

47th minute Fritz Abromeit holds the title of being Rot-Weiss' only European goal-scorer. For Abromeit, this record is one of football's enduring stories. He played his entire career with Rot-Weiss over 11 years, a rarity in today's game. A Pokal and League winner with the club, he scored 33 goals in 67 appearances – a notable feat even when compared to the modern game. Although they have not been seen in the Bundesliga since 1978, their influence and standing within the national game is set in stone. If Bayern Munich are Germany's record five-time European Cup winners, it will always be Rot-Weiss who can say they were the first to compete in the competition.

Nowadays, Rot-Weiss are viewed as another Fahrstuhlmannschaften, but for their 1950s exploits they will forever have a place in the history books. For a side that were eventually besieged by financial problems and a slow decline, their history very much replicates the Ruhrgebiet, whilst the city of Essen even more so – from industrial powerhouse, to decline, to a rising star in the tertiary sector of Germany's industry.

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Perhaps one of the best-known football clubs in the world, Borussia Dortmund has a relationship with its supporters like no other. From their humble beginnings in December 1909 they rapidly embraced the feeling within the area. Angry at the local Catholic trinity, a breakaway was proposed. Speaking at the foundation of the club Franz Jacobi said:

"I have been a member of the Trinity Youth since 1902, and since 1906 we have been playing on the 'Weissen Wiese'. We footballers have been systematically attacked and defamed by our church since 1906. We can no longer put up with this. This club is absolutely necessary."

With his statement Jacobi gave birth to the idea that Borussia Dortmund would question routine and lead a path of its own value – a sentiment alive and well in the club today.

A modest early history, it wasn't until the 1960s that Borussia Dortmund began to make waves in German football. In 1965, Dortmund won their first DFB-Pokal, and in 1966 came European success – winning the European Cup Winners' Cup 2–1 against Liverpool in extra time.

If the characteristics of the Ruhrgebiet are defined by the 1960s to 1990s – the rise and fall of heavy industry – then so can the achievements of Borussia Dortmund. Financial problems littered the years of the 1970s and 1980s, it was only the last year of the 80s which offered solace – a Pokal victory against Werder Bremen was swiftly followed by a Super Cup victory against Bayern Munich. The 1990s, however, would prove pivotal.

From the prospect of relegation in the 1980s, very few could have predicted the boom of the 90s. Ottmar Hitzfeld set the club on a path out of obscurity; his reign brought about two Bundesliga Championships, two Super Cups and, most famously, a Champions League victory over Juventus in Munich. Later, and under the stewardship of the Italian coach Nevio Scala, the European Champions became World Club Champions with a 2–0 victory over Brazilian club Cruzeiro in the 1997 Intercontinental Cup Final.

Once again though, reminiscent of the area, it had to get worse

for Dortmund before it got better. Financial pressures almost destroyed the club – players were forced to take wage cuts and the sale of the Westfalenstadion were the most extreme examples. However, this hardship had galvanised the locals; the stadium became more famous for what occurred on the terraces than on the pitch. The now world famous Südtribüne – South Bank – terrace is home to not only the largest standing terrace in Europe, but perhaps the most well-known fans in Europe.

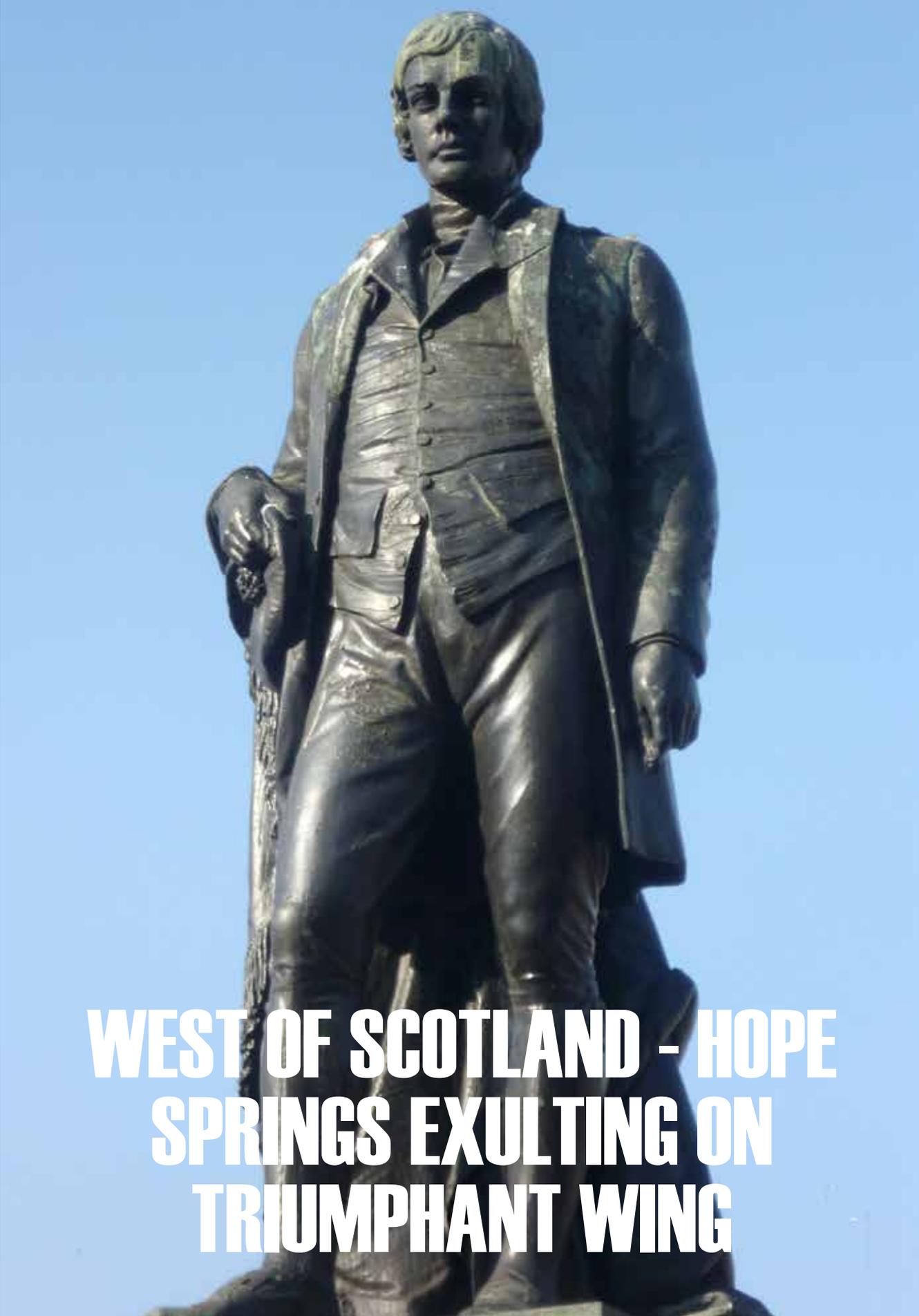
Unafraid to speak on political matters, or those pertaining to societal issues, visitors to the Südtribüne describe it as an almost religious experience. When times were hard in the Ruhr region it was football that allowed the man on the street to escape, and this feeling is still very much alive in Dortmund today. Whether it be acceptance on refugees or the backing for the destruction of homophobia in football, it is Borussia Dortmund, and the Südtribüne specifically, that confronts these issues head on. There is a forward-looking mindset that reflects the region on the steps of the south bank that forms a voice like no other. Magnificent fan 'tifo's' display the conveyance of messages as well as simple but effective banners.

For the Südtribüne inhabitants, their heroes on the pitch now reflect their iconic fan culture status off it. This wouldn't have been possible without the arrival of Jürgen Klopp in May 2008. The now Liverpool manager became Head Coach of Dortmund after the departure of Thomas Doll. What Klopp went on to achieve catapulted Dortmund from perennial also-rans to back-to-back Bundesliga champions, double winners and mainstays of the Champions League – the reflection of the club in the local area is unmistakable.

From an area with such hard-working values, and an ethos of togetherness, it was no surprise that when the Dortmund team bus was targeted by a financial terrorist during the Champions League quarter-final in the 2016-17 season, the Westfalenstadion supporters – and the local area – rallied round immediately to ensure no visiting fan from Monaco would be stranded. Opening their homes to their French visitors, the Borussen harnessed the power of social media. The "bedforawayfans" hashtag on Twitter encapsulated everything Dortmund stands for, both on and off the pitch. Whilst the overarching story of the night was an attack on the Dortmund team bus, which consisted of three explosions that left defender Marc Bartra in hospital with a fractured wrist – it was the togetherness of those inside the stadium, and those in their own homes, that ensured this story will forever be remembered as one where many people came together, not of one extremist who tried to force them apart.

With each of the clubs in the region there is as much in common as the diversity that makes them uniquely individual. As with the region itself, they have all experienced the highs and the lows – the bond they all have is the area in which they are situated and the mentality of those who they serve week in, week out.

The blast furnaces, gasometers and winding towers still stand strong in the region – they will always provide a visible reminder of an industrial past; however, akin to the Ruhrgebiet itself and a story of evolution through adversity, these venues now serve as areas for theatre, music, and the performing arts. The industrious nature of those who live and work there has ensured that no matter the hardship, a winning mentality shines through.



**WEST OF SCOTLAND - HOPE
SPRINGS EXULTING ON
TRIUMPHANT WING**

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL IS OFTEN THE TARGET OF SNEERING JIBES THAT CLAIM IT IS DEAD, AND THAT THE FANS NO LONGER CARE FOR IT. BUT AS JOE CARROLL EXPLAINS, IN THE WESTERN HALF OF THE COUNTRY, NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.

In his 2013 autobiography, Kenny Dalglish recalls his childhood in Glasgow: "It was difficult to avoid a football stadium and even more difficult to avoid taking an interest in football". The beautiful game is as much a part of the fabric of Scotland's most populated city as the river Clyde that flows through it, or the shipyards that helped build an empire in the 19th century.

As the country's national sport for the last 100 years, it's fair to say football has been somewhat of a Scottish obsession, and the club that kicked it off was formed in the heart of Dear Green Place. Queen's Park FC were the first association football club in Scotland and to this day they're the only amateur club playing in the Scottish Professional Football League. Though not the first 'football' club when they formed in 1867, they were the first to adhere to a codified version of the game and they were an active force in championing the game to other clubs across the country. They adopted the Football Association rules from south of the border and were instrumental in forming an equivalent body for Scottish football.

Founded in Glasgow's south side, their famous motto *Ludere Causa Ludendi* means "to play for the sake of playing". The club were pioneers of the game at a time when Glasgow and many other industrial centres across the country were bulging with a populous necessary to meet the heavy demands of shipbuilding, iron works, coal mining and cotton mills. The pursuit of leisure as a means to escape the dreary slums and long working days, became more prevalent as a social issue and clubs like Queen's Park sprung up to help the working class living in those heavily polluted urban areas, take their health and well-being into their own hands.

While players during these formative years were most likely of middle class background, football was quick to cross social divides, despite Queen's Park's initial struggle to popularise the game. They entered the English FA Cup before Scotland had its own knockout competition and reached the final on two occasions, both times narrowly beaten by Blackburn Rovers. The very first Scotland team to line up against the old enemy (1872) was almost exclusively made up of Queen's Park players and while parts of Scotland were still turning their nose up at football, certain Scottish players were making names for themselves down in England.

Queen's Park were one of the eight founder members of the Scottish Football Association in 1873 but it would be another 17 years before the inaugural season of the Scottish Football League kicked off. Some familiar faces lined up that year: Rangers, Celtic, Hearts, Dumbarton and St. Mirren, as well as some lesser known names like Third Lanark (an offshoot of the 3rd Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers), Vale of Leven (the first football club in Dunbartonshire) and the now defunct Cambuslang FC.

Perhaps it's just a pleasant coincidence that the sport's popularity began to rise once James I's 'ban' was eventually lifted. 'Fute-ball' was a very different game in the 15th century and its violent nature and tendency to break out into long, bloody battles was thought to disrupt military training. As such the Football Act of 1424 was passed, forbidding the playing of football. Of course, by the 20th century and the formative years of the Scottish FA the law had become archaic and disused – but the 1906 act officially repealed the ban and ushered in football as the nation's number one sport.

It soon grew into a mass spectator sport that entertained

steelmen, office clerks, factory workers, miners and dockers; uniting them behind a common banner. The appetite for football in Scotland grew more gluttonous by the year, and clubs across Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Dunbartonshire and Ayrshire established themselves to help satisfy this hunger.

The 1970s are looked back on fondly as Scottish football's golden age, when the national team reached the World Cup finals for the first time in 16 years; Celtic made history with their ninth consecutive title in 1974 and just two years earlier Glasgow hosted two European semi-finals on the same night. But Scottish teams had been making a name for themselves on the European stage from the 1950s onwards. Celtic became the first British team to lift the European Cup in 1967 while Kilmarnock ventured as far as the semi-finals of the Inter Cities Fairs Cup in the same year, losing out to Leeds United. On the domestic scene, Rangers dominated for the first 20 years of the post-WWII era, while St. Mirren finished third to achieve their highest ever league placing in the 79-80 season.

After a miserable decade in the 80s, the 90s saw Rangers equal Celtic's record of nine consecutive league titles, before Celtic restored some pride in the new millennium, but what about the rest? Falling attendances across the leagues points to fans becoming sick of the predictability of the Old Firm sweeping up everything in front of them, yet struggling to compete with some of the bigger teams on the continent.

Rangers' liquidation in 2012 handed Celtic a monopoly over Scottish football, and while a report in April showed that top-flight attendances were at their highest for five years, the trend is only just beginning to change after the game came close to flatlining in the noughties. Lower leagues may well have seen an increase in the last few years too, but it's clear that the fleeting visit of Rangers in each division helped draw crowds to otherwise empty stadia.

How does this compare with other footballing nations? Despite the game fighting for its life for the majority of the 21st century, Scotland has more people per head of population attending football than any other country in Europe. There's an argument Scottish football has simply had it so good for so long, and that even a moderate fall in enthusiasm shouldn't be mistaken for widespread indifference.

The Old Firm can always expect bums on seats, but just 11 miles down the M8, Albion Rovers are one of those clubs in and around Glasgow that are struggling to draw crowds. Their average attendance was just 450 for the 2016/17 season, compared with the 54,000 packing into Celtic Park every other weekend. With a highest attendance last season of 1,199 – nearly three times their average – against Celtic in the Scottish Cup, there is still some appetite for the game in Coatbridge and other satellite towns, even in its lower league form. Yet the struggle to attract locals on a regular basis, especially in the shadow of the 'Gruesome Twosome' is a reality that bites at the bottom line of clubs like Rovers, Airdrieonians, Clyde and St Mirren.

It means these clubs are largely dependent on volunteers like Christopher Ide, who performs roles at Coatbridge as far-reaching as club doctor, snow-shoveller, handyman, club sponsor and biscuit connoisseur. "I suspect that the rest of Coatbridge don't give a tinker's cuss about us", says Ide (his views of course being his own, not that of the club).

"Even when we won the League Two championship in the

SOME OF THE BEST-KNOWN NAMES IN WORLD FOOTBALL HAVE BATTLED THEIR WAY OUT OF GLASGOW'S TOUGHEST DISTRICTS AND THE MOST BARREN PARTS OF LANARKSHIRE TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL LEGENDARY STATUS.

2014/15 season, and were promoted via the play-offs at the end of the 2010/11 season, I don't recollect it being translated into an increased crowd, even at the start of the following season."

Rovers' players' may not be valued by as many locals as they would like, but there's no doubt the town sees the club as a vital part of the community. The club knows only too well what it's like to be the neglected, marginalised club outside of Glasgow, and the various initiatives and programmes organised by the Albion Rovers in the Community Trust are aimed at those on the fringes of society.

As well as coaching camps for children during school holidays, Rovers' community programmes range from 'The Buddy Club – for people with learning difficulties to meet and take part in social and educational activities – and a reminiscence group for dementia sufferers, to reaching out to Syrian refugees in the area and a fitness programme aimed at unfit middle-aged men. The trust has even put on a free bus to away games for diehard Rovers supporters, and yet while the club is hopeful such good deeds can translate into increased gate numbers, the town is struggling to shake off a general feeling of apathy when they turn their gaze towards Cliftonhill.

Neighbours Airdrieonians (or the enemy, depending on who you speak to in Coatbridge) set up their community trust in 2013 to help "social disadvantaged individuals and groups through coaching and educational programmes." They've struck up a close relationship with the local Glencryan School, putting on sessions at the club's Excelsior Stadium.

And in West Dunbartonshire, there's a junior football club with the interests of the town at its heart. Clydebank FC are members of the Scottish Junior Football Association. Not to be confused with youth football, the SJFA West Premier Division is a competitive league across the West of Scotland, equivalent to England's non-League. Such is their level of income the Trust were the main drivers behind essential maintenance works to their Holm Park stadium, but their true value lies in their backing and

sponsorship of local sports teams.

While community work like this can be life-changing for some, the little jobs shouldn't go unnoticed. The fans who steward the ground for free; the mums and dads, grandads and grandmothers who serve tea and cater on match-days out of their own pocket; the club doctors who volunteer their weekends and shovel snow on sub-zero January mornings to ensure the pitch is playable. They all make a difference because football has been a force for good in their lives and others.

There are countless stories across Scotland of people getting involved in their clubs, making a contribution, and in the last decade or so this has translated into a more all-encompassing role for supporters.

Sometimes just volunteering isn't enough. Fans may well dream of their own "more-money-than-sense" oil baron riding into town shaking a magic money tree, but the reality of a football club run by a billionaire owner is usually much more nightmarish. When the oligarchs, princes and tycoons get fed up or fail to turn a profit, it's the fans who are left to pick up the pieces.

Stirling Albion are one of the success stories of fan ownership in Scottish football, becoming 100% fan owned in 2010. And it inspired fans across the country to think about their own club's future. What measures are in place to save the club from financial trouble? Who would be in charge of the club if the owners up sticks and leave? Are there enough fans who love the club enough to put forward their own, hard-earned cash to keep the club afloat?

The answer to the latter question in at least 10 cases across Scotland's professional leagues is a resounding yes. Fans are nothing if not passionate about their club and when you combine such devotion with a well organised supporters' association, you have a recipe for a potentially successful fan takeover.

Motherwell are perhaps the most high-profile of the fan-owned clubs. Then chairman Les Hutchison sold his 76% stake to the Well Society for just £1 in 2016, making Motherwell the first club in the Scottish top-flight to fall under majority stewardship of its fans. Rather than being mismanaged by their billionaire owner, the intention it seemed was always for Hutchison to pass the club onto the fans when the time was right. "I think people should be extremely proud of this club. I know I am. And I am only a temporary custodian" said Hutchison in August 2015, himself a promising player with Albion Rovers until a car accident cut his career short.

The Well Society has surpassed its target of 2,000 members, with regular contributions starting from as little as £5 a month. It's a model similar to that of Edinburgh club Hearts, whose majority shareholder, Ann Budge, set up an agreement to sell her stake to the Foundation of Hearts supporters trust over a five-year period. To help with the transition from wealthy owner to fan-owned, the Well Society's loan repayments for the first three years will be paid from a percentage of player transfer income, rather than match-day revenue and sponsorship deals.

Such schemes backed by transparent arrangements and financially stable agreements between seller and buyer seem to be the ideal scenario for fan ownership, with Hutchison having grown up in Bothwell, South Lanarkshire. Motherwell fans are fortunate to have had an owner ready and willing to put the club into the hands of the people who hold it most dear.

For Clyde FC supporters, quick and decisive action was needed to save their club from administration in 2004. The Clyde Supporters Trust secured a 50% stake having become aware of the severe financial difficulties that ultimately brought an end to Billy Carmichael's reign as chairman.

£150,000 was raised to stave off the impending threat of the administrators, and while the club continued initially under strict financial constraints, the takeover and subsequent running of

the club has been seen as a huge success. Now running as a Community Interest Company (CIC) since 2010, the club styles itself as “Scotland’s first fully democratic CIC, with a one-member one-vote democracy”. It’s another example of how fan-ownership can work in Scottish football, and a shining example of football fans taking action to ensure something that they and their community cherish is protected.

It’s reassuring to hear of community efforts which are so clearly a force for good. But there are examples of fans coming together which don’t exactly hit the headlines for the right reasons. According to the BBC, football hate crimes in Scotland rose 49% in the year leading up to June 2016, with 50% of cases taking place at a football stadium. These numbers were released in the wake of the 2016 Scottish Cup final between Hibernian and Rangers which saw ugly on-field scenes between fans.

If it recalls the violence of the 1980 cup final between the Old Firm, it should also act as a warning sign. British football has come a long way in cleaning up its image of match-day hooliganism, an image which in no small way contributed to UEFA’s decision to impose a 5-year ban on English clubs from European competition in 1985.

Scottish clubs would ultimately benefit from the ban, as players headed north of the border for the guarantee of European football. But Scottish fans owe their English counterparts even more gratitude for igniting a sub-culture of football away days, new fashions and violence.

If your first taste of football came after Lord Justice Taylor’s report of 1990, your typical match day experience is likely to be one of all-seater stadia, fan-zones and family enclosures, as British football attempted to wash its hands of the unsavoury images of football hooliganism. Such was the disdain for football fans in the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher’s government viewed them in much the same way as trade unions: a menace.

While the Old Firm always have and always will take issue with one another, the breakout of violence on the terraces and in the streets around stadia between opposition fans was the effect of a youth movement sweeping through Scotland in the late 70s and early 80s. The violence was just one facet of the culture. The clothes you wore and the music you listened to were as important to the soccer casual of the 80s as your favourite set of fans to scrap with.

As if to send something back for the gifts of successful Scottish players and managers to Anfield, the culture of casuals was imported from Merseyside. Liverpool enjoyed unprecedented success in Europe, not only winning the European Cup four times in seven years from 1977-1984 but frequently turning out in continental competition. With regular qualification came regular away days to the far-flung reaches of Europe: Rome, Madrid, Brussels, Milan, Dortmund, Amsterdam and Belgrade to name but a few.

Aberdeen enjoyed as much success on the European stage as anyone during those early years of Thatcherism and austerity. Exotic fashion labels were hard to come by on British shores, but as Aberdeen fans followed their club across Europe they discovered and brought home brands that most people had never seen. When they turned out in tracksuits, trainers and t-shirts adorned with Kappa, Fila, Ellesse and Armani, other fans took notice.

Just as the trend had spread to Aberdeen from Merseyside, the casuals movement spread throughout Scotland, with Motherwell’s hardcore following embracing it as whole-heartedly as anyone.

While Aberdeen adopted the ‘casuals’ tag, members of the Motherwell Saturday Service referred to themselves as ‘dressers’.

The violence cannot be condoned, but for fans buying into this absorbing youth movement it was equally about having the latest, most fashionable clothing. One such dresser, Matt Johnstone spoke of his time in the Saturday Service to the Scotsman in 2012: “I’d already seen Aberdeen lads dressing, so I noticed Motherwell lads dressing. As a skinhead, I had a similar mind-set – I wanted to look the business. Everything had to be just right, the jeans so far down, the right size of boots, so we could tell a different style was coming in.”

In his book *Congratulations, You Have Just Met the Casuals* Dan Rivers champions casuals as a sub-culture worthy of academic enquiry. As a member of the Aberdeen Soccer Casuals in the 80s, Rivers feels the media obsession with fan violence meant that the other aspects of casual culture were ignored, and thus denied true classification alongside punks and mods as an accepted sub-culture.

Today you can watch slideshows turned YouTube clips of the old Motherwell Saturday Service in action, backed with David Bowie’s “Heroes” and Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s “Two Tribes”. Some of them pay tribute to the fashions of the times, with brand logos popping up to remind us that “when two tribes go to war”, it’s just as much about the gear on your back as who’s got your back.

And just as some of those exotic brands have managed to keep their appeal among today’s teens and twenty-somethings, so has the ultra culture. Rangers’ Union Bears, Motherwell’s Well Boys and St. Mirren’s Supras Paisley are all part of the match day scene at grounds across the central belt, waving flags, brandishing banners and setting off pyrotechnics. Is it just a group of kids out for a good time watching their club? Or is there something more menacing at the heart of ultras?

Celtic’s Green Brigade have clashed often with police and have even been labelled ‘Scotland’s modern Millwall’. And yet, within the same city exist the Peasy Ultras, a group of young Petershill FC supporters. Their team compete in the Scottish Junior Football Association’s West First Division, and while they might have to share their Petershill Park stadium with Rossvale and two ladies’ teams, the 900-capacity ground is usually a cacophony of young lads singing songs and banging drums, making for an exciting match day experience. Some might say it’s an antidote to the sanitised libraries of top-flight football, where hospitality trumps hostility.

But such hardcore supporters are very much still on the margins of match day culture, and as ticket prices at the bigger clubs go up, the kind of fan able to afford regular outings to Celtic Park and Ibrox have become increasingly middle-class. The Taylor Report and the advent of Sky coincided with a lull in violence at football matches, as football began to clean up its image. Keen to see the back of the stadium disasters which defined the 80s, all seater stadia ushered in a more middle-class supporter.

And according to former Kilmarnock and Ayr United winger Andy McLaren, the game hasn’t looked back. Speaking to BBC Radio Scotland earlier this year McLaren believes he’d be priced out of the game if he was a kid in 2017: “Football has become middle class. It’s meant to be our national sport. It’s meant to be all-inclusive. At the moment it’s not.”

McLaren signed professional terms for Dundee United in 1989, but grew up in Castlemilk, a notorious housing estate in Glasgow. “I thought that was the way everybody grew up. Crime, heroin, drink – football was my escape route from all that.”

Glasgow is home to four out of five of the highest council wards for child poverty across Scotland, according to a 2016 report in the Glasgow Evening Times. There’s no doubt it must have been a tough place for McLaren to grow up in the 80s. But as we’ve seen throughout history, council estates and deprived former industrial areas are so often breeding grounds for

footballing talent.

Some of the best-known names in world football have battled their way out of Glasgow’s toughest districts and the most barren parts of Lanarkshire to achieve global legendary status. Jock Stein, considered one of the greatest managers in the British game, became the first manager of a British side to win the European Cup. His record of nine consecutive league titles with Celtic has only been equalled by their fiercest rivals.

Hailing from Burbank, South Lanarkshire, Stein looked destined for the pits when he left school but he quickly escaped a life of underground toil, swapping the coal mines for the football field. Starting in junior football, Stein signed terms with Albion Rovers before heading south of the border to play in Wales. But he would return to Scotland, signing for Celtic reserves and soon grasping his first team chance to become an important part of the Hoops side in the mid-50s, captaining the club to a league and cup double in 1954.

Not many can match Stein’s stature in the game, but there is one man who emerged from the great man’s shadow. Maybe his achievements aren’t heralded in these parts as much as Stein’s due to the majority of his success coming down south, but Alex Ferguson – born and raised in Glasgow’s docklands in Govan – and his achievements in football eclipse even the great Stein.

His managerial honours include a treble of Scottish championships with Aberdeen in the 80s, as well as four Scottish Cups, a League Cup and a European Cup Winners’ Cup victory sandwiched in between two eras of all-out Old Firm dominance. But of course, it was with Manchester United that ‘Fergie’ would write himself into British and world football folklore.

13 Premier League titles, five FA Cups, four League Cups, 10 Community Shields, two Champions Leagues, success in the Cup Winners Cup, UEFA Super Cup, Intercontinental Cup and FIFA World Club Cup...and one club knocked off their perch. Not bad going for the son of a shipbuilder.

Dalglish is another son of Glasgow. Originally from Dalmarnock, Dalglish’s early life took him to Milton in the north of the city before the family moved to the industrial heart of Glasgow, Govan. His achievements came both as player and manager, something which few footballing figures have managed.

Scotland’s most capped player of all-time, and their leading goal-scorer, Dalglish was a prolific striker for Celtic and Liverpool who terrorised defences on these shores and abroad. After a successful playing career on Merseyside where he won numerous domestic and European honours, he became player-manager and then manager at the club, picking up where the departing Joe Fagan left off. He won three championships, two FA Cups and four Charity Shields in his six-year stint, before going on to win the Premier League with Blackburn Rovers in 1995.

His managerial stint in Scotland is less memorable, becoming Celtic’s Director of Football and then manager at the turn of the century, but a sole League Cup triumph was deemed failure at the end of a decade in which Rangers had equalled Stein’s record nine consecutive league titles. Still, his playing days for both Celtic and Liverpool will be remembered affectionately by both sets of fans, and his place in world football is cemented by his 1983 Ballon d’Or. He’s the only Scottish player to receive the award.

It seems impossible that a boy from the mean streets of Govan, or the coal mines of South Lanarkshire could break free of the poverty surrounding them, ignoring high unemployment rates, throwing off social injustice and rising to the top of professional football to be forever remembered in Scotland and the world over.

For the average fan growing up in Glasgow, however, being caught on camera celebrating a last-minute winner against the enemy is as close to infamy as they are ever likely to get. The Old Firm game is a world-famous derby, but there are hordes of

rivalries further afield. Motherwell and Hamilton Academical play out the Lanarkshire derby, although try telling that to Airdrie, Clyde or Albion Rovers. Just because they don’t always appear together in the same league, doesn’t mean things don’t heat up when they do meet.

Clydebank FC, playing in Scotland’s Junior league, have had more than one incarnation since they entered the junior ranks of Scottish football as Clydebank Junior FC, including a stint as members of the SFA in the 60s. Whatever the level of football; whatever the league, they’ve needed little motivation when turning out against Dumbarton FC.

Across the River Clyde and a few miles west of the Dumbarton Football Stadium lies Greenock Morton FC, whose fierce rivals are the Paisley club, St. Mirren. As the crow flies, Morton and Dumbarton are closer to each other than either of their historic derbies yet it seems the river forms a barrier of indifference, as they seek their honour and revenge elsewhere.

For St. Mirren and Morton, there are Renfrewshire bragging rights at stake. A long-standing derby that may have endured barren spells when both teams competed in different leagues (their season 14/15 meeting was their first competitive fixture in 15 years) but traditions run deep in these post-industrial towns – just ask the mascots. Paisley Panda once brandished an oversized air freshener while Cher’s “Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves” blared out around the stadium. No idea what they were trying to imply there. In the return fixture at Cappielow Park, Morton’s own mascot paraded a toy panda with a noose tightened around its neck.

A bit of pre-derby joviality never hurt anyone, but what’s it like to watch from the stands? And what about actually playing in one? “I can remember going to the game at Love Street as a boy”, says former player Barry McLaughlin who grew up watching Renfrewshire derbies from the terraces before taking centre stage in them for the best part of 10 years.

“When St. Mirren scored you would be right up against the fence to noise up the Morton fans. One time my mate got a pie right in the face, while another time me and my pals were chased though the park all the way home”.

Pete Cormack played in his fair share of derbies in the 90s and was dismissed in two, one for what he himself describes as a near kung-fu kick. “It was like the Old Firm game but on a smaller scale...I overstepped the mark on a couple of occasions after getting caught up in the atmosphere”, he recalls. “They were always fiery games.”

One of Scotland’s most famous sons, writer Robert Louis Stevenson wrote: “The mark of a Scot of all classes [is that] he... remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth century.” While many would lament a loss of quality in the Scottish game, there’s no doubt that football still stirs the passions of fans, players and managers. Gone are the days when Celtic and Rangers are seen going toe-to-toe with Europe’s finest. More agonising is each passing year in which Scottish involvement in European Championships and World Cups passes them by. The clubs living in the Old Firm’s shadow are struggling more than ever to keep their turnstiles turning. And match-day violence is still an evil to be confronted. But from Coatbridge to Celtic Park, from the Junior FA’s West First Division to the Premiership; the famous firsts, the glorious greats and the downright shameful remain in the hearts and minds of Scots. The passion and the hunger for football to live on.

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