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## SWANSEA CITY FOOTBALL CLUB



### SWANSEA CITY

v

### NORTHAMPTON TOWN

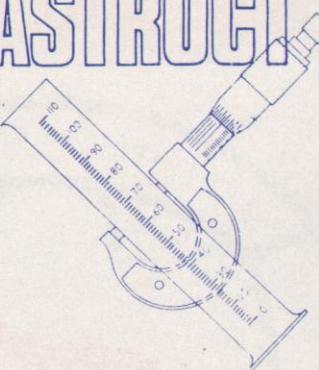
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MATCH DAY MAGAZINE **10p**

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## MANAGER'S NOTES

When you are in a corner, you fight that much harder. That has been my philosophy all my life in football ; that was the mood—I am proud to say—of the players for the third of our Easter games, the visit to Bradford City.

It started as the hardest of our holiday games ... and was made that much harder by the two home defeats against Torquay and Reading. From being a game from which we would have been happy to take a point—assuming that we had won both our home games—it became a game that we HAD to win.

And take it we did. It was a display of fight, determination and a will to win ; of a refusal to be branded as a re-election club.

Every supporter who saw, for instance, our game against Reading last Saturday knows that we are not a re-election club. Visiting manager Charlie Hurley left the Vetch Field boardroom confessing : "Goodness knows how we won it. All I can say is thank you."

We outplayed Reading for almost all the match ; we had perhaps ten scoring chances to their two or three. The difference was that our average was one out of ten ; their's was two out of three. We had only ourselves to blame. I am not going to say we were unlucky... because we weren't.

The point that I want to make, however, is that there is real quality in our football. In itself, it is not enough because it is goals that count. Somehow we have to graft on the finishing touches and, once we are ahead and playing well as we were against Reading we must knock in the 'killer' goals.

This is our last but one home game. Two points today and another two against Exeter in a fortnight are a 'must'. We have made the fight unnecessarily hard for ourselves and there must be no more slips.

The attitude of you 'hard core' supporters is so important to every player who will be fighting to the last reserve of stamina, strength and skill to keep this club free of the shame of seeking re-election. I ask you for the kind of effort that I am asking of the players.

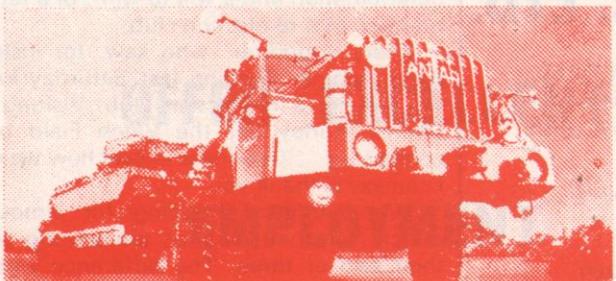
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## OUR VISITORS

## NORTHAMPTON TOWN

Good Friday was certainly a good day for Northampton Town. They ended weeks of defeats, both home and away, with a 2-1 victory against Barnsley. In fact, the previous four games had been the worst of all—no goals and no points.

It was the low point in a dreadful run that had started from the turn of the year after 1975 had opened with Northampton looking a side of promotion possibilities.

The Cobblers kicked off on January 1st with a 2-0 away win over Hartlepool. Then a home point from a game against Brentford put them on 28 points from 25 matches—just two points and a couple of goal average places outside the top four.

The next 11 matches produced disaster. There was just one win, a home 3-0 success against Scunthorpe plus a couple of home draws. Every other game was lost... and Northampton tumbled down the table so fast that re-election became a definite possibility.

Thanks to the Easter programme plus a game or two in hand over most sides, Northampton should avoid that prospect—but it has been a dreadfully disappointing spell for team manager Bill Dogin and general manager Dave Bowen, the former Wales boss.

Northampton, after all, seemed to have everything going for them this season. They finished fifth in the table last season and opened this campaign as promotion favourites. Despite the dominance of Mansfield Town and Shrewsbury from the kick-off in August, it always seemed 'on' for Northampton to clinch one of the other two places.

After a moderate start to the season, they burst into front running company with five consecutive wins from mid-September to mid-October and from there on maintained the steady form that kept them within striking range of a promotion place.

The Cobblers had a pair of outstanding strikers in Paul Stratford and Gary Mabee and a brilliant mid-field player behind them in John Buchanan. In October, however, Buchanan featured in Cardiff City's one big transfer deal of the season when he came to Ninian Park in a straight swap for John Farrington.

Only the previous season, Farrington—a 'flyer' for Leicester City in the First Division—had cost Cardiff a record £65,000 and it looked a wonderful exchange for both clubs. The goals dried up at Northampton, however, but Farrington stressed his competitive class against Barnsley when he scored the vital winner five minutes from the end—his third for the club.

With the defeat at Shrewsbury on Easter Monday, Northampton have not picked up an away point since that New Year's Day win at Hartlepool. Before that, however, they had won games at Torquay, Rotherham and Cambridge—plus at Torquay again in the F.A. Cup—and gained draws at Lincoln, Rochdale and Exeter.

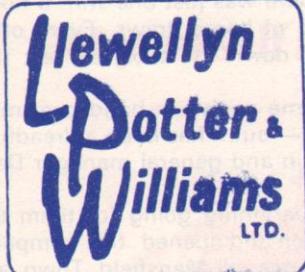
Stratford and Mabee still head the goal scoring list with 13 apiece, followed by Billy Best (6), Jim Hall (4) and Farrington.

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## PEN PICTURES

## NORTHAMPTON TOWN

BILLY BEST : Signed by David Bowen for Northampton at the age of 17 from a Scottish Junior Club, and after 5 years service with Northampton, he was transferred to Southend United. Returned to Northampton in 1973, and is now Club Captain. Plays Midfield or Front, and is a prolific goal scorer.

ALAN STARLING : Goalkeeper. Signed at the end of 1971-72 season from Luton for whom he was on loan. Known as Sparrow to his team mates.

BARRY TUCKER : Defender. A product of the Youth Policy. A regular first team player all last season.

STUART ROBERTSON : Defender. Born at Nottingham. First joined Notts. Forest as an amateur, leaving them to go to Doncaster Rovers, from whom his transfer was secured.

JOHN GREGORY : Defender. Signed for Northampton on leaving school, has spent his whole professional career with us, and was a regular member of the first team last season.

DAVID CARLTON : Mid-field. Played 5 League games for Fulham, where he started as an Apprentice, transferring here in the early part of last Season, and was in the first Team for the remainder of the Season.

ROBIN WAINWRIGHT : Mid-Field player. Born in Luton. Was transferred about 3 years ago to Millwall. Was signed by us during the summer.

GARY MABEE : Striker. Born in Oxford, and signed as an Apprentice for Tottenham Hotspur. Has been a full time professional for about two years. Signed by us in Summer 1974.

DERRICK CHRISTIE : Striker. Born in London, moved to Bletchley in 1965, and was later signed on school-boy forms by us. On leaving school, signed Apprenticeship forms. Is still only 17 years old, and played for the first team three times last season.

GRAHAM FELTON : Striker. Born at Cambridge where he played for Cambridge United in the Southern League before joining the Cobblers.

PAUL STRATFORD : Striker. Outstanding schoolboy. Signed on Schoolboy forms, then on leaving school signed Apprenticeship forms. Is now 19 years old, and a regular member of the senior side.

MALCOLM JOHN : Needs no introduction, hails from the Bridgend area, played many times for the Swans in combination games, went to Bristol Rovers. Transferred this season to Northampton. Capped for Wales at Boys Club and Youth Team level.

## TODAYS REFEREE

Mr. CLIVE WHITE

(Harrow). Began refereeing in the South East Counties League and made his way on to The League's full list last season via the Metropolitan and Isthmian Leagues, and the supplementary list. Vice-president of the Fulham Referees' Society, his interests include cricket and tennis.

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- 6 Geoff Thomas
- 7 Danny Bartley
- 8 Alan Curtis
- 9 Dave Roberts
- 10 Robbie James
- 11 Peter Abbott
- 12 To be announced

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(Orange Flag)

## NORTHAMPTON TOWN

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- 2 Gary Anderson
- 3 Ray Tumbridge
- 4 John Gregory
- 5 Stuart Robertson
- 6 Wayne Cegeilski
- 7 John Farrington
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### IT ISN'T EASY

by MICHAEL BOON, Sunday Express Sports Columnist

The hallmark of a great competitor is the man who never knows when he is beaten. That certainly applies to Gary Sprake whose goalkeeping fortunes have hit an all time low this season—month after month of second team football at Birmingham, torrents of abuse from St. Andrews supporters, his transfer market price tag slashed from £100,000 to £35,000 and his Wales reign seemingly over.

Just when Swansea-born Gary needed it least, his biggest threat has emerged in the formidable, gum-chewing shape of Dai Davies. Not since he took over in the Welsh team in 1964 has Gary faced a rival with the kind of references that Dai possesses.

After all, Everton are battling grimly for the First Division championship and Davies, playing brilliantly behind a fine defence, has been one of the reasons for the Everton success this season. After years of struggling since his transfer from Swansea City, Dai has the game at his feet.

He could have rightly assumed until a couple of weeks ago that his place in the Wales team would fall into place. National manager Mike Smith admires Sprake—but he could hardly have kept him in the side after months of reserve football while Wales have a goalkeeper to call on who is playing for the most successful side in the land.

Yet Sprake had a stroke of luck when he needed it most. Dave Latchford, the man who had taken his place in Birmingham's goal, hurt his knee and in jumped Sprake... back at his best. A couple of his saves against Carlisle virtually ended Birmingham's last lingering relegation worry.

Birmingham kept a clean sheet thanks to Sprake—despite going off for five stitches in his leg—and sneaked a couple of goals themselves to gain both points. Suddenly the St. Andrews crowd, which had hissed Sprake last season, acclaimed him as a hero.

"It hasn't been easy for Gary", agrees Birmingham manager Freddie Goodwin. "Yet, despite it all, he kept going and worked amazingly hard in training. He was determined that he would take his chance when it came—and take it he did. He will still do Wales a mighty good turn."

Smith himself deserves a fair share of the credit for making sure that Sprake did not 'die' in the face of previously unknown professional humiliation. He kept contact with the goalkeeper who has served Wales so splendidly and assured him that his record was still going for him and that he was being watched regularly in Central League matches.

"This meant the world to me," says Sprake. "I have been hoping against hope that somehow the chance would come for me to show that I can still produce the goods. I was just slightly nervous when I went back into the side—but elated when I made those saves.

"I felt that I had proved wrong all those people who have been writing me off. I showed that I was not a forgotten man."

But what about Davies? His first Welsh cap was within touching distance at the age of 26. Now manager Smith is likely to leave his decision until Wales take the field in Budapest on April 16 for the critical European Nations Cup tie against Hungary.

Smith agrees that the goalkeeping issue is his biggest problem... but having to choose between men like Sprake, Davies and Chelsea's first team goalkeeper John Phillips—who played so well here in the recent Under 23



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international against Scotland—is the kind of problem that Welsh football can live with quite happily.

In fact, Welsh football could happily propose a vote of thanks to Birmingham City at the moment. The shock of Mike England's retirement at Tottenham left a huge hole in the Welsh team for the five European and home championship internationals of the next eight weeks, especially as John Roberts has been out of football for almost six months.

But, as with Sprake, Roberts has returned in the nick of time after a miserable time that included an operation. "People at home in South Wales were wondering whether I had retired," he says. "Certainly I saw very little chance of playing for Wales again this season."

Now both are heading for Welsh team places—and, to make the picture complete, Wales full-back Malcolm Page should have pulled back from a groin injury which has kept him out of the Birmingham team for a few games.

#### CLUB NEWS

Today we have the pleasure of inviting the Llanharry Welsh Paraders to the Vetch Field, to entertain you.

The paraders are all girls, their ages range from nine to twelve years old, this will be their first display in public, so give them a loud cheer.

Before the game and at half time there will be a collection in aid of this jazz band, please give generously. I would like to mention that this organisation, contribute at least twenty pounds per week to the Swansea City from their sale of the clubs Bingo Tickets.

As you are now probably aware, our Youth Team went to Germany over the Easter, to play in an all Nations Youth Tournament, and to everyone's delight came back to Swansea proud winners of the cup which they competed for, drawing one game and winning the remainder convincingly, and beating the German Team in the final 4-0 congratulations lads.

May we take this opportunity of thanking the parents committee for all the hard work that they put into fund raising, to enable the lads to go to Germany, also the lads themselves, and to the undermentioned for donations most gratefully received :

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and to Mr. Phillip Chapman "Talk of Wales Entertainments" for putting on two shows completely free of charge, at the Bryn Gelli and Heathcliffe Clubs also to the artists who took part.

Once again on behalf of my chairman, and board of directors Harry Griffiths, John Charles and all the staff may I say to you all many thanks.

GEOFF FORD

Next week, John Charles will give a detailed report of the youth squad's fortunes in the tournament in which they competed in West Germany

## TODAYS MATCH BALL DONOR

We most gratefully thank

**Mr. VAUGHAN THOMAS, Esq., O.B.E.,**

for donating the Ball for today's match.

## NICE TO BE BACK

from GORDON DANIELS, Secretary Swansea City F.C.

This week I have returned to the desk and the job I left two years ago last December. Obviously I am very glad to be back; although I left the club physically I never left it in spirit—I do not think that I missed a game ever since I resigned to take on another post.

It was a difficult decision but I made up my mind to return to the Vetch Field because I wanted to make my contribution to assist the club to reach its rightful place in the higher divisions of the Football League.

At this moment, I know, it is a desperate and worrying time but, as an ordinary supporter for the past two years, I have seen enough of the players at the club to be convinced that there is a much brighter future ahead.

My duties will be the same as they were before but anything I can do, using my previous experience, to help the manager, Harry Griffiths, or our commercial manager Geoff Ford, I will be delighted to do.

To all supporters, I would like to say this: I would be delighted to see any of you at any time should you feel that you have a suggestion which could help the efficiency and success of the club. I will, of course, always be here during matches—but I can also be contacted by phone. My door is always open to anyone with the welfare of Swansea City at heart.

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