

# YESTERDAY'S MEN

## PETER SHILTON

European Cup glory, England heartache and managerial misery with a true footballing legend

■ WORDS: Richard Lenton

### PETER SHILTON

#### CV

» 1005 appearances in the Football League for Leicester, Stoke, Notts Forest, Southampton, Derby, Plymouth, Bolton and Leyton Orient  
 » 125 caps for England  
 » Shares the record for clean sheets at World Cup finals (10)

#### HONOURS

» FA Cup runner up with Leicester, 1969  
 » League Championship with Forest, 1977-78  
 » League Cup winner with Forest, 1979  
 » European Cup winner with Forest, 1979, 1980  
 » Super Cup winner with Forest, 1979  
 » First Division runner up with Southampton, 1983-84

#### INDIVIDUAL HONOURS

» PFA Player of the Year, 1978

#### HOT OFF THE PRESS

» Peter has signed up for series five of the ITV show *Dancing on Ice!*

**A**ccording to the British Army adage, 'Perfect Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance'. During his time as manager of Nottingham Forest, Brian Clough followed the military motto to the letter. Well, kind of – he played around with the order of the words just a little. 'Pissed Up Preparation Produces Perfect Performance' became the new aphorism at the City Ground...

It's the afternoon of May 15, 1980, and European Cup holders Nottingham Forest are in Arenas de San Pedro to the north-west of Madrid, preparing for the defence of their crown against Kevin Keegan's FC Hamburg.

The atmosphere is typically relaxed; Clough insists that his players should treat European ties like holidays, and this sun-drenched, week-long trip has been no exception. "The key to preparation is relaxation," he would say. But there's 'relaxation' – health spas, massages, all-round pampering – and 'relaxation' – lounging around a Spanish pool quaffing European lager...

Clough is in typically ebullient mood as the hours tick down towards kick-off at the Bernabeu. However, one of Forest's star players, goalkeeper Peter Shilton, is concerned at his lack of specialist preparation.

"We'd had a long season, and Brian thought that we were shattered and physically gone, which is why he took us away to Spain for a week before the final," Shilton tells Football Punk.

"But the problem was that we were staying in a small town in the mountains where the ground was bone hard, and there was very little grass. All we had was a surface similar to a hard tennis court, which was no good if I wanted to practice shot stopping without getting injured. When we did find a bit of grass on a hotel lawn, the manager told us to clear off!

"I didn't think I was ready at all. I suddenly panicked, and told Brian and Peter (Taylor, the assistant manager) about how concerned I was at the lack of grass to train on, but Clough said: 'Well, you haven't looked hard enough, have you? Because we know where there is a grassed area that's perfect for you, Peter me lad.'

"Clough went back to the hotel and I followed Taylor to the outskirts of this small town that we were staying in. 'There you go,' he said. 'There's your grassed area.' I couldn't believe what he was pointing at. We were standing in front of a traffic roundabout and on it was a circle of grass. He was serious. I got my essential practice for the European Cup final against the background noise of tooting horns from the passing cars, and with two tracksuit tops acting as goalposts. We won 1-0 and I had one of my best games for Forest." Perfect Preparation Prevents Piss-Poor Performance? My arse...

Peter Leslie Shilton was born above his father's off-licence in Leicester on September 18, 1949.

From a young age he showed immense promise between the sticks, and was quickly snapped up by his local club, Leicester City. His parents, Les and May, built his childhood around his lofty goalkeeping ambitions. When Peter feared that he wouldn't grow tall enough to be a goalkeeper, his parents would pull on his ankles while he clung to the stair rail. "It sounds ridiculous, but my arms are two inches longer than normal for my build," he insists.

At the age of 13, at a coaching session overseen by England and Leicester number one, Gordon Banks, the King Richard III Boys School



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pupil was handed the highest of compliments.

"That lad's a good 'un," Banks told club trainer George Dewis. "Aye," Dewis replied. "He'll have you out of the first team soon enough..." He was right.

At just six feet tall – despite his parents' best efforts – Shilton lacked the physical frame and presence of many top goalkeepers, but his footwork, suppleness and agility made him damn near unbeatable at times.

He was also a perfectionist. "Perfection is unachievable, I knew that," he added. "But it is what motivated me when I was younger. By aiming for it, I reasoned that I'd achieve a higher standard than anyone else."

He drew inspiration from the great goalkeepers of the past; replicating Banks' positional intuition, the magnificent Russian Lev Yashin's agility, and Chelsea and England stopper Peter Bonetti's command of his penalty area. "I noticed that Gordon was never caught out as the ball was struck; that Yashin projected an aura of invincibility; and that Peter was willing to take responsibility for crosses, and I wanted to bring these qualities to my game."

As one of the country's most promising schoolboy players, Shilton was courted by England's elite clubs, but there was only one team for the Leicester lad.

"As a 15-year-old I played for England schoolboys against Scotland in front of 90,000 people, and after that Manchester United and Arsenal wanted to sign me. But I'd been at Leicester since the age of ten; I was Leicester born and bred, and had supported them, so I signed as an apprentice.

"I made my debut at 16 when Gordon was on international duty, and I took over from him at 17 when Leicester sold him. At the time Leicester had a decision to make; do they sell me – a young lad with potential – for a reasonable amount of money, or cash in on Gordon who was towards the other end of his career? They took the view that I was a better long-term investment."

Shilton spent eight years at Leicester, amassing 286 appearances,



'Just think Ray, if you'd got the nod in '82, it could have been you on the cover of Retro...'



and even managed a goal against his future club Southampton in October 1967 when a long, hopeful clearance found the net.

In 1969 Leicester met Manchester City in the FA Cup final, but the 19-year-old Shilton had to settle for a runners-up medal; Neil Young scoring the only goal of the game.

Five years later, by which time he'd been capped more than a dozen times by England, Shilton moved to Stoke for a record fee of £350,000, but, after the Potters were relegated to the Second Division in 1977, he made the life-changing decision to join newly-promoted Forest for a fee of £270,000. It was a deal Clough later described as the most important of his Forest tenure. "It was like buying a painting, like a Constable or a Turner," he said. "In a year or two's time, you know it's going to be worth twice what it cost you."

With Shilton nearing the peak of his powers, Forest romped to the League title in their first season back in the big time. Imagine Burnley doing that this season... In 37 appearances, he conceded only 18 goals. His performances, which included an outrageous title-clinching save from Mick Ferguson's close-range header in a 0-0 draw against Coventry – which was every bit as good as Gordon Banks' thwarting of Pele at the World Cup eight years earlier – also secured the PFA Player of the Year award for the Forest custodian.

"We had a firm belief that if we scored, there was no way we'd lose because they wouldn't score against our defence, and Peter, obviously, was a big part of that," said Clough.

In the next two years, Shilton would also win a League Cup, a Super Cup and a brace of European Cups to fully vindicate his decision to turn down mighty Manchester United for the second time in favour

of a move to Forest.

"Brian Clough had tried to sign me when he was at Derby, and then again when he was at Leeds for 44 days," adds Shilton. "I liked the fact that he wanted me, and I think there was a bit of chemistry between me, Clough and Peter Taylor, who was an ex-goalkeeper who really fancied me as a player.

"Everything came off at Forest. There was a mixture of young players who became internationals like John Robertson, Viv Anderson and Tony Woodcock, experienced players like John McGovern, Ian Bowyer, Frank Clark and Peter Withe, and players like Martin O'Neill, Larry Lloyd and Kenny Burns who Cloughie got the best out of. The team was well balanced and had strength in the right areas. For the first three years it was like a dream come true."

By 1982, Shilton was regarded as one of the finest goalkeepers in the world. However, one of his biggest rivals for the crown of global number one, Ray Clemence, also happened to be English. The two were big pals, who roomed together on trips away with the national team, but their rivalry was fierce.

In the lead up to the 1982 World Cup in Spain, Shilton and Clemence were so closely matched that manager Ron Greenwood would alternate the duo. For five long years he'd wrestled with who should be his number one, but on the morning of Wednesday June 16, 1982 – the day of England's first World Cup match since their quarter final defeat to West Germany a dozen years earlier – Greenwood had vowed to make a decision as to who his first choice would be. It was a tense moment for the roommates.

"Usually Ray and I would work together in one corner of the pitch, going through our warm up routines and stuff, but on this particular morning Ray went one way and I went the other. We both knew that whoever Ron went over to first was going to be left out, so it was very tense," remembers Shilton.

"When Ron came onto the training area, he went over to Ray, and Ray's head just dropped. I knew straight away that I was in. I was gutted for Ray I must admit, but I was elated that I was going to play in my first World Cup.

"Fair play to Ray though; he and I just carried on as if nothing had happened. We had a really good relationship – we roomed together for ten years and were big mates as well as rivals."

While Shilton's international career was finally blossoming after 12 years, several false starts, and even a period of self-imposed international retirement during the mid 70s when Clemence was the undisputed first choice under Don Revie, his club side were on the slippery slope as Clough and Taylor's Midas Touch began to desert them. The fabled duo bought a succession of pups for big money, and Forest began to slide down the table.

Shilton's personal life was also in chaos; there was his highly publicised gambling addiction, and a conviction for drink driving, when, after going out alone to eat one night, he got drunk and met a young woman who he drove home after closing time. A car followed him, and after a few miles he realised it was the woman's husband! In a panic, he raced away, lost control of the car and wrapped it around a lamppost. He was banned from driving for 15 months and fined £350. The incident also led to a famous terrace chant in the 80s, sung to the tune of 'Bread of Heaven', which went: 'Peter Shilton, Peter Shilton, does your missus know you're here?'

He decided the time was right to seek pastures new, and moved south to join Lawrie McMenemy's Southampton side, which included fellow England internationals Kevin Keegan, Mick Channon and Alan Ball. It was a team genuinely capable of challenging for honours, but McMenemy's men consistently fell just short in both League and cup competitions.

Immediately after the 1982 World Cup, in which Shilton had kept four clean sheets in five games as England just missed out on a semi final place, Bobby Robson succeeded Greenwood as England manager, and made it clear that Shilton would remain his number one choice. It was a far cry from nine years earlier when he was public enemy number one...

It's October 17, 1973, and England need to beat Poland in order to qualify for the World Cup finals in Germany the following summer. Most pundits were calling it a foregone conclusion.

Shilton barely touched the ball in a one-sided first half, but, despite

## HE GOT DRUNK AND MET A YOUNG WOMAN WHO HE THEN DROVE HOME. A CAR FOLLOWED HIM, AND AFTER A FEW MILES HE REALISED IT WAS HER HUSBAND!



June 22 1986, Azteca Stadium, Mexico City, World Cup quarter final: Argentina's Diego Maradona punches the ball past England's Peter Shilton to open the scoring in a 2-1 win

England's dominance, the score remained goalless. Then, midway through the second period, Norman Hunter trod on the ball near the touchline and Poland broke. Lato fed the ball to Jan Domarski, who decided to hit it first time. His low shot towards the near post looked innocuous, but Shilton dived awkwardly and the ball slipped through his grasp.

Allan Clarke equalised from the spot later on, but a 1-1 draw saw England miss out on World Cup qualification for the first time. "I was trying to make the perfect save," he admitted. Shilton later described it as 'his only mistake in 20 years of playing for England.'

By 1986, when England travelled to the World Cup in Mexico, Shilton was arguably the world's finest goalkeeper. And, under Robson, the team harboured genuine hopes of a successful tournament.

After squeezing through the group stage, England saw off Paraguay in the last 16 to set up a quarter-final clash with Argentina, who were led by the world's finest footballer, Diego Maradona. The Napoli star had been the outstanding player in the tournament, but in the first half of the quarter-final, his threat had been diluted by a resolute English side.

Then, early in the second half, an attempted clearance from Steve Hodge deflected into the England box. Shilton raced out to claim the ball from an on-rushing Maradona, but the diminutive Argentine climbed highest and punched the ball over Shilton and into the net. Shilton, the acting captain in the absence of the injured Bryan Robson, led the protests, but Tunisian referee, Ali Bin Nasser, allowed the goal to stand. Argentina won 2-1 and went on to lift the trophy.

"I don't like to be associated with it; one of the greatest players ever cheating like that and getting away with it. The ref and linesman were also to blame - they weren't up to the job. It was such a tight match up until then, but that swung the game. Obviously he scored that great second goal, but we were mentally still reeling from knowing we had been cheated.

"Maradona asked me onto his chat show in Argentina a few times, but I told him that until he apologises I can't draw a line under it. But he won't say sorry. He should have apologised like any good sportsman, but to this day he still hasn't admitted that he got away with murder. It's a detriment to him more than anything else."

At the age of 36, it appeared as though Shilton had played his last World Cup match. However, he was still there four years later when England came so close once again at Italia '90.

In the late 80s he looked a shoe-in to surpass Bobby Moore's England caps record of 108, and, in the run-up to what proved to be the three lions' most successful tournament since '66, Shilton was awarded his 109th cap in a friendly match against Denmark. His appearance in the third/fourth place play-off defeat to Italy at the World Cup was his 125th and last for his country - a record that still stands today.

Shilton has mixed feelings about Italia '90. After their customary slow start, England built up a head of steam during the tournament, before finally bowing out in the cruellest of circumstances - a penalty shoot-out defeat against the West Germans.

"To get to the semi finals was fantastic, but to go so close - missing out on penalties - was heartbreaking. We hit the post when we had the Germans on the rack, and if that had gone in then who knows? But it's still the best we've done at the World Cup away from England. It was a great

effort and one of the greatest memories of my career."

Shilton announced his retirement from international football after the tournament, and in February 1992 he left his club, Derby County, to take his first steps on the managerial ladder with Plymouth.

In the 1993-94 season, Shilton guided the Pilgrims to the Division Two play-offs, but he left the following year after a disagreement with the chairman, and more revelations about his gambling addiction, which almost led to him being made bankrupt. The Mirror ran a story that included the line: 'A love of gambling turned Peter Shilton into the goalkeeper who could save almost anything but money'.

At the time of his departure from Home Park, Shilton had made 996 appearances in the Football League, and decided to have a crack at a playing return in an effort to reach the magic 1,000 mark. After short spells at Wimbledon, Bolton, Coventry and West Ham, he finally reached four figures on December 22 1996, turning out for Leyton Orient against Brighton & Hove Albion in front of the Sky Sports cameras. After five more matches he retired at the age of 47. 

**Shilton is a popular on the after-dinner speaking circuit, and has a variety of corporate and business interests, including a new portable goal for kids called the Eye Goal. <http://www.redyset.com/>**

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