DEVELOPING STRONG YOUNG GUNNERS

IN THIS ISSUE...

@ArsenalAcademy
Growing up, I had an interesting relationship with football. Unlike most in my age group here at Arsenal, I started playing quite late and to be honest, I never really used to watch games in the way that others did. You see, my dad didn't really pay much attention to football and because of that, I didn't really have a team to support growing up. For me, football was just a way to have fun with my friends and express myself a bit, I guess. But that all started to change when my friend's dad was watching me play out in the street and thought I had something about me. He told my dad right away, and although my dad doesn't know too much about football, he took his word. He was the first person to really believe in me as a footballer, I think.

Street football has definitely played a really important role in my development as a player. It's all about close control and technical skills and these are the kind of traits that will follow you throughout your whole career. It's probably why we have so many technical players in the England youth system right now. I had a wall directly opposite my house as a kid and that was perfect for kickabouts with my mates. I also had a Power League just around the corner too. As a kid, I loved playing there because everyone used it as a space to just freestyle and kind of go with the flow. You're not really thinking too much, you just have to adapt, and over time, those skills and movements become more and more natural.

Now, when I was playing at school and with my mates, I could tell that I was a good player. I could slip past defenders with ease and do things others couldn't, but in the way many others were, it took me a little longer, but I've given it a lot of attention over the years and I've changed as a player for the better.

Last year was my first up at London Colney and overall I'd say I did alright, but it was quite a frustrating and testing period for me. Just before I came to Colney I was out of form and knew that I could do more, so when I arrived here and started finding my form again, I was buzzing, but then I broke one of my toes against Reading and that killed my rhythm. Then we were hit by coronavirus just as I was getting back to fitness! That was tough for me mentally because I just wanted to put a run of games together.

When I'm out of form, I always feel like I'm forcing things. I'm trying too hard and I feel I'm trying to be too smart. I know it's the wrong thing to do because when I'm in form, I always feel like I'm flowing and playing with instinct. When I'm at my best, I don't think, I just do. It goes without saying that it comes with good practice and good habits, thought.

I feel like that's why I've really kicked on this season. Throughout my career, my end product has never been my standout attribute. I've always been able to get into the box, but then I'd let myself down because my first thought was to pass. I used to get a lot of assists, but I've never been a goalscorer and that's something I realised I had to change.

The moment that made me realise that was when I was away with England Under-16s and I wasn't called back after a tournament. They told me I didn't take a single shot in the whole tournament and that I need to become more deadly in the final third. Since then, I've been working on adding that clinical side to my game – and I think it's paying off!

Serge Gnabry is a player I really look up to in that regard. He was always a very talented player here at Arsenal, but he never put up crazy numbers and over time he's become more direct, aggressive and sharp with his runs and shot selection. I want to add that to my game too.

As for today's game, I'm proud that as a member of our academy, we'll be remembering a true Arsenal legend, David Rocastle. As a player, he was before my time, but his legacy around the club and especially the academy lives on. He's got the Indoor Sports Hall named after him and I think little details like that are important because kids at Hale End will remember his name for generations. Homegrown players and the academy system has given this club so much talent and so many memories over the years.
RATE YOURSELF

SPEED 90
SHOOTING 82
DRIBBLING 94
STRENGTH 75
PASSING 80
DEFENDING 70

KID TAYLOR-HART

LOWDOWN

Earliest memory of football
Kicking the ball against the wall outside my mum’s house

Got me into playing football
My friend’s dad

First footballer looked up to
Zinedine Zidane

Favourite football shirt owned
The first Hypervenoms

Team supported as a child
I didn’t really support anyone

Best goal of all-time
Zidane’s volley in the World Cup

Best player I’ve faced
Tino Anjorin from Chelsea

Best goal I’ve scored
From the halfway line against Ipswich Under-14s

Best performance I’ve had
Against Liverpool U-16s away

Best skill I’ve done in a game
I flicked it over someone’s head and then got an assist

Best moment of my career so far
My international debut

One stadium I’d like to score in
Emirates Stadium

One type of goal I’d like to score
A header because I’ve never scored one!

Favourite training drill
Matches at the end

Ambitions this season away from the pitch
I want to start a football programme for the younger kids in Haringey at some point

The important non-playing attributes
Dedication and hard work

Biggest lesson learnt off the pitch
Attitude gets you far

Favourite footballer of all-time
Zinedine Zidane

Favourite follow on Instagram
Dwayne Johnson

Arsenal and the rest of the Premier League will not tolerate racism, anywhere, and we are taking action to combat all forms of discrimination. But we can all do more.

Challenge it, report it, change it, and together we can make a positive impact. Visit premierleague.com/noroomforracism to find out more. #NoRoomForRacism
Our under-18s booked their place in the last 16 of the FA Youth Cup as they knocked Blackburn Rovers out. It was Rovers who knocked us out at the quarter-final stage last season, but this time around the team had a strong performance, delivering an attacking performance of the highest quality.

Khayon Edwards opened the scoring with just nine minutes on the clock, racing behind Blackburn's defence and latching onto Brooke Norton-Cuffy's through ball. The keeper looked set to claim his searching pass, but failed to take control of the situation and Edwards was on hand to finish into an open goal.

Kido Taylor-Hart then went on to double our advantage, cutting inside from the left on a dangerous counter-attack and firing the ball into the top corner. It was a stunning strike from the 18-year-old winger, but the best of the bunch arrived on the stroke of half-time, as Miguel Azeerz picked up the ball 30 yards from goal and found the top-right corner in style.

Rovers pulled one back just one minute after the restart with Zak Gilsenan converting from close range, but we restored our three-goal advantage late on when Brooke Norton-Cuffy raced forward on the break to convert Majeed Ogungbo's rebound.

We will travel to West Ham United in the last 16 of the competition, a date has yet to be confirmed for the game.
DAVID ROCastle

...“Player of the Year”

by KEVIN CONNOLLY

What a pleasant surprise... and what a joy it caused! Our Supporters Club’s 1986 Player of the Year David Rocastle says he couldn’t have even dreamed about winning such an award, while he was recovering from a cartilage operation in the summer. Now our skillful, tenacious midfielders’ powerful displays have deservedly established him as the fans’ favourite — after just 45 first team appearances.

David topped a close poll. Kenny Sansom, Paul Davis and Tony Adams were challenging, till the final votes were cast after our 3-0 win over Manchester City... when David emerged a clean winner.

“David is a very popular winner. He’s quickly made a great impression with the fans,” says Supporters Club secretary Barry Baker.

Rocastle admits he found it “hard to catch on” when Baker phoned to tell him the news. “It was a shock at first” he revealed: “I couldn’t believe it. I never expected it — but it’s a great feeling!”

David has not only proved his ability; he’s proved his courage as well. He recovered from that operation, won back his place in the Gunners’ team and now he’s being tipped as a future England star.

“It was a bonus for me to get back into the side — and be part of a team that’s been doing so well” he says modestly.

But the Highbury fans have taken David to their hearts; and David gratefully acknowledges their support: “The crowd have been marvellous to me, ever since I made my debut against Newcastle last September” he says: “They’ve stuck by me even when things were not going the way I’d hoped. They’ve helped me when I’m feeling down. I feel that I’ll have to try and make up for it next time.

Why is it that David has struck up such a quick rapport with the Arsenal fans? Rocastle doesn’t like boasting about his own qualities. But he tries to find an answer: “I think that know that I always give 100%, that I’ve come up through our junior ranks and that I’m Arsenal through and through” he says: “It probably makes it easier for a young player to be accepted than, say, a big money buy. The fans don’t expect as much from me... they try and make up for it next time.”

Rocastle also acknowledges the help he’s received from his first team colleagues. “They’ve all encouraged me and led me up” he says. Skipper Kenny Sansom — a former South London schoolboy star like David — has given him plenty of good advice. So have the players around him: “Viv Anderson and I form a partnership on the right — and Viv is always talking to me, using his experience to help me through the game” says David. “Likewise with Steve Williams and Paul Davis in midfield. They give me a boost when I need it — and they tell me straightforward if I ever get sloppy!”

David has already won a place in England’s u-21 squad. He’s played against Sweden and a highly talented Yugoslav side — who packed the midfield and set David and his team mates problems they don’t often meet in English football. Rocastle wants to broaden his experience against that calibre of opposition. Establishing himself in the England u-21s is one of his aims this season.

But Arsenal remains his top priority — and he’s set his own targets with us too.

“Firstly, I want to keep my place in the side” he says. “Then I want to be part of an Arsenal team that wins a major prize. The way we’ve been playing this season, we could make that happen.”

ROCKY - THE ORIGINAL YOUNG GUN!

David Rocastle was a teenage sensation at Arsenal. So much so that he was voted Player of the Year for 1986, when he was still only 16. Here we have reproduced the interview with David from our matchday programme against QPR on December 4, 1986, when the level-headed youngster discussed the special accolade
## UNDER-23 FIXTURES

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* = won on penalties
WIN THE ARSENAL PRE-MATCH SHIRT

Answer one easy question on Arsenal defender, Calum Chambers and you could be our next lucky winner!

Head to arsenal.com/juniorgunners or download the JG app to find out more

Name: Edward

"Hey, I'm Edward, today's virtual mascot. I'm super excited to be the mascot for today's game. Let's do this guys, good luck! Come on you Gunners!"

Find out how you could be our next virtual mascot at arsenal.com/juniorgunners or download the JG app

Here's the day when Ryan Rocastle, was our mascot! He led the team out for the 2005 FA Cup final at the Millennium Stadium against Liverpool!

WTW WELCOME, OISIN!

Everyone say hello to Oisin. He's just ten weeks old but here he is celebrating a win on his first north London derby!

WTTW membership is for our youngest fans aged 0-3 years. As a WTTW member your little one gets access to fun competitions, special events and loads of other benefits including Gunners Membership packs.

Find out more at Arsenal.com/Membership
One of the most memorable moments of my career involved Rocky, but it was actually away from the pitch. Penny (my wife) and I went down for the Arsenal end of season dinner at the Hilton in Park Lane at the end of the 1986/87 season. I was joining the club at the start of the next season and we were sat there with other couples. Rocky came over to introduce himself, welcomed me, said how delighted they were to have me at the club and said if there's anything he can do for me please ask. Pen and I spoke afterwards in the car, almost goshmacked at that particular interaction. Rocky spoke as if he was the 30 year old club captain and senior man, yet he was 20 years old! He was so mature, so charming and so polite. That was our first experience and we hit it off right from that point.

He was just one of those people I naturally got on with and I grew very close with his family. We would quite often meet for a meal and we became very comfortable around one another. I remember Penny used to speak to Janet whilst she was working at BT – they would be chatting away for hours which shows you how good mates they were.

He was a funny lad Rocky, he had a big booming voice when he wanted to, he could fill the dressing room with his big smile and big personality – you couldn’t dislike Rocky. He was serious when he needed to be but could also take the mickey, especially with who they called the ‘brothers’ like Micky Thomas and Gus Caesar.

I would always like to see what Rocky was wearing and what car he was driving – he was such a classy guy. He had a beautiful Mercedes Coupe at one point which I ended up copying and getting one myself a few years later.

On the pitch Dave was so good at putting in an early ball, just freezing a low one in that corridor between the keeper and defenders. When I realised how accomplished he was at it, it became ideal because I could make my movement just before the defender. He would do quite a few step overs which I had to get used to as a bit – just watching him bamboozle defenders – but the goalkeper knew Rocky had a special ability to go past players and encouraged him to be creative in the final third. Having said that Rocky was intelligent enough to know when to go past a player and when to deliver. In those early years we had Brian Marwood on the left and Rocky on the right – that was some service for a centre forward!

The fact that Penny and Janet were so close was something that was important to me as it meant our relationship remained. The nature of being a footballer means things changed so quickly with your teammates – one day you’re best friends and suddenly one gets a transfer and you don’t hear from them. Having Penny and Janet close meant we could easily retain our friendship as women are usually much better at keeping in touch than men! I remember visiting him up in Leeds and him coming back down when he could. When he was at Chelsea I would go to watch him play and go meet him in the players’ lounge beforehand.

Even when he was in Malaysia we would speak regularly on the phone about what it was like out there. The legacy of Rocky lives on with his wonderful kids.
There’s something special about the Arsenal No. 7 shirt

Some of the club's greatest, and most popular players, have strutted their stuff in the iconic jersey. Dating right back to when Herbert Chapman’s Gunners first trialled the use of shirt numbers in the late 1920s, our number seven has invariably possessed the skill, talent and magic to light up any game.

Here we profile six of the very best Magnificent Sevens, including of course David Rocastle, the focus of today’s matchday programme. Between the six they boast more than 1,800 first-team appearances, nearly 300 goals and a combined 14 major honours for the Gunners.

And with another homegrown, England international as the current incumbent, we hope Bukayo Saka will only add to that tally in the coming years...
Opta Stats didn’t exist in the early 1970s, and not all of Arsenal’s goals from that era are now available to watch on YouTube. But from the footage which has survived, and newspaper reports of the matches, it’s clear that workhorse winger George Armstrong had a hand in a huge proportion of Gunners goals.

Although Alf Ramsey’s ‘wingless wonders’ won the 1964 World Cup, and many in the game were sceptical of wingless wingers, all great sides in the early ’70s had one. Leeds had Eddie Gray, Derby Alan Hinton, and Arsenal had the indelible George Armstrong. Born in County Durham, Armstrong joined Arsenal in 1969 as an inside forward and was swiftly converted into a winger, making his league bow against Blackpool in February 1969.

Still a teenager, he struck up an excellent understanding with high scoring centre forward Joe Baker in the middle part of the decade. Armstrong was adept at performing on either flank, but he dovetailed perfectly with Bob McNab over on the left, occasionally dropping back to allow McNab the opportunity to push forward, and never afraid to tackle back when the occasion demanded. Armstrong may not have been blessed with express pace, but he possessed an uncanny ability to drift past defenders.

By the early ’70s, he was in his prime, and up front, the Radford/Kennedy partnership profited from Armstrong’s ability to deliver laser-guided corners, and pin-point accurate crosses. Skipper Frank McLintock said that the Arsenal number 7 “could land the ball on a matchstick.”

This was never better illustrated than in the crucial showdown at White Hart Lane in May 1971, when he crossed for Ray Kennedy to head home the decisive goal which won the title for Arsenal in a 2-0 victory.

Despite never being a prolific scorer, he’d weighed in with a vital brace of strikes in the Highbury clash with the Gunners’ north London rivals back in August 1970, in Arsenal’s 2-0 win. Although the Gunners were unable to add any further silverware in the immediate years after winning the ‘double’, Armstrong remained a key member of the team, with World Cup winner Alan Ball, who joined Arsenal in the 1971/72 campaign, expressing astonishment that ‘Geordie’ was never awarded a full cap by England.

Fortunately, Arsenal fans were richly blessed to have watched the popular and respected winger – who held the Gunners appearance record with 521 until David O’Leary surpassed it in 1986 – in his pomp for 16 years at Highbury.
LIAM BRADY

1973-80 307 APSS. 59 GOALS

What was his finest moment in red and white? Propelling the Gunners to a 2-1 win at Tottenham – our greatest post war result in 1977 – with THAT curling goal, or the 1979 FA Cup final, when he dragged Arsenal over the finishing line in a pulsating last five minutes to beat Manchester United 3-2?

Wherever it was, this outrageously talented Dubliner stood head and shoulders above all those around him, a hero for a generation, a player who could walk – or glide – into any team in the world. The sweetest, most exquisite, left foot and sublime mastery of a football delighted and enchanted an otherwise grey Highbury in the 1970s.

Inevitably, he left for Juventus in 1980, shortly after an outstanding display in Turin as the Gunners became the first team to beat the Old Lady on their own pitch. There he won the titles his talent deserved. He won the Serie A title in both 1982 and 1983 with Juventus, before also starring for Sampdoria and Inter Milan. He returned to London to finish his playing days at West Ham but his time at Arsenal wasn’t over. In 1996 he came home, rejoicing the club as the head of our academy, imparting his knowledge to future generations of Gunners.

It began a golden era for our youth department, and after various academy league titles, and three FA Youth Cup successes, he retired in May 2014 – leaving a permanent legacy at the club.

A great regret is that he never got to showcase his talents at a major international tournament. He played 72 times for the Republic of Ireland, scoring nine times, and later served as assistant manager for the national team (having previously taken charge of Celtic and Brighton) but he was suspended for Euro 88 and was not selected for the 1990 World Cup after retiring during the qualifiers.
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DAVID ROCastle

1985-92 277 APPS 34 GOALS

“The crowd loved him because he had that combination of spirit, determination, and brilliant ability on the ball.”

The words of former team-mate Martin Keown.

He may have been one of a clutch of youth team stars propelled into the first team in the 1980s, but the crowd had a special place for Rocastle. Affectionately known as Rocky, the skilful attacking midfielder made his debut in September 1988, and it soon became evident that this was the most exciting talent seen at Highbury since the days of Liam Brady. Powerful yet graceful, Rocky was an all-action player with superb technique, his footwork would bewitch opposition defenders, and he also scored some stunning goals. He thrived on a battle as much as he loved dancing effortlessly around hapless opponents on another mazy run, combining English grit with Brazilian skill.

Just watch his goal at Old Trafford in a 1-1 draw in 1990, bursting past Paul Ince and Bryan Robson before chipping Peter Schmeichel from 35 yards.

He was named Arsenal Player of the Year by supporters in his debut campaign, and won the Barclays Young Player of the Year Award in 1987 and 1989 – he was named in the PFA Team of the Year in those seasons too.

A Littlewoods Cup winner in 1987, he was ever-present in the 1988/89 league title success, and filled the No.7 jersey with distinction again when winning the league in 1990, though that season was disrupted by injury.

He played 30 times in the league the following campaign, but was surprisingly sold to Leeds that summer. An England international with 14 caps, he later played for Manchester City and Chelsea, but injuries were taking their toll and his career never scaled the heights of his Arsenal days.

His death in 2002, aged just 34, shocked the football world.

He simply had no enemies – even Spurs fans liked him. Can you imagine his worth in today’s Premier League? 
One of the most elegant, graceful players ever to light up the Premier League, Pires was a major creative influence in the successful Arsenal team of the early 2000s.

Often playing on the left wing, but effective in any attacking position, the Frenchman was an excellent finisher, as well as creating countless chances for the likes of Thierry Henry and Dennis Bergkamp during his six seasons at the club. Arriving from French side Marseille in 2000, Pires took a while to get used to the physical nature of English football, but then took the Premier League by storm. He was sensational during 2001/02, only to have his season cut down early by a cruciate knee injury in March 2002. He had already done enough to win the Football Writers’ Association Player of the Year award, and his ten minutes literally bowed before him when he picked up the Premier League trophy in May.

He scored the only goal in the 2003 FA Cup final win over Southampton and the following season was an integral part of the Invincibles side with 15 goals and seven assists. He left the club after the 2006 Champions League final, after being withdrawn early so that Manuel Almunia could replace the dismissed Jens Lehmann. Pires scored 66 goals in 284 appearances for the Gunners, and particularly enjoyed playing in the north London derby – the No. 7 scored eight times against Tottenham in all.

A long-time France international with 79 caps, he was part of the 1998 World Cup and 2000 Euro winning squads, as well as lifting the Confederations Cup in 2001 and 2003.

He later played for Villarreal, Aston Villa and finished his playing days in India.
Nicknamed 'Little Mozart' while playing for Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga, the Czech playmaker quickly made an impression after signing for Arsenal in 2006, thumping home a glorious goal against Hamburg in a Champions League group stage match. Although a succession of injuries meant he only made more than 20 Premier League outings in one of his 10 seasons at Arsenal (his first), the presence of Rosicky on the Emirates pitch meant that supporters would often be treated to the sight of this creative player pulling the strings in midfield, laying on chances for team mates, and perhaps scoring a beautifully crafted goal.

In many ways, Rosicky was a footballer: “I experienced some of the fabulous moments that football creates, and also some cruel ones. I never played for money and fame. I have always been a boy who loved the game; it brought me fulfillment and a lot of joy.”

Rosicky notched a rate of great goals. In a 2006/07 third round FA Cup clash with Liverpool at Anfield, he bamboozled the home side’s defence, latching on to a long ball, striding ahead of the Whites, before dropping into the box to score Arsenal’s opener, before grabbing another after dancing through the opposition’s backline. On several occasions, Rosicky reserved his best form for north London derbies. Despite having been two goals down to Tottenham at the Emirates in February 2012, Rosicky’s diryball, and fine goal after latching onto Barnsley’s low cross, helped Arsenal fight back to win 5-2.

Almost two years later, he ran half the length of the pitch to score in an FA Cup third round clash which Arsenal won on route to winning the competition in 2014. The Czech scored no finer goal for the Gunners than in early March that year, drilling home Arsenal’s exquisite winner in a league clash at White Hart Lane from outside the box. He finally won silverware for Arsenal after coming on in the 106th minute in the 2014 FA Cup Final against Hull City, before injuries once again scuppered his chances of winning back his first team place permanently.

After announcing his departure from the club in May 2016, he received a guard of honour after Arsenal’s 2-0 final day victory against Aston Villa, with several members of the squad wearing “Rosicky 7” jerseys.
The latest Gunner to wear our famous No. 7 shirt... Bukayo Saka is one of the most exciting young talents in world football right now. With blistering pace, outrageous trickery and maturity beyond his years, Bukayo has seamlessly stepped up to the challenge of first-team football, becoming a vital player for Arsenal at just 19 years of age – but let’s take it back to the start.

Born in the London Borough of Ealing, Bukayo joined our Hale End Academy aged eight and has long been marked as one for the future, often playing above his age group – and not once did he look out of place.

As each challenge became bigger and tougher, so too did Bukayo, and by August 2017, he made his debut for our under-18s at just 15 years of age. By 16 he made his debut for our under-23s, assisting against Manchester City no less, and just three months later he made his first-team debut against Vorskla Poltava in the Europa League.

His first goal arrived in our opening Europa League fixture the following season, and he went on to provide a further three goals and 11 assists in 38 appearances that term. Success on the pitch didn’t come at the cost of his schoolwork either, as Bukayo left Greenford High School with four A*s and three As at GCSE level.

So often with talented young players, the pressure of expectation and the occasion will limit opportunities – but in the case of Bukayo, it’s quite the opposite. As each season has passed, Bukayo has come back even stronger and more determined than ever before, taking on greater responsibility in the final third.

His ability to play in a number of positions certainly can’t go unnoticed either. Whether he’s stretching play on the left wing, bombing on from full back or cutting inside from the right, Bukayo is never afraid to express himself on the pitch – a quality that’s no doubt appreciated by all Gooners.
MICHAEL THOMAS

Me and Rocky met before we became team-mates at Arsenal when we were both playing for South London Schools at around 11/12 years old. I only knew him on the field at that point. When we joined the Arsenal youth team I was coming from Stockwell and Dave was coming from Brockley, he got the train to Waterloo and I was on the Victoria Line – most mornings we’d meet at Arsenal station and walk to the stadium from there.

When we got to around 16/17 we were spending a lot more time off the field together. We went to a lot of parties – he seemed to know the scene a bit better than me! I would sometimes stay at Dave’s family home and we would go out as I was from the same area.

Dave started training with the first team a bit earlier than me and I will never forget when he made his debut. We used to train at Highbury on a Friday and the youth team would go into the gym after the first team. By that point Dave was already training with the main squad and he was by the stairs waiting to tell me that he was making his debut tomorrow against Newcastle. He was absolutely glowing and he couldn’t wait to tell me! Unfortunately we weren’t there to see it as the youth team had a South East Counties game but I remember Dave’s reaction to that bit of news so clearly. He was beaming with pride about playing for The Arsenal.

Me and Dave came through the ranks together, playing in district teams, it was a special journey with so many incredible moments that we could share with each other. Dave was humble, he had everything, he was so talented but he had time for everyone and that is what I loved about him. He was special like that – he didn’t see himself as bigger than any other person, in his eyes he was just a young kid from Brockley who had time for everyone else. He had such hunger and love for the club and playing for Arsenal – putting on the shirt – that was his team!

I would go to him for advice as he was in the first team a bit before me and he really was an old head on young shoulders. He lost his dad when he was five but he was just so well adjusted that you could ask him anything and he would try and help you out. He would treat everyone fairly.

When Dave left Arsenal that was a sad day for me. I was on pre-season tour with Liverpool in Paris and Gueïme Sámano came over and said to me “that’s a bit of a shock about your mate isn’t it?” I was thinking what’s he on about before he told me that Arsenal had sold David Rocastle to Leeds. I knew Dave would be absolutely gutted because he loved Arsenal and his best mate Wrigley had just arrived there, I had left at Christmas. That was hard because I knew Dave would never ever want to leave Arsenal – that hurt him a lot and that hurt me.

But his move to Leeds and then Manchester meant we got to see more of each other. We would always talk on the phone but when I was at Liverpool and he was at Leeds we had some incredible times. I’d drive down a lot and spend time with him and the family and they were great memories. Much of it was just reminiscing about old times at Arsenal – something we did right up until his very last moments.
a crucial victory in the north London derby last Saturday with a 3-2 victory at the
Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.
Kate McCabe delivered a player of the match performance, scoring one and assisting another, while Vivianne Miedema hit a stunning contender for goal of the season.
We started strongly and after Jordan Nobbs fired wide early on, Caitlin Foord gave us the lead in style.
The Australia International played a quick one-two with Noelle Maritz down the right wing, before arriving inside the area and finding the bottom corner.
Miedema then went on to double our advantage on the stroke of halftime — and in the same style too. McCabe floated an inch-perfect corner delivery into the penalty area and Miedema found the top corner with a stunning volley on her left foot.
McCabe wreaked havoc on Tottenham’s defence all afternoon, and shortly after the hour mark she grabbed her reward, racing in behind and coolly finishing into the bottom corner.
The hosts would go on to create a golden opportunity late on, but Manuela Zinsberger was on hand to deny Tottenham, not once, not twice, but three times in succession.
That outstanding triple save also created a little bit of history, as we secured four consecutive WSL victories without conceding.

GOLDIE MOMENT
All of the squad were thrilled to be part of keeping north London red last Saturday — but it was a particularly special afternoon for 16-year-old Teah YMinnesota. It was the St Albans youngster’s first involvement with the first-team squad and she took her place alongside established internationals Leah Williamson, Lydia Williams, Leonie Maier and Maina Gwaba — it must have been a dream come true for the young defender.
Teah, who doesn’t turn 17 until June, has been a member of the Arsenal Academy for a number of years and is also part of the England Under-18 squad having captained England under-17s.
Congratulations Teah!

MAGIC MCCABE
The north London derby witnessed a wonderstrike from Viviane Miedema — but also yet another superb performance from Kate McCabe, including the Gunners’ third goal.
After originally coming on trial in 2015, Katie’s career has gone from strength to strength in the last six years, with this season arguably her best of all. She has played 21 games for the Montemurro team — only Miedema has played more — and now has three goals and a remarkable 11 assists to her name, including the cross for Viv’s goal on Saturday and the corner converted by Lotte Wubben-Moy against Manchester United in our previous match.
Kate is only one assist away from equalling Arsenal’s WSL record of 12, held by Beth Mead from the 2018/19 season.
The 20-year-old has now played 18 times for the Gunners in total, scoring 20 goals. Keep it up, Katie!
A coffee machine for just £1?

Back in 2013 I took a near-fatal overdose in Highbury Fields. I couldn’t see any other way out. I was in debt, addicted to alcohol and about to lose my flat. Luckily I was resuscitated that day, but that didn’t stop me from becoming homeless. After five months things changed one night in Isledon Gardens. I went into the locked park to take my own life when a man appeared and was like, “What are you doing?” He threw me, I broke down and told him everything – and not only did he save my life, he gave me my life back. That moment became the inspiration for a lot of my art, which later played a massive role in me coming off the streets. It led me to meet other artists with similar experiences and discover a museum about homelessness was being set up by people affected by it. I’ve collaborated with the museum since 2016 and we’ve come a long way in that time. We’ve put on exhibitions and events all over the country; we’ve operated in the halls of Tate Modern and on the streets. We believe art can change lives. It saved my life and that’s why I’ve dedicated myself to changing society through art. We have a homelessness crisis but if you just shout about it people stop listening. If you give them something beautiful, make them cry, they will listen.

When the pandemic hit we knew it was a massive risk to homeless people so we set up a taskforce. Islington Council lent us a community centre and we stocked our museum shelving with food and emergency supplies, but even after the lockdown we realised isolation was still having a devastating impact on mental health, so with the help of funding from The Arsenal Foundation we set up a Street Museum every Thursday on Highbury Corner. This was an outdoor, Covid-safe space where people could gather as safely as possible for food, art and company.

We have worked with thousands of people during the pandemic. In lockdown one alone we distributed 8,506 hot meals and care packs, and the winter was very tough. We had a spike in homeless suicides in 2020 and given my own experience, and the fact the Street Museum was so near to where I tried to take my own life, it meant so much to me to be able to help people.

My proudest moment was having my family come to our show at Tate Modern. It was the first time I knew my dad was proud of me, proud that I had gone through so much and picked myself back up. He didn’t think the arts could make a difference, but that day changed his mind. Little did I know that just over a year later I would be carrying his coffin. I can never thank the museum enough for giving me that chance to make my dad proud.

For more info visit museumofhomelessness.org
PREMIER LEAGUE MATCHDAY 29
3pm • Sunday, March 21 • London Stadium

FIRST HALF
Having made a desperately slow start to the game, we were punished when the Hammers took the lead as Jesse Lingard arrowed a shot into the top corner. It should have acted as a wake-up call, but instead, less than two minutes later, the hosts doubled their advantage as a quickly-taken free kick caught us off guard and earned Bowen a brace. The Hammers extended their advantage when Tomas Soucek deflected in Michael Antonio’s header. Finally, we woke up and responded when Alexandre Lacazette’s serve and shot inside the box deflected off Soucek into the roof of the net. Bukayo Saka had a golden chance to make it 3-2 soon afterwards but his shot was too close to Lukasz Fabianski.

SECOND HALF
Just after the hour mark our dominance had its reward when, Calum Chambers’ whipped in cross was deflected into his own goal by Craig Dawson. The comeback was on, and the influential Martin Odegaard soon saw a shot blocked in the area while down at the other end Chambers had to clear one off the line as Lingard looked set to claim his second. We finally levelled with nine minutes remaining. Nicolas Pepe dug out a fine cross to the back post for Lacazette to head in from close range. Pepe had two half chances during a thrilling finale to the match, but in the end we shared the spoils in a dramatic derby.
LIVERPOOL

By: Mike Hammond

FORMED
June 3, 1892

NICKNAME
The Reds

STADIUM
Anfield (53,394)

HONOURS


Uefa Cup winners 1973, 1976, 2019


FIFA Club World Cup winners 2021

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Tom Werner

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The reigning champions of England appear to have it all to do to finish in the top four of the Premier League this season. A remarkable collapse in Liverpool’s form at Anfield since the turn of the year has seen them slide from first out of title contention, then out of the Champions League places, and although they have continued to fare well on their travels, they come to Emirates Stadium placed seventh in the table with 46 points – and just 13 wins – from their 29 matches.

Having finally fulfilled their Premier League dream last season, winning it in champagne style with 99 points – 18 more than second-placed Manchester City – and dropping just two points at home, Liverpool’s side have gone badly off the rails this term. The damage has been done at Anfield, where, after going 68 league games undefeated – a record run lasting almost four years – they have, incredibly, lost all of their last six matches there. Burnley, the only team to deny them victory at Anfield last term, started the trend with a 1-0 win on January 21. Since then, Brighton (6-0), Manchester City (4-0), Everton (2-0), Chelsea (6-0) and Fulham (1-0) have all won there.

It is perhaps a blessing for Liverpool that the match against Fulham on March 7 was their last fixture at Anfield for five weeks. They return there to face Aston Villa next weekend and will be desperate not to extend their new club record run to seven defeats in a row. Before then, however, they are in action on Tuesday in Spain, where they take on Real Madrid in the last 16 of the Champions League. If Liverpool are to lift the trophy this season, it will have to be the ‘one with the big ears’, which they won for the sixth time two years ago, defeating Spurs 2-0 in the final – also in Madrid, at the home of their rivals Atlético.

It was Arsenal who denied the Merseysiders silverware back in late August with a penalty shoot-out win in the Community Shield after a 1-1 draw at Wembley, and the Gunners also knocked Liverpool out of the Carabao Cup with another shoot-out success at Anfield in October. Klopp’s men were turfed out of the FA Cup in the fourth round, losing 3-2 to Manchester United at Old Trafford, but at least they have maintained some stability in Europe, topping their Champions League group before beating RB Leipzig 2-0 twice in neutral Budapest in the round of 16.

Liverpool’s recent away form has been in stark contrast to their Anfield aberrations. They have won four of their last five Premier League fixtures on the road, the first two in London (3-1 against both Tottenham and West Ham), with a 3-4 defeat at Leicester interrupting the sequence before they got back on the victory trail at Sheffield United (2-1) and, last time out, at Wolves, where ex-Merseyside favourite Diogo Jota scored the only goal of the game. A raft of injuries, especially in central defence, has plagued the Merseysiders in 2020/21, and they will be hoping for a clean bill of health from the international break as they go again in search of a top-four place against Arsenal this evening.

Mutual Admiration
Ray Kennedy was still a teenager when he helped propel Bertie Mee’s team to the double in 1971. After a handful of games the previous season – including a substitute appearance in the triumphant Fairs Cup final – the powerful left footer from Northumberland grabbed his chance early in the double winning campaign due to an injury to Charlie George and went on to score 19 league goals and two in the FA Cup, providing a superb contribution. Over five seasons for the Gunners, he scored 73 goals in 213 games before Liverpool paid a club record £60,000 for his services on July 12, 1974.

On Merseyside, Kennedy used his excellent vision and passing skills to drop back into midfield, where he was a regular during the second half of the decade as Liverpool swept all before them. In all he claimed a remarkable five league titles, three European Cups, a Uefa Cup and a League Cup on Merseyside before leaving for Swansea City in January 1982.

In later life Kennedy has suffered from Parkinson’s Disease and Arsenal and Liverpool hosted a Testimonial for him in April 1993.
5 THE ALL-PURPOSE MIDFIELDER

GEORGINIO Wijnaldum

BORN Rotterdam, Netherlands, 30/10/93
PREVIOUSLY Feyenoord, PSV Eindhoven, Newcastle

The captain of the Netherlands is now in his fifth season as a Liverpool player, having joined the Merseysiders after an impressive first season in England with Newcastle in 2015/16. The 30-year-old box-to-box midfielder has been a mainstay of Jurgen Klopp’s side, barely missing a match since joining and being a key player in every Premier League game this season, all but two from the start. He scored in the 3-1 win at West Ham in late January.

6 THE SCHEMER

THIAGO

BORN San Pietro Vernole, Italy, 12/4/92
PREVIOUSLY Barcelona, Bayern Munich

Liverpool appeared to have landed a major coup when they added Thigo to their Premier League title-winning squad last summer – especially after his outstanding performance for Bayern Munich against Porto in the Champions League final. However, the Spain international midfielder, who has won 13 major club trophies and does not turn 29 until next weekend, has yet to fully assert himself in the red shirt of Liverpool, his first half of the season having been curtailed by illness and injury.

26 THE FLYING SCOTSMAN

ANDREW ROBERTSON

DEFENDER

BORN Glasgow, 27/3/94
PREVIOUSLY Queen’s Park, Dundee United, Hull

A key contributor to Liverpool’s recent triumphs at home and abroad, with his pacy runs down the left flank and inch-perfect crosses. Andrew – or Andy – is an attacking left back par excellence who joined the Merseysiders from Hull City in 2017 after experiencing relegation, promotion and relegation again in successive seasons for the Toffees. He was appointed as captain of Scotland in September 2018 and captained his country to the Euro 2020 finals last autumn via the play-offs.

1 IN GOAL

ALisson

BORN Novo Hamburgo, Brazil, 21/6/92
PREVIOUSLY Internacional, Roma

Alisson briefly became the world’s most expensive keeper in 2018 with his £67m transfer from Roma, and Brazil’s World Cup goalkeeper has proved to be money well spent, resolving Liverpool’s problem position between the posts with several world-class performances – albeit with a few high-profile errors thrown in. Injuries have also occasionally set him back, but his contribution to the club’s Champions League and Premier League triumphs have already assured his recognition as a Liverpool goalkeeper great.

15 THE EX-GUNNER

OLEX DIALLO-CHAMBERLAIN

MIDFIELDER

BORN Portsmouth, 25/9/93
PREVIOUSLY Southampton, Arsenal

Alex left Arsenal for Liverpool in August 2017 in a £25m deal having spent six seasons at Emirates Stadium accumulating 158 first-team appearances and scoring 20 goals. A versatile midfielder with a strong shot, he was absent for over a year after sustaining serious knee ligament damage in April 2020, and although he remains on the fringes at Anfield, the 33-cap England international made 30 appearances, scoring four goals, in last season’s Premier League title-winning campaign.

10 THE AFRICAN ACE

SAidi MANE

ATTACKER

BORN Sohio, Senegal, 14/12/92
PREVIOUSLY Metz, Salzburg, Southampton

A potent, athletic striker with an eye for goal, Sadio joined Liverpool in 2016 from Southampton for £30m and has proved fabulous value for money. He has maintained a steady output of vital goals throughout his five seasons at Anfield, peaking with 22 in 2018/19, and is fast closing in on a century for the club. He succeeded team-mate Mo Salah as the CAI African Footballer of the Year in 2019 after two successive runners-up placings behind the Egyptian.

20 THE SPEARHEAD

DIogo JOta

ATTACKER

BORN Porto, Portugal, 4/2/96
PREVIOUSLY Passos de Ferreira, Atlético Madrid, Porto (I), Wolves

A pacy Portuguese international striker, Diogo has been selected ahead of Roberto Firmino in the Merseysiders’ list of two league games and scored the winner last time out at Wolves, the club that sold him for a reported £3m last September. Although the 24-year-old got off to a fine start at Anfield, scoring his first Liverpool goal in their 1-0 home win against Arsenal, he was out for three months after sustaining a foot injury in early December.

21 THE PHARAOH

MO SALAH

ATTACKER

BORN Gharbia, Egypt, 16/6/92
PREVIOUSLY El Mokawloon, Basel, Chelsea, Fiorentina (I), Roma

A phenomenal first season at Anfield in 2017/18 – following a then club-record transfer from Roma – earned the Egypt international both the PFA and FIFA Player of the Year awards. The doubling of his hat-trick tally from the 2016/17 Champions League win and last term’s Premier League triumph, and he has scored 25 goals already this season. Electric pace and a lethal left foot make him one of English football’s leading attractions.

20 THE BOSS

JURGEN KLOPP

MANAGER

BORN June 16, 1967 in Stuttgart, Germany

Jurgen has strengthened his reputation as one of Europe’s most accomplished managers since he arrived at Anfield in October 2015, leading Liverpool to Champions League and Premier League triumphs in successive seasons. The 53-year-old German has won three titles and four league cups in his three seasons at Anfield, and has already secured the title in his third year.

REMEMBER KIT WELL

All of Liverpool’s kit sponsors
1979-92 – HITACHI
1982-88 – CROWN PAINTS
1988-92 – CANDY
1992-2010 – CARLSBERG
2010-21 – STANDARD CHARTERED

REALLY?!?

If you want to know your Arsenal history, James Milner wouldn’t be a bad man to ask. Not only did he have the pleasure of playing at Highbury, for Newcastle on August 15, 2003 (pictured below – Arsenal won 2-0), but he also played against the Invincibles, for Leeds at Elland Road on November 4, 2003 (a 4-1 win for the Gunners).

Naby Keita is the sixth player from Guinea to play in the Premier League – and the very first was a Gunner. Kaba Iliana became the first when he played for Arsenal against Chelsea on January 31, 1999. Till Camara became the second when he joined Liverpool the following season, and scored a winner at Highbury against Arsenal in his first season. The other three were: Mo Camara (Derby County), Kamal Zayatte (Walsall) and Ibrahim Cisse (Fulham).

Andy Robertson’s father Brian grew up on the Wyndham estate in the Maryhill area of Glasgow, where he was a childhood friend of later to be Scotland, Celtic and Arsenal star Charlie Nicholas.
A sunny August afternoon saw Liverpool exact a modicum of revenge over Arsenal, as they won the Charity Shield on August 12, 1989 to launch a new season in English football.

After stunning Liverpool two months previously on the famous night at Anfield, George Graham’s men were beaten by a first-half strike from Peter Beardsley.

Two of the stars of any Arsenal/Liverpool show at the time were undoubtedly David Rocastle and John Barnes – both indubitably talented attacking spearheads for their club. Barnes – four years Rocky’s senior – always was one of the younger man’s heros. Not only for his remarkable talent, but also the way he had been forced to deal with the racism that came from being England’s highest profile black player of the era.
Ian Wright

David,

Twenty years bro. In a way, I’ve been dreading the build up to it. You’re always on my mind but I try not to think of that specific day. You know what I mean?

Everyone knows how close we were. Both Bromley boys, you were up in Tunham, I was just down the road. We would see each other in school despite you being younger. Football meant everything to you man. Do you remember when you dragged a bunch of us? to this football tournament literally minutes before it was due to start. We beat everyone! A bunch of us and our mate who played rugby. Everyone had parents and supporters, we just had each other. It was always just us.

At 15, you were already operating at a totally different level. You always carried yourself with a level of professionalism we couldn’t understand. I remember those times when you would leave Bromley to go all the way to Stoke Newington, just to get picked up by Paul Davis so you could go training. On your way home, you would stop by the estate and tell me “I don’t care how you do it, you have to get into the game”. I can see the frustration in your face detailing these training sessions with reserves and seeing players you thought were not on your level.

I remember the club said you weren’t allowed to play on the estate or park anymore. You did anyway because everyone knew the main rule was to not touch or tackle you. That was the law! We were playing with DAVID ROCastle! You were our hero. You had made it in our eyes.

You saw something in me I couldn’t even see in myself. It got to a point where I stopped turning up to those sessions because I knew you would be there, hounding me with the same message. If I’m being honest, I was embarrassed. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve become someone that young players and parents speak to and ask for advice. It’s not something I take lightly. I think about what you would have said to them, what you said to me, the things you told me to improve. As much as the game has changed, it’s still the same.

We weren’t just friends, we were brothers. You would come to watch me play for Palace religiously. And then Arsenal happened. Think about how many times we acted out being in the same team one day. Wright to Rocastle, Rocastle back to Wright, Two Bromley boys.

That night before our first game as teammates, we must have spoken for over five hours. Even in that moment where I was still doubting myself, you were reassuring me as always and telling me how you would make everyone work to get me my goals so I could settle in.

I’ll never forget that moment when you told me you had been told to Leeds. Everything froze. I didn’t know how to feel and I still don’t like thinking about it. There was no Arsenal without you. I took it personally. I joined because of you. I went into those offices demanding answers.

We had come too far. I couldn’t stop thinking of that moment against! Leicester when I scored my first goal and saw you, Paul Davis, Michael Thomas and Kevin Campbell coming towards me.

I still think about our holidays together with our families. The pictures serve as reminders of those precious moments. I’m Uncle Ian now bro and just know that I’ve got them. Without fail, the first call I get on Father’s Day is from Mel. You would be so proud of Ryan, Monique, Mel and Janet. They’ve worked so closely with the club to make sure your legacy lives on.

We’ve had a crazy year (long story) but I can’t wait to hear our fans sing your name home and away.

Love you always my brother,

Ian.
ADRIAN ON ROCKY

Our analyst Adrian Clarke was a youth player at the club by the time David Rocastle had progressed to the first team, but he trained alongside him on occasions.

Adrian, a young emerging winger himself, also watched Rocky in competitive action regularly at Highbury, and says he was always one of the players he was a big fan of. Here he gives us a bit more insight into his style of play.

I was lucky enough to spend five years marveling at David Rocastle's magical wing play from Highbury's West Stand Lower before joining Arsenal as an apprentice in 1990 and he was every bit as brilliant as people tell you when they reminisce. His talent on the ball was special but first and foremost Rocky was a fiercely competitive 'Arsenal Man'.

Wingers can sometimes be a little soft, but Rocky was physically and mentally tough. And because he'd fight and scrap for the badge with the kind of unflinching determination that supported year for in the modern game, everybody loved him.

Like many of his teammates brought up at Arsenal during that era, there was a winners' spirit burning inside Rocastle.

In one-on-ones Rocky was dynamite. He'd torment full backs with his shuffle (throwing one leg over the ball, dropping a shoulder and then dinking past them on the outside) and he'd even throw in a double shuffle on occasion just to rub it in.

In my view he had the full winger's package. Elegant on the ball, full of tricks and turns; quick and powerful (like, really powerful); great at pressing and streaking back; and of course most importantly his end product was also first class.

Time and again I'd watch him get the wrong side of a full back before whipping a quality cross along the face of goal.

Every now and then he'd arrow a fierce drive of his own into the bottom corner too.

When Highbury united as one to sing 'Oh Rocky, Rocky; Rocky, Rocky, Rocky, Rocky Rockcastle' you just couldn't not sing along with it.

Between 1991 and 1992 I was privileged to get the odd opportunity to train alongside David Rocastle at London Colney, and at close quarters he was even more impressive.

Very professional and an absolute machine once he got into his full stride, it was a relief to me that I wasn't a left back charged with the task of stopping him.

Rocky lit up English football for Arsenal in the late 80s and early 90s, and his rounded skill set would have made him a superstar in the modern game too.

Wingers as good as David Rocastle don't come around too often.
# First-Team Appearances (Goals)

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## Fixtures, Results & Line-Ups

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## In This Very Special Edition

You will have access to:

- The Captain's notes
- A special message for the fans

See how the team prepared for today's showdown

- You'll find out who is the biggest joker in the dressing room!
BEN

WINSTON

When Arsenal played Valencia at Highbury on April 4, 2001, just four days after David Rocastle’s death, the matchday programme featured numerous eulogies to one of Arsenal’s favourite sons.

Teenage supporter Ben Winston – a volunteer with the Arsenal Community Department – submitted his own, heartfelt tribute, which we printed with those of former team-mates and friends.

David Rocastle was the reason I got into football. I am a season ticket holder who is currently coaching football with Arsenal in the north of Israel, to kids who would not normally have the opportunity to play. Football is therefore a big part of my life. However football was a sport I didn’t even know existed until I saw Rocky play at the age of seven. He was such a great player that I was mesmerised by him and after seeing him, started supporting the club. Four years ago, I started a tribute football team called Rocastle Rovers, a team that is still going strong.

Everyone knows that David was a fantastic player and loyal servant to the club. However David was also one of the nicest men I have ever met. I was very fortunate that in 1990 he allowed me to come and interview him for my school magazine. Rarely have I met such a kind, lovely and generous man. I was overcome by his warmth and personality. He is a one off, a legend, a genuine hero. I will never forget him.

Ben Winston, 2001

Two decades later, Ben has swapped north London for Los Angeles, and a highly successful career as a TV producer and director. Winning Emmys for his work on The Late Late Show with James Corden – he was also executive producer of the awards show last month – he has worked with some of the world’s most celebrated music artists including One Direction, Shawn Mendes and Bruno Mars. Ben remains a huge Arsenal fan, who still feels the impact of his favourite player’s death all those years ago. The matchday programme asked Ben to once again reflect on Rocky’s influence as we commemorate the 20-year anniversary of his death.

Twenty years since his passing, it’s a testament to how much David Rocastle meant to us all that we will still sing his name, still have his picture adorning our walls, still reminisce about the great times we had watching him. The meeting room in my office will always be named in his honour.

I’ve often thought about why David’s legacy looms so large all these years on. Which other player’s name from our Big Six line up is so regularly sung by an entire stadium, often by fans too young to have even seen him play? It’s worth remembering, although David means so much to us, it is only the ever-grown amongst us that would have had the privilege to see him in an Arsenal shirt. Yet he remains a beloved icon and legend of our club to every supporter.

But here was a player we all would have wanted to be. If we had been born great enough to step on that hallowed turf, we would have all liked to have been like Rocky. He loved our club, played with his heart on his sleeve. He worked as we would have worked. Yet with a class and dignity to match. And his ability was second to none. Rocky had a silky, majestic quality on the ball, that had rarely been witnessed at Highbury before.

To top it all, his talent on the pitch was matched by his kindness off it.

I often think back to being that little boy walking into the treatment room at Highbury to interview him for my school magazine. It’s kind of crazy that it ever happened. Struggling on the treatment table, out of the team with the knee injury that kept him on the sidelines for so long, he made time for this nine-year-old kid to interview him for North West London Jewish Day School’s magazine. I always remember him making me promise I wasn’t working for The Sun undercover. As a young nervous kid, I thought he was serious. As an adult, I now appreciate the kindness of making me feel at ease whilst inside my head was exploding. He was my idol. A superhero in a red shirt. And there he was, answering my questions with patience and kindness, as I probably asked what his favourite colours was, or what would he have been if not a footballer.

David Rocastle was more than a player. He represented what was great about our football club. What some of us fell in love with. As time moves on, we will continue to see much change around us. New stadium. New players. New managers. New owners. New crest. New competitions. But he will always remain as he was. He is our constant. Beloved and respected. An icon never forgotten.

Ben Winston 2021

@ACFCProgramme
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<td>33</td>
<td>MAT RYAN (GK) (1)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>JOEL MATIP (3-11/1)</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>GRANT XHAKA (24-1/1)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>RHYS WILLIAMS (2-1)</td>
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<td>GABRIEL MARTINELLI (3-3)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NATHANIEL PHILLIPS (8-2)</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>FOLARIN BALOGUN</td>
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<td>BEN WOODBURY</td>
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<td>BEN COTTRELL</td>
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<td>CADIMIN KELLEHER (GK) (2)</td>
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<td>MIGUEL AZEEZ</td>
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<td>TRENT ALEXANDER-ARNOLD (25-2/1)</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>DAVID ROCastle</td>
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<td>NEJ WILLIAMS (3-2)</td>
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**TODAY’S OTHER FIXTURES**

- Chelsea v West Bromwich Albion (12.30pm)
- Leeds United v Sheffield United (3pm)
- Leicester City v Manchester City (5.30pm)