

Some like it and some don't.

Three somewhat different views about English football in World Soccer football magazine 1980-1982

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1 Introduction

1.1 Starting point of the research

To sociological football research the game of football is a product of the society in which it operates. According to Richard Giulianotti, managers such as Alex Ferguson, Matt Busby and Bill Shankley have assimilated their social background in Scottish mining and ship-building heartlands and its pragmatic and communitarian values to their conceptions about football. Similarly Bob Paisley and Kenny Dalglish were affected by their surroundings in Tyneside and Glasgow respectively.¹ The significance of this is two-fold. Firstly, it means that common English background creates a distinctive entity of “English football” which can be distinguished from other countries – no matter how thin this common background might be. Secondly, it also means that conceptions of “English football” (in England) have divided along different social backgrounds, which in turn create contradictions when English football is defined. Richard Giulianotti notes the same thing with more contributors, to him Football also reflects the political struggles and ideological interest of dominant and subaltern social groups: young against the old, middle classes versus working class, the old versus the new world.² This in turn means that football is constantly reassessed with different ideological concepts. Thus English football is a contest of discourses in which participating social classes and ideological concepts belonging to that particular Zeitgeist are trying to assert their supremacy.

David Russell notes that there is one distinct and long lasting contest of discourses in England in which two different notions about English football are involved. In England during the 1930s the imaginary status of the country as a world power in football started erode when first pundits began to realise that sooner or later England was going to lose to a continental side and there would be no excuses for it - continental sides were catching up on Englishmen in technical and tactical ability. When England lost to Hungary 6-3 at Wembley in 1953 and during the next seven months it lost three times more to continental opponents critical conceptions about English football started to arise. This critical school³ – in no sense a real school but a group likeminded people – gave up on the conception of English superiority in

¹ Giulianotti 2000, 127–128

² Giulianotti 2000, 129

³ David Russell doesn't use this concept, and it is my own creation

football, hence creating two different views about English football. This critical minority wanted to review the standard of English football and make it more aware of continental achievements in tactics - David Russell highlights the role of Geoffrey Green and Eric Batty especially in this matter. The critical school's decline of footballing prowess was a similar process to the disintegration of the British Empire. Like in the breakdown of the Empire where former subordinates rose to the same level as England and achieved status as independent actors on the world stage, former students of English football caught up with their former teachers and even surpassed them. The counterpart of the critical school was a collection of more aggressive and nationalistic responses to footballing failure and national decline. These arguments found their expression in popular and tabloid press and the answer given to this failure was to decline any foreign influences and to demand "Getting down to fundamentals" which meant that national characteristics would allow Englishmen to overcome sides with superior technique. Thus long preparation periods and intensive coaching were considered "foreign". According to David Russell such sentiments still echoed in the press, in popular discussion and within a professional game that, in marked contrast to continental Europe, allows its leading sides to be run by individuals without coaching talent.⁴

From its beginning in 1953 to the last year of David Russell's research in 1998, before the mentioned phenomenon appears to be quite homogenous. Through the years the critical school seems to think that England needs to learn from the continent and their opponents disagree. According to Stephen Wagg in "popular press journalism", which he has analysed from the Second World War on, there is neither context nor history when writings concern the English national side in football. He concludes that the story is always the same and it uses the similar patterns of thought again and again. The pattern goes like this: if the national team loses, the man in charge of running things is not doing his job properly and he must be replaced. There is always a one man who is responsible and who can't get the best out of the team, thus he must be sacked - no fault in the system at all.⁵

But what about the critical school, because the problem is this: How could the critical school adhere to their beliefs when in a period 1977-1985 there was an English team in every European Cup final except for one and English club sides won seven of them. Liverpool won four times, Nottingham Forest twice and Aston Villa once. Furthermore the UEFA Cup was won

⁴ Russell 1999, 25-26. David Russell's research extends to the year 1998.

⁵ Wagg 1995, XI

by an English team three times and Cup Winners Cup once by Everton. Although the club sides did very well in this period, the national side had little success. It was absent from the World Cup of 1978 and played without distinction in 1982. Also during this time England did participate in European Championships in 1980, but the failed to succeed.⁶ But still English club side football had (re)gained World dominance, and how did this period of club success translate to the thoughts of the critical school about English football in general?

1.2 The question defined

Raison d'etre of this research is to read the writings of the members of critical school in a period 1980-1982 and to analyse their views about English football⁷. For this purpose I have selected three pundits from the World Soccer football magazine, Eric Batty, Leslie Vernon and Ken Goldman. First mentioned writer is included because he is a known member of the critical school and the two latter are selected randomly from the other pundits who write in World Soccer to see if they give a second opinion to the research question. The first reason for selecting the World Soccer football as a source for this study is because it is known forum for Eric Batty – a known member of critical school - to voice his views about English football. Second reason is because World Soccer was first published in 1960 and since then has risen to a formidable status among the football writing releases due to its critical and analytical starting point⁸. Thus one can expect to find reasoned opinions about English football, not just mere rants for or against.

Although “the stream of consecutive” – there had been occasional victories before - European Cup victories to the English club sides began in 1977, it is in order to begin this research few years later when the dominance of the English club sides was clearly visible. The selection of the year 1980 as the first year of this research can be justified with the fact that it was the first time in ten years that England qualified for any International tournament – namely European Championships. Thus the prevailing factors of club dominance in European competitions and return of the national side to international competition might compel the critics – if they haven’t changed their opinions – argue their statements more thoroughly. The number of the

⁶ Goldblatt 2008, 560–561

⁷ English football in this context means national side and 1st division sides respectively.

⁸ Veikkaaja, “Euroopan futislehdet” 18.1.2005.

articles chosen for this research was determined by themes which mean that different articles with different subject matters were chosen. In another words this means that the two main themes, namely 1st division football and efforts of the national team were in primary focus - if some other relevant themes in articles could be found, they were chosen. Thus I feel that the time span – although quite short – is sufficient because the themes are more important than the time span. Furthermore David Russell has examined the discourses in English football in his profile study. Thus the three year time span 1980-1982.

The main question of this research is: **What are the views of Eric Batty, Leslie Vernon and Ken Goldman about English football?** In order to understand the historical context of this question it is not sufficient to remain in the level of simple affirmation or disaffirmation, although it is the first question that needs to be dealt in course of this research. Although this first question is quite pivotal, it must be remembered that “critical school” is a constructed entity for research purposes, and thus it is unlikely that it is present in the articles in a clear form. This means that it is unlikely that the articles are clearly for or against English football. In an analytical magazine one should expect reasoned considerations of the good and the bad elements of English football. Thus this gives two important notions. Firstly, writers should not be forced in to a one category or another – they might not fit either. Secondly, if pundit falls into one the before mentioned categories – critical school or the nationalists – his thoughts should be considered with more caution, because it might be (more) ideologically biased. This simply means that his premises and facts should be more carefully checked.

Nonetheless **the second step is to find out the reasons for pundits’ views about English football.** What are the things that these pundits like or (and) dislike in English football? When this question is asked, it is imperative to distinguish different reasons of (dis)like from others - these (dis)likes must be sorted out. Let’s take an imaginary pundit as example. His reasoning goes: “Don’t like English football tactics because coaches are not doing a proper job”. One might imagine that your imaginary pundit is from the nationalist camp, when in fact he could be either. To clear the stance of the imaginary pundit, his reasoning must be followed thru. To a nationalist bad coach is the final reason, but if there is a reason behind the “bad coach” the imaginary pundit is from a “critical school”. In this case the reason behind the “bad coach” reason could consist of things such as “backwardness of English system” or “ideological tendencies that value hard work over sophisticated skill practice”. This is what I mean when I’m talking about sorting out the different reasons.

To sort out these chains of reasoning is to understand what makes English football English in early 1980s in the eyes of the pundits. And when one knows what English football is, one has a clue how does English football separate from continental football.

Furthermore it must be asked **how the pundits see connection between national side and English club sides?** If club sides did well during this period then why this success didn't translate to national side? For example, why didn't club sides' success matter when they are judging English football?

1.3 English football in previous researches

Football is one of the most popular games in the world and its no surprise that there is a lot of scientific research as well as popular literature concerning football. Scientific research has been studying football from several perspectives; for example from economical, historical and sociological perspectives. On the game level there has been research covering the field of tactics and coaching for practical purposes – for example how to prepare a team for a game, what are the central tactical aspects of each formation and what are the tasks of an individual player in his given position. Usually these are concerned with the latest information and very seldom dwell on the past tactical formations in away that are useful for historians. From historical perspective there are plenty of popular histories of different World Cups, club sides and national teams. Furthermore there are vast amount of autobiographies from the individual players, but the problem is that most of these books are somewhat popular and lack scientific standards - mostly in references. And lately it has become a habit to write a history of every single international tournament, World Cup and European Championships alike, but almost without an exception these histories of international tournaments present events on day by day basis and in chronological order.

The history of British football as a whole – inside a single book - has only recently been covered with depth and scientific standards by Matthew Taylor – his book was published in 2008. The difference with previous writers of the whole English football – such as Tony Mason – is simply in the number of pages. Furthermore the newness of Matthew Taylor's book means that he has covered, analysed and critically discussed with the writings of the previous scholars. Another book which has somewhat broader time span to English football -

to national team of England and its fortunes under different managers if one is precise - has been covered by Brian Glanville in his recent book "England managers" (2007). Glanville's book, although somewhat popular, has plenty of clever insights about English football, its tactical formations and its national side managers. Third book that has altogether different view to English football is Neil Carter's "The Football Manager" (2006), which covers the history of football manager(s) in England. In doing so he also discusses the issues about tactical ideas and their meaning in English football.

Tactical advances on world level in Football has been put together by Jonathan Wilson in his 2008 book called "Inverting the pyramid" which covers the whole history of tactical formations from the very beginning to the present. The book also accomplished in a manner by which it gathers together information for broad source of previous researches for several different countries. Other books that are useful when studying English football - although don't cover English football as such - are Ulrich Hesse-Lichterberger's "Tor. Story of German football", Phill Ball's "Mordo" about Spanish football and Alex Bellos' book "Futebol" about Brazilian football. These books give a point of reference which English football can be compared to.

Sociological football research that has concerned itself with English football has concentrated mostly on football fans and hooliganism. As Richard Giulianotti has noted, research combining tactical aspects of the game to local, regional or national identity have been scarce. Even Richard Giulianotti's initiatives to open up this subject have been limited. He has a good theoretical starting point, but the main problem with his research is that he overly complicates some concepts by giving them names for the field of economics and obscuring their exact meaning - For example "taylorist football"⁹ basically means defensively oriented playing style. David Russell has studied (written) discourses in English football. He has formed an image of this discourse and has noted that there two different views about the game. According to Russell the other discourse is characterised by strong patriotic sentiment and unwillingness to learn from sources abroad. The antipode of patriots support continental influences to better the standard of English football. Russell research is an excellent starting point but it lacks essential information. First of all it isn't very specific about the demand of the continental advisors, and their specific grievance(s) about English football. Is it tactical

⁹ Giulianotti 2000, 134

formations, players lacking skill, or both combined? Secondly it isn't detailed on time wise either.

2. English football according to Eric Batty

2.1 There is not enough quality

“England Players must work at their game”¹⁰

When the article is titled “England players must work at their game”, it is a telling sign of the writer's thoughts about English football. Obviously there is something which isn't the way it should be, and the first glance to the headline pins the blame on the players. But before going on with the analysis I shall introduce the article first. This particular article was written by Eric Batty for the World Soccer football magazine, and in it Eric Batty writes his views about the European Championships played earlier that year. His article is especially concerned with English national side, because in the before mentioned competition England didn't advance from the group stages to semi-finals, and to some – including Eric Batty – that result wasn't good enough. According to his article, if England is to attain the required standard of football needed to succeed, then the remedy is two fold. A quick remedy for the situation is longer preparation period for international tournaments. But beyond offering this quick remedy, the *raison d'être* of Eric Batty's article is to analyse and explain what is structurally wrong with the English football. To prove his subject matter right, in the beginning of his article the author covers vast array of tactical misdeeds such as an inability play against continental defences, but most important notion is made in latter stages of the article when he writes about German football [in comparison with English football].

”I know that at Hamburger SV and all the other West German clubs the players are called back most afternoons for ”skill practice” and acquiring what Greenwood has called “technical knowledge”. Again I know for experience that a good coach is respected by even the top players like Beckenbauer, Netzer and Muller. They look on the coach as God...”¹¹

¹⁰ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980

¹¹ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980

In the quotation above one can see the basic things West German football teams see as the fundamentals of football training. The point here is that when German (top) players think about football, they know these above mentioned aspects of the game are important if one is to have any success. Hence this is how they practice - several times a day since they are called back - and these are the things they concentrate on in practice sessions – skill and technical knowledge. Furthermore for the Germans another fundamental part of the game is respect towards coaches who will help them practice both tactical and technical knowledge of the game. Thus according to Eric Batty English football players don't practice hard enough and they don't practice the right things. Before exploring Eric Batty's thought further it is in order to ask if there is a reason for inclusion of Germans. Why Eric Batty is comparing English football to German football? Or the more accurate question should be, does the name "Germany" matter, or is just a randomly picked example how other countries are training right?

My conclusion is that the Germans are taken here as an example to illustrate how things are done in successful football nation because West Germany won the tournament in 1980. Noteworthy thing here is that Eric Batty doesn't explain the inclusion of the Germans for the comparison by terms of success - he doesn't give any direct explanation at all. This omission can be explained by pointing out that German victory must have been a well known fact in (European) football world. Thus it is understandable that the article doesn't mention the fact that West Germany won the tournament, because its point is to analyse English football in detail, and German football is here to help to make a point. Furthermore it is also plainly obvious that Germans are used here not just because they were successful on this occasion but also because they have been successful before. One could argue that Germany was at that time a dominant football nation. On the world level they had achieved two World Cup victories (1954 and 1974) and they had two European Championship victories as well (1972 and 1980). Furthermore they have lost final appearances on both competitions – on European level 1976 and on World Cup 1966.¹² For Eric Batty success of the Germans might be an explaining factor, but it also might be a ploy to persuade the reader to agree with the message he is trying to put through, since the reality of Germany's national team in 1980s is a different

¹² More information about the World Cups can be attained from several sources. I have used Brian Glanville's book "The Story of the World Cup." (2005), World Cup in Switzerland 1954 pages 82-83, World Cup in England 1966 pages 156-157, World Cup in Germany 1974 pages 206 – 207. In the Internet FIFA webpage's covers all the tournaments in <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/index.html> . History of the European Championships can be found from UEFA webpage <http://en.euro2008.uefa.com/history/index.html>

story. Germany might have peaked with its success as football nation in 1970s, but the fact is that after that they were on decline. From Ulrich Hesse-Lichtenberger's book "Tor! The story of German football" certain details can be picked up and pieced together, and the picture it shows of German football in 1980 looks much like a team in decline. Hesse-Lichtenberger points out that in 1974 the Dutch – another dominant team in Europe at that time - and the Germans were very much alike in tactical sense, and the only major difference was that Gerd Müller was no Johan Cruyff – meaning that Germany had a one of the best national teams in the continent.¹³ But almost suddenly in 1980s the brilliant players of the previous decade were gone and they're talent was unmatched by the coming generation - as Hesse-Lichtenberger puts it in his book, "all of them were hardworking but (very) average". This meant that the national team's game wasn't pretty anymore but it was effective.¹⁴ And those players with the required skill to make more attractive – Uli Stielike and Felix Magath - were left out of the national team or they were played out of position.¹⁵ Was Eric Batty ignorant about the decline of German football, maybe it hadn't happened yet or past German glories counted much more than the present – perhaps to Eric Batty a temporary – decline ? At least according to Eric Batty most other countries aren't worth a comparison. He notes in the beginning of the article when he is writing about future prospects of English football.

"My view is that things are not as bad as they might seem, though they could be a great deal better. Looking at the series overall, I am convinced that the level of performance by England is not too far from that of the best – if only because the best are not very good!"¹⁶

Teams mentioned in this context are the ones that played with England in the preliminary group; Italy, Czechoslovakia and Belgium. Eric Batty sees that although Italy has a solid defence, it is lacking attacking ideas; Czechoslovakia just plainly over achieved in this tournament, and apparently Belgium is just plainly bad since it's doesn't get specified mention what is wrong with its playing style. Eric Batty might have a point suggesting that Italy had solid defence but no attacking ideas. According to Jonathan Wilson the playing style (formation) called "*il gioco all' Italiana*" was the game plan in late 1970s and early 1980s in Italy, which every team in the country was using. Thus everybody had the same system and it was rigidly reflected in the numbers the players wore. Number 9 was always the

¹³ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 195

¹⁴ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 205–206

¹⁵ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 252

¹⁶ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980

centre forward, number 11 was the second striker who (always) attacked from the left and number 7 was “tornante”¹⁷ on the right. Formation also included number 4 as a deep-lying central midfielder, number 10 was more attacking central midfielder and number 8 was the link-man, usually on the centre left, leaving space for number 3, the left-back, to push on. Defence worked with man-to-man marking, thus everybody marked a man so it was a predictable pattern.¹⁸ Italian football had become tactically predictable, no use of taking influences there? Hence, as noted in the beginning, Eric Batty’s point here is that these other teams could have been overcome with better preparation – 10-day preparation before internationals that is. But apparently there is something different about the German team, and if England is to match its prowess, something more needs to be done.

England might not be too far from the best and Eric Batty seems postulate that England should (or could) be one of the best. If England is to reach the top class of football in Europe then English training methods and training amounts should be more like Germans. This being, when Eric Batty compares the methods of the Germans to the English way of doing things and continues the previously quoted thought about German practice habits, he notes a sharp difference. As a structural difference he notes that when it comes to England, the attitudes of the top players towards football are completely different from the Germans. It was previously noted that Germans have respect for coaches and versatile training methods, now he continues about the Englishmen

“That is not the attitude in England where most players prefer to play their own game – on their natural ability – and that at the highest level is not good enough”¹⁹

When the quote is properly understood - read between the lines - it seems that when compared to their German counterparts, English players aren’t coming back at afternoons to practice, and that is the reason for Eric Batty to say that Englishmen are trying to cope with their natural ability. And this, on its behalf, is the main reason behind the poor, or under the par, performance(s) of the national side. But if Eric Batty thinks that English players should practice more, then why doesn’t he say so? I believe the answer to this question, is not only how much is practiced but also what is practiced. This particular question can be examined from two view points – history and present.

¹⁷ Tornante is a winger who tracks back to help the defence.

¹⁸ Wilson 2008, 266

¹⁹ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980

If one looks English football history - and the things that have been written about it – it appears that there has been a certain amount of negative attitudes towards training at least in formative period before the Second World War. To Neil Carter pre-World War II English football had been pervaded by anti-intellectualism, which was connected to working class culture and its ideology that “practice is more important than theory”. Thus the attitudes towards theoretical knowledge - about tactics for instance - have been negative. At the same time managers (and coaches) used to be former players themselves and instead of learning by reading they had learnt by practice. Furthermore it was viewed that most of all managers should be figure of authority. Because of this “anti-intellectualism” greater emphasis was placed upon physical strength than the technical side of the game. Thus attributes such as stamina, courage and loyalty have been more important than skill. Contrast to continent is clear because, unlike England, continental Europe has always placed its emphasis on tactical knowledge. The result has been that England and the rest of the British Isles have been unable to develop enough players with the understanding of tactics, constructive and intelligent movement and sophisticated ball control.²⁰ The difference is partly explained by the fact that in continent engineers were responsible for creating many of clubs that were formed. This created a technocratic mentality towards management and coaching, which meant that intellectual contribution to football was not frowned upon – football could be theorized. Another explaining factor is the fact that in addition of European football being more “white collar” game, more emphasis was put to national team than the club sides. Furthermore in England many club directors had the powers to rule over their managers and that way hindered the development of the game – even after the Second World War directors could pick the starting line-up instead of the coach/manager. This was notable when those English managers, who had been coaching / managing abroad, returned from the continent and tried to implement continental style of doing things faced an opposition from the players and the club directors about the (new) methods that they had learned from the continent.²¹

Matthew Taylor acknowledges the “anti-intellectual” stance in English football, but also notes that the negative attitudes towards coaching may have been magnified. And of course it must be noted that while players such as Stanley Matthews were against coaching, there were not against training per se. Majority of players under the first England manager Walter

²⁰ Carter 7-8

²¹ Carter 66 - 67

Winterbottom²², such as Johnny Haynes, Bobby Robson and Billy Wright, were receptive to these ideas of coaching. Due to the work of the Football Association, the large football community, after the Second World War, was more inclined to accept coaching as proper thing to do in football. Matthew Taylor notes that such was the impact of these new approaches that they took central role in developing (new) styles and systems of play.²³ Attitudes about training have progressed from that point in English football but if judging from this particular Eric Batty article there might be some of them left. Thus the above seen comparison is a telling sign of structural flaw, and points to the fact that in England the basic things have been done wrong in most of the English football teams. It is easy to understand why Eric Batty doesn't compare the game tactics of these two teams, but goes straight to comparing their practice sessions.

If one looks the situation with more contemporary 1980s view, there is another explaining factor. If one wants to put Eric Batty's comments in another way and make a crude generalization, one could suggest that according to him there seems to be an unprofessional or amateurish way of thinking about football in England since they only "kick about" in practice sessions. But is this a valid connection? If unprofessional or amateurish attitude means that Englishmen just "kick about" and don't do anything else to enhance their football prowess, then evidences to support this particular quotation are nowhere to be found. Associating Eric Batty's "natural ability" with "kicking about" is not exactly true since Englishmen take football professionally and English Football Association (FA) has (had) scientifically studied football projects such as the direct football school. The purpose of this school was to identify how to score goals more efficiently or, if one is to be precise, it was about scientifically determining how efficiently create more goal-scoring opportunities. The results of this "study" showed that lesser the amount of passes the more certain were the goal scoring opportunities. Thus this lead to the situation were long crosses towards the attacking zone were favoured.²⁴ The argument made about direct football school and its effects to Eric Batty's argument aren't straightforward as that. In a way it proofs that English football has studied its training methods and the important thing being that this shows dedication to football, but it doesn't say anything about the amount of time that English spend on training

²² Walter Winterbottom started as an England manager in 1946.

²³ Taylor 2008, 220 – 221

²⁴ Giulianotti 2000, 133

grounds. Or about the fact the direct football wasn't (and still isn't) the most sophisticated form of football.

Thus at this point it can be concluded that Eric Batty wants more attitude, i.e. more disciplined and frequent practice sessions than the Englishmen have (if he truly wants to imitate the Germans), but what does this “natural ability” way of thinking really mean since it was noted that Englishmen do practice with scientific methods? Eric Batty's thoughts about it can be specified with the following quotation, when he goes on to write more about what Englishmen should do to improve their practice sessions.

“We must look to the lack of top-drawer coaches in England; to the casual part-time approach to training in the First division and, hopefully, get Greenwood involved with the First Division coaches who in turn will get their players back in the afternoons and pass on what they have learned.”²⁵

Again Eric Batty seems to be claiming that there is a wholesome unprofessional attitude in English football – at this point it is called “casual part-time approach”. With the above-mentioned quotation one can broaden the influence of this mentality to other people than the players. This time the attitude is not only found with the players, but it is also in the coaching staff as well. The casual part-time approach means that most of the coaches cannot do their job properly, and because of that they are making the situation even worse or at least they are not helping the situation. Previously it was noted that English football players need to train more, come back at afternoons to practice and on this chapter it was shown that coaches can not pass the right kind of knowledge to players. Thus these are the aspects that are contributing to the fact that English 1st division players lack in skill and technical knowledge to go on and compete fully in international matches. It seems that there are still negative attitudes towards coaching in England and there aren't enough of those imaginative coaches who can create new playing style – i.e. take the English football forward. Furthermore I think that the biggest problem that bothers Eric Batty in English football is coaches like Graham Taylor who is linked with the direct football school.

Graham Taylor was the first coach to advocate the pressing game in England, a style he had adopted from Soviet coach Victor Maslov. Watford games might have been high-scoring events after he took charge in 1977 but there were no football(ing) delicacies. Tactical

²⁵ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980

formation could be 4-4-2, 4-2-4 like the Brazilians had in 1958 or even 3-4-3, but the thing that mattered was the pressing for high up the field. Instead of short passing long ball was favoured, but Graham Taylor defended his style of playing by arguing that when does long pass become long ball? When compared with the continent the problem was that, as Graham Taylor found out, opponents skilled enough to move the ball and keep it even under pressure would leave direct football lagging behind.²⁶ It seems that direct football school and its result don't convince or impress Eric Batty, because as a keen follower of English football he cannot be unaware about it. Hence I think that this is in the hearth of Eric Batty's thought; he simply doesn't value the direct football school with its long ball tactics - he wants more and different tactics out of English teams.

According to Eric Batty English football is based on the idea of casual part-time approach which in his thoughts is based on the duality of not enough practice and not enough able coaches – or “wrong kind of coaches”. The before mentioned has caused the fact that English players and coaches haven't taken the time learn to the new tactical formations that have developed. For future purposes I going to go thru some the tactical problems that Eric Batty sees, but I'm not going to analyse them here. The reason is that I'm going to do this later on in the study. This part of the chapter only serves as an overview of the problems that Eric Batty sees in English football, and it also shows that these same problems are going to be highlighted in other articles as well – that is why I'm keeping them here instead leaving them out. Eric Batty notes

“...that English players do not know how to approach the continental defence with its tight marking, quick tackling plus libero.”²⁷

And when the continental sides have taken the time to study the contemporary tactical formations and have developed new ones, the results are, as Eric Batty notes, unfortunate for England:

“I have heard Greenwood himself say, countless times, that “British teams beat the foreigners on crosses.” But now the best of the foreigners are not troubled by highballs because their defenders and goalkeepers have worked at this aspect of the game”²⁸

²⁶ Wilson 2008, 282 - 288

²⁷ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980.

²⁸ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980.

Thus according to Eric Batty the English tactical thinking is old fashioned when others have moved on. In another words, he means that Englishmen have played their own 4-4-2 game for too long, and thus their knowledge of continental football is not what it should be. When he writes about quick solutions to current situation, he notes:

“Either persuade Greenwood to get involved with the coaching of First Division club coaches – or afford him the 10-day preparation of internationals that was accorded to Don Revie, who never did anything to suggest that results could be better that way.”²⁹

The common denominator in both occasions is Ron Greenwood, the manager of the national side. Eric Batty seems to think that the success of the national side could be improved by involving national side manager Ron Greenwood to coaching of 1st division sides thus giving more tactical flexibility to national side – the 10-day preparation time would do the same thing. He doesn't mention the tactical flexibility in the quote above, but that must be “the Ron Greenwood factor” because the lack of tactical thinking is in the very essence of this article – it is the thing that Eric Batty is pointing out or rather the lack of it. If Eric Batty thinks that Ron Greenwood would be a remedy for the problems he has pointed about, it is obvious that they must be like-minded persons. The reasoning goes: If Ron Greenwood can have more power in English football, he can see the problems and mend them.

The other person mentioned in the quote, Don Revie, was the national side manager before Ron Greenwood. Don Revie was received well by the football pundits and according to Brian Glanville there was cause for optimism. In his first year Don Revie – he started as England manager in 1974 – changed the playing style of the team but results were poor. The curse of the English game, long-ball tactics were cast a side for passing on the ground.³⁰ Other tactical experimentations were sweeper behind man-to-man markers, and Don Revie even tried out-dated 4-2-4 formation against Finland, but he could not get the England's play to work properly. The problem was that England lacked skill. For example George Best and Nils Liedholm noted that dominating defensive ploy, i.e. man-to-man marking, could be beaten if players had more skill than their markers. These same persons also noted that England players could not do that because they din not have enough skill to do that. Nils Liedholm, the

²⁹ Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980.

³⁰ Glanville 2007, 109

Rome's manager, also noted that there were no longer dribblers like Stanley Matthews and Tom Finney in England's side. The early optimism faded Brian Glanville wrote after Don Revie had been in charge for 2½ years: "It has no pattern, no apparent tactical purpose, no consistency in personnel". And Enzo Bearzot asked "why was it that English team no longer came out and played like an English team, throwing away instead the old weapons of aggression, in the best sense, and commitment?" Argentina's manager Cesar Luis Menotti said "They surprised me. I thought they would exploit the attacking potential of the team. But when I saw them play in Rio, I just saw them looking for a result. The level of English football in general is so much higher than that of the England team that I was surprised".³¹

"From the management viewpoint, I simply cannot see that anyone could have done better than Ron Greenwood did..."³²

Thus Eric Batty sees that manager Ron Greenwood stands out from the rest of the English coaches, because he has an understanding that could mend English football - he must one of those "top-drawer coaches" so little in number in England. Ron Greenwood didn't deliver the silverware, but article's writer sees that lack of success wasn't his fault. As was seen above, the whole English football system needs a change. Before Ron Greenwood can use his full potential in national team the players must learn to do the things he wants them to. This article proves that Eric Batty's thoughts about English football haven't changed at all. English playing style is wrong, players aren't practicing the right things and continental influences are needed. If national side doesn't succeed then success of the club sides seems to be in this context irrelevant.

³¹ Glanville 2007, 113 - 116

³² Eric Batty, England players must work at their game. World Soccer, August 1980.

2.2 Consequences of casual part-time approach

“I still feel that England will qualify for the World Cup, but we will not become a force in international football again until our clubs provide the necessary players and begin to coach their players to play real football” – Eric Batty³³

In the first article covered in this research Eric Batty analysed England’s national football team using the European championships of 1980 as a starting point to his analysis. It was noted that Eric Batty sees English football having a “structural flaw” and thus in need of influences from abroad. The topic of this Eric Batty article is a dissection of a friendly game between England and Spain, which was played in 1981. In conclusion of his article Eric Batty writes out those words quoted above this paragraph, in which he states that English club sides don’t play real football, but national team of England still will manage to qualify for the World Cup – strictly speaking he doesn’t even mention that national side doesn’t play real football. Thus when Eric Batty is criticizing the national team the criticism is directed towards the system and not national team. In the game that is the starting point of Eric Batty’s analysis, England dominated the events on the field, but it lost the game. According to the Eric Batty home side dominated only because Spain let them to do it, and the football pundit points out that Spain’s game tactic was to counter attack – which they did with intelligence. Eric Batty ponders in his post match analysis why England did not win the game, and the previously noted message -England must change their game – is also present. Noteworthy point from the quote is the part when Eric Batty writes “we will not become a force in international football again”, in which the word again indicates that to Eric Batty England has been, in some unspecified time, a force in international football. This is an indication to a reason his previously noted crusade against English football - or should one say crusade for English football. Eric Batty is criticizing England because he wants to bring England back to its glory days³⁴.

His article was concluded with proclamation that English club side football isn’t real football. Since Eric Batty’s notion “real football” isn’t sufficiently accurate term, hence it must be clarified. His thought can be elaborated when in the very beginning of his article he gives an indication what he means when he says:

³³ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

³⁴ The question has England been a force in international football could be debated endlessly, thus the question does Eric Batty really believe what he is writing or is this a rhetorical ploy, is excluded from this research.

“...It was not England manager Ron Greenwood or the players who were on trial but English football. And the sad truth is that England were found to be sadly lacking in the fundamentals of the game.”³⁵

This is the same thought that he brought forth in the first article, the fault is neither in the manager nor the players, but in the system as a whole. This time he goes even further and elaborates that reason for this is a lack in something called fundamentals of the game. When he talks about fundamentals of the game he is not talking about passing, shooting or dribbling, since these things aren't mentioned in the article. These fundamental aspects of the game that England doesn't have are the elements that created contemporary football in early 1980s, or to be more precise “lacking” is due to the fact that England doesn't have the proper understanding of these elements. Here again one can note Eric Batty's objection to the English long ball playing style.

The early advocate of the long passing game in England was a man called Charles Reep – he wasn't coach, just someone who was affiliated with the game. In 1930s he was greatly influenced by Herbert Chapman's WM-formation and the counter attacking style deploying long balls that went along with it. After the II World War, Charles Reep returned to England and noticed that most of the teams had switched to the WM-formation, but to him these teams weren't playing it properly like it should be played – To Reep every team should play like Arsenal.³⁶ What was different to previous tactical formations was that the strong headed Arsenal manager Herbert Chapman had created more defensively orientated tactic called the WM by emphasizing the defense – he dropped one more man from the midfield to the defensive line, making it 3-2-2-3. The attacking tactics of the WM system were centered on the idea of “fast attacks”. Because Herbert Chapman believed that teams could attack too long, the plan was to create space behind the opposition's defense and utilize this space with swift counter attacks build on long passes. In other words this meant that the whole Arsenal team would drop back deep to defend in a way that made the opponent(s) move up their players leaving space behind their defensive line. This meant that Arsenal switched the short passing game to a more direct approach. This new direct approach meant that wingers were also responsible for scoring goals by gutting inside instead of just running on the line and making a cross.³⁷ Several teams tried to copy the Chapman formation by without its tactical

³⁵ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

³⁶ Wilson 2008, 138 - 140

³⁷ Carter 57

attacking finesses thus creating a purely defensive formation.³⁸ According to Reep in Chapman's tactical thought long ball should be played from the defense to a winger waiting just onside, and winger's task was to cross it or score a goal by individual effort. Charles Reep backed his thought with flawed "statistical analysis". Perhaps Reep's the biggest flaw was that he didn't realize what Herbert Chapman had realized - short-passing game was not a productive way of playing in the muddy fields of midwinter.³⁹

Another thing that dominated English football in 1980s was success of 1966. To go along with the long ball tactics there was the "standard English 4-4-2" formation which is the single most dominant formation in English football - Matthew Taylor characterizes the style as organized. "Standard English 4-4-2" formation was developed in midway of 1960s by the then England manager Alf Ramsey. His (football) team management style has been compared to contemporary – meaning those dominant 1960s - business ideologies such as organised management and producing result with efficiently as possible. His new style of playing the game involved traditional marking full-back now expected to overlap and hardworking "midfield" players, such as Nobby Stiles and Alan Ball, replaced the dribbler wingers of the previous decades. The problem was that – as in government in general – the change was only cosmetic and not structural. England might have been the best country in the world for short period, but underneath it still used old methods of training and playing. The stereotyped play of "fast and hard" did not disappear – there were no foreign influences.⁴⁰ This was the background in which Eric Batty notes one of these dominating tactical ideas of the time, when he writes:

"Overall the Spanish defence coped very well in the air, and of course by fielding a libero, behind the defence with no one to mark. Spain gave the English attack the old problem that they have rarely managed to cope with."⁴¹

The fundamental aspect that England lacks is the ability to bypass contemporary defence with her long-standing attacking tactic. To put it in another way, traditional English attacking tactic, long crosses to forwards, has been made less efficient by the continental teams with the usage of libero. Furthermore Eric Batty points out that "Spanish defence coped very well in

³⁸ Carter 75

³⁹ Wilson 2008, 138 - 140

⁴⁰ Taylor 2008, 290

⁴¹ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

the air” which could indicate that Spanish players have developed their previous weak points, and making English attacks even weaker. I think that the point Eric Batty is trying to make is that England’s tactical options at attacking zone are too limited because they don’t understand the modern football and its tactical formations. This lack of understanding modern football seems to something that has plagued for long time, since according to quote these problems have been long lasting because it’s called “the old problem”.

Spanish football history can in its part clarify the “the old problem” of the English problem. British managers brought the “la manera inglesa” (The English Way) to Basque country, which lies in the northern Spain, in the early part of the 20th century. This first form of British influence was called “the old 1-2-3” because (in theory) it meant that three passes from goalkeeper to centre-forward was sufficient for him to score a goal. Athletic Bilbao recruited its first British manager in 1910 and although he lasted only for couple of months, he (apparently) introduced the term “el dribbling” to Spanish lexicon.⁴² The most famous of the English managers in Athletic Bilbao was Fred Pentland – appointed in 1923 – and he is remembered by advocating the short passing game as opposed to “the old 1-2-3”. This form of short passing game (lo de Pentland) spread to Barcelona in the season 1928-29, and Barcelona’s stature in the game from 1928 onwards influenced others to adopt the “ball into feet” style. The point worth noticing here, firstly Fred Pentland spend most of his coaching days in continental Europe and secondly English clubs still haven’t mastered this “ball into feet” style. Thus “lo de Pentland” wasn’t “lo de Inglaterra” although Basques (and Spanish?) believed it was.⁴³ The phrase the old problem indicates the fact that English football has used “the old 1-2-3” for too long, although it might have updated by Herbert Chapman, because it was brought to and known in Spain in the early 20th century, and everybody was grown accustomed to it. Furthermore the English inability to create new ways to play against defensive line with libero has highlighted the problem.

It was noted that according to Eric Batty English football needs something new, and I suggested that to Eric Batty that something is more options, or variations, to their playing style – long ball to forwards is too one-sided for modern football. Before it was noted that Spanish defences can cope with aerial play and libero even further enhances their defensive abilities. And on concrete level this is what happened to English attacks, Eric Batty notes:

⁴² Ball 2001, 79-80

⁴³ Ball 2001, 82-83

“None of the English players could be criticised for lack of effort and up in front both Francis and Mariner did a great deal of running, trying without success to shake off their markers.”⁴⁴

Above written could indicate that Spanish defence with its marking defenders did played well, but when considered against the mindset of Eric Batty this what he means by “lacking in the fundamentals of the game”. In that case English players worked hard on the field but their work didn’t produce any results, because they did not know how to do it properly. This is a further proof of the flaws of the English football written earlier in the text. Meaning that players haven’t been taught (or coached) to play against defences like this and they aren’t used to playing defences like this. Although in the first article Eric Batty supported Ron Greenwood according to Brian Glanville the manager must bear some of the blame.

Brian Glanville recounts the Greenwood era in national side in his book England managers: When he began as an England manager Ron Greenwood was disillusioned with football and was no longer the same innovative figure he had been years earlier. This grew all too clear when Greenwood was elevated to the England role.⁴⁵ Whenever Greenwood relied on his convictions and instincts England would come out good play-wise but not necessarily result wise. This happened against Italy 1977 and West Germany in February of 1977, when England manager utilised wingers. – Thus making it 4-2-4 formation.⁴⁶ Then the quality of play plummeted – even against much inferior opposition. While wingers gave width to the game, England paid for it in the middle of the field because they had no ball-winner in the midfield.⁴⁷ By the late seventies international competition was now so intense, so tactically sophisticated, so swift to exploit potential weaknesses, that Ron Greenwood had to think hard what kind of formation should be preferred.⁴⁸ Nothing really happened and Ron Greenwood had lost his direction and consistency. Talent in England may have been scarce, but Greenwood wasn’t deploying it or exploiting it properly.⁴⁹ Although England didn’t play with a libero the difference to Spaniards’ attack is clear. Eric Batty sums the Spanish attacks up with following example:

⁴⁴ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

⁴⁵ Glanville 2007, 119

⁴⁶ Glanville 2007, 123

⁴⁷ Glanville 2007, 125 - 126

⁴⁸ Glanville 2007, 128

⁴⁹ Glanville 2007, 136 – 138

“As the Spanish right winger cut in, Satrustegui made a diagonal run from left to right that took the entire England defence with him as if he were sweeping them along with a huge broom. Then into that space created on the left came left back Gordillo...”⁵⁰

There are few points that should be noticed here. There is a clear difference how English and Spanish attacks are described. Former did a great deal of work on the pitch but with no result, while few Spanish attacks caused serious problems with English defence. They (Spaniards) knew how to create a space for attacks and how and when to fill those spaces to create a goal scoring opportunity. Another thing, although it is not immediately apparent here, is that Spanish defence made sure that there could be no openings at the defensive line by fielding a libero – or these opening would be more elusive. Thus if England had used a libero then defensive problems would have been solved (?). In conclusion Spanish team had more intelligent attack and tighter defence than England. Eric Batty himself summarises the difference on attack and repeats the earlier convictions about English coaching:

“No club in England coaches its players to run off the ball in attack as the Spaniards did, and very few play the ball around to feet as almost all continental sides do.”⁵¹

In addition to these aspects there is also another point that differentiates the English national side from their Spanish counterpart. From the quote that described Spanish attack in detail it can be noted that it was a winger who started the attack. And according to Eric Batty this is yet another difference between Englishmen and Spaniards. He notes about (English) wingers:

“...one cannot criticise Ron Greenwood for not choosing one because the English clubs are simply not providing them. Most first division clubs are playing 4-4-2 with two central strikers.”⁵²

I think that the point of this phrase is to indicate the reason why national team hasn't got a winger(s), and why club sides aren't producing them, but the 4-4-2 formation in itself doesn't exclude usage of wingers - one can have the 4-4-2 formation with wingers. Thus to say that England plays with 4-4-2 formation, doesn't in itself fully explain the absence of wingers in English football. The before mentioned formation does explain partially the disappearance of the old school winger (wing forward), since it needs to be notes is that these old school

⁵⁰ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

⁵¹ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

⁵² Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

wingers - like Stanley Matthews and Billy Meredith - never had defensive duties. In 1950s and 1960s the when game became more defence orientated orthodox wingers practically ceased to be in English football.⁵³ But when Eric Batty is talking about wingers, he talks about attacking players who utilise the width of the field like wingers, who also have defensive responsibilities. Continental sides are using players like these, but according to Eric Batty the traditional English 4-4-2 formation combined with casual part-time approach and traditional English long ball attacking, has made a winger an obsolete figure in English football. Thus the result is that wingers are not needed in domestic football, since English playing style, the 4-4-2 formation, almost solely uses long balls to two central strikers as an attacking pattern. To Eric Batty wingers would bring a welcome variation to these attacking patterns. Eric Batty finishes the article with a following thought:

“For 27 years since Hungary beat England 6-3 at Wembley, England have beaten foreign teams on crosses which is the stereotyped style played in the English league. And faced by a libero and an eight man defence that can cope with crosses England have always been in trouble, because our game does not produce the quality players who have the ability to adapt and change their style of play for England.”⁵⁴

Although the purpose of this work is not to evaluate the truth value of Eric Batty’s writings, at this point one differentiating must be noted. Eric Batty notes above that England loses games because the players can not adapt (and change) their game according to their opposition – demonstrating that game against Hungary was one such event. According to Brian Glanville⁵⁵ England lost the game against Hungary because it failed to man mark Nandor Hidegkuti who played in space between the attack and defence enabling him to wreck havoc in England’s defence. Furthermore scoring 3 goals against top team of its time isn’t a bad result for the English attackers. Defence on the other hand could be another matter, but Brian Glanville notes that England manager Walter Winterbottom knew that man marking needs to be done, but somehow failed to get his players to play accordingly.⁵⁶ By 1950s all European teams were using the third back game, and Brazilians had a variation of it called diagonal. According to Brian Glanville personal talents were more important in those days than tactical formations – excluding Winterbottom’s rudimentary mistakes against Hungary. To Glanville,

⁵³ Mason 1989, 157 - 158

⁵⁴ Eric Batty, England found sadly lacking. World Soccer, May 1981.

⁵⁵ Brian Glanville has also been writing to World Soccer magazine for several decades and at 1980s had a similar critical edge to English football as Eric Batty had – wingers must be used. This is a noteworthy point because it proves that Brian Glanville is more than mere antipode to Eric Batty.

⁵⁶ Glanville 2007, 25

when Uruguay beat Brazil in 1950 World Cup's decisive game – there was no final – it was because of individual talent. Even Brazil showed no tactical innovations - that was to come in 1958 – and their success was due to supreme individual skill. Thus neither Brazil nor Uruguay had any great coach (manager) behind their success, as was the case with Hungary of those days. Walter Winterbottom's problem was that he could neither innovate in tactics nor inspire his players – with his upper-class background he couldn't communicate with working class players.⁵⁷ Tony Mason on the other hand notes that the Hungarians played with a new tactical formation (3-2-3-2 or 3-2-2-1-2) which confused Englishmen who had been accustomed to playing with and against WM-formation (3-2-2-3).⁵⁸ The Second phrase in the quote states that teams, which use libero along with eight man defence, are causing problems for England - is there a team that doesn't struggle against libero and an eight man defence?

Furthermore, if one looks football in 1980s with hindsight it can be said that contemporary football was not free-scoring feast of attacking football. According to Richard Giulianotti football in 1980s was based around the key words hard work and tight defence. On the tactical side the main question was, should one play with flat back four or use a libero. Richard Giulianotti even goes on to proclaim that in 1980s skill wasn't valued at all – or at least its appreciation declined - thus the playmaker in the midfield was replaced by hard tackling midfielder.⁵⁹ Even though before mentioned might be an overstatement, it clearly gives an indication of direction and the place that football was heading in 1980s. Thus the attitude of times can be described with term “result football” – winning was everything. This relevant because, I think this proves that Eric Batty isn't arguing against English football from “joga bonito” – the beautiful game or play beautiful - perspective, but from competition perspective. This is what needs to be done if England wants to win.

Compared to his article year earlier where Eric Batty points out that in order to improve the performances of the national team, they need a longer time to prepare for the international games, now there is no talk about 10-day preparation. The undertone also was in the first analysed Eric Batty article critical towards the English playing style, but now the critical analysis has come more cutting. Then there was demand to make things more professional, and now the demands include that England must take influences from abroad – “England

⁵⁷ Glanville 2007, 18-20

⁵⁸ Mason 1989, 158

⁵⁹ Giulianotti 2000, 134

must play real football”. Eric Batty hasn’t changed his views about English football since, the grounds for the arguments are still much the same as last year, but now the demands for more complete change in the English game have become sterner. Hard work ethics just aren’t adequate anymore; there must also be intelligence in the style of play. All the assets of the players must be more fully exploited.

2.3 A change of heart? England is pretty good after all?

“On paper it looks as if England and France will qualify from this group and I expect England to win it. If they do not then the English players deserve to be kicked”⁶⁰

About a year on from the previous article and this time the article is a preview of the 1982 World Cup. The quote above is about the group stages of World Cup and doesn’t cover the whole tournament, which is pretty obvious since one can not tell which teams are going to advance. As can be seen from above Eric Batty expects England to qualify from group stages, and later on in the article he confesses that England might even reach to 3rd place if everything goes according to their plan. Although Eric Batty sees that England has a sporting change in group stages, and in the tournament altogether, his opinions about English football haven’t changed. English football still isn’t world class, but England might make it because others aren’t that good – a thought that has been noted earlier. But as one has seen in the previously analysed articles that isn’t the point in his articles. His task is to analyse English football and to convince readers that Englishmen should play with continental style. The reason why Eric Batty thinks that Englishmen have a change is because he notes that England will receive some help from its opponents who have problems as well.

“I cannot see them (Kuwait) doing any more than going down in glory... France like the Czechs have problems scoring goals.”⁶¹

Significant aspect here is that the other countries to be reckoned with in group stages are nations that are having problems with their football – countries such as France and Czechoslovakia – or are tiny in football sense such as Kuwait. But when England’s problems

⁶⁰ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

⁶¹ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

are structural – as demonstrated in previous articles - France and Czechoslovakia have only problems with players respectively. France is lacking a decent striker – or a striker with high quality as Eric Batty puts it. Czechoslovakia on its behalf is going to thru a generation change, and now the previous generation is “too old” and the next generation “too new” for international football. And as noted, Eric Batty sees Kuwait as a minuscule football nation with no real changes of success. France and Czechs have their goal scoring problems, but the same problem also seems to trouble England.

“The big problem is who will get the goals for England?”⁶²

This time Eric Batty isn't talking about the English old problem, since the above mentioned quotation is all he is saying about English attack. Maybe he is saying so little because, the problem of scoring goals have become everyone's problem, or maybe he doesn't want to speculate too much because the article is a preview, in which he doesn't have too many facts to base his analysis on. Furthermore it should be noted that world of football had changed almost dramatically from what it had been in the early 1970s. Jonathan Wilson has written that the World Cup of 1970 was the high point of “the old football”. Thus the tournament in question was held in the age of “new football”.

To Wilson the apogee of attacking football was the World Cup 1970, but it was also the last days of the old (football) – the system centred way of thinking about tactics was soon to takeover. The change might have happened in the 1970, but the hot weather during the tournament and high altitude locations of the stadiums rendered the pressing game in the final tournament unusable allowing attacking football to flourish for the last time. The tournament gave birth to the (world wide) myth of beautiful football, which was going to become the standard for everything coming afterwards to and compared with. Besides the beautiful and skilful football that Brazil was showing, another explaining factor was that the tournament in Mexico was presented in the (colour) television for the first time, and the television transmissions spread out the Brazilian style of attacking football for global audiences. The Brazilian football might have given the impression about being care-free, free flowing and inclined on attacking but behind it all was scientific preparations – shirts were made to resist sweat, boots were custom made and player's diets and sleeping was controlled. Tactical wise

⁶² Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

such was the fluidity of Brazilian football in 1970 that the formation could have been anything been 4-4-2, 4-4-3, 4-2-4 or even 4-5-1. In modern terms, perhaps the closest would be 4-2-3-1 formation.⁶³ The next time when Brazilian national team would reach the same kind of fluidity was in the World Cup 1982. Then the formation was different. It was a 4-4-2 formation, or more accurately 4-2-2-2, without wingers or substantial usage of width – although fullback(s) had the task of supporting attacks. The required spaced was created with movement in the midfield. The difference between the world Cup of 1970 and 1982 was that the times had gone past from just picking up best players and letting them play – system had won and Brazil did not succeed in the tournament.⁶⁴ Trademark Brazilian football had practically come to the end, but as an image it lived on.

The apogee of beautiful football might have been the World Cup of 1970, but Brazilian style of football that has become an international trademark was developed in World Cups of 1958 and 1962 – Alex Bellos calls the year 1970 as world wide acceptance of the style. In the heart of this style individual player’s ability to create and latch on to these goal scoring opportunities. In these Brazilian national teams tactics were inferior to individual player and dribbling and heel passing were more important than tackling and playing the long ball. Alex Bellos has explained this with the fact that in Brazilian society individual talents are more valued than conformity.⁶⁵ Brazil has developed its style of football by breaking the usual patters and habits, and bringing playfulness and showmanship to the game of football.⁶⁶ Also to Alex Bellos the high point of (trademark) Brazilian football was the Year 1982, which saw a Brazilian midfield in their national team that was better than the previous midfields and those who came after – the midfield was consisted of trio Falcao, Socrates and Zico.⁶⁷ This is the background were the goal scoring problems occur. It was no longer enough to have the most skilful players, you also needed tactics.

Key date from the perspective of South American football is World Cup in 1974. It was then that the big three South American football nations - Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay - saw their style of play turned to obsolete. The thing that did this was not the attacking style of the Dutch – players swapping positions and versatility to carry on different functions – but their

⁶³ Wilson 2008, 253 - 261

⁶⁴ Wilson 2008, 263 - 266

⁶⁵ Bellos 2002, 39 - 40

⁶⁶ Bellos 2002, 193

⁶⁷ Bellos 2002, 294

defence. The idea of the Dutchmen was to involve as many men as possible in their simultaneous movements – with or without ball. When the opposition had possession the Dutch squeezed their space and applied pressure on the ball. South American weren't used to this and because their (creative) midfielders were more accustomed to having all the time in the world to trap the ball, move around with it and pass it when they saw it fit, there was going to be difficulties for the South Americans – they couldn't cope with the challenge. As in response Uruguay faded from the list of major powers in football, Argentina kept their passing game but with more variations on the tempo of the game. Brazilians on the other hand decided to match the physical prowess of the Europeans and hoped that the advantage in technical ability would tip the scale of their advantage. In early 1980s Brazilians returned shortly to their (elaborate) passing game, but the overall trend in Brazilian football has been that players have become bigger and game more pragmatic – the game is based more on the counterattack. This in turn has rendered the old fashioned South American put-their-foot-on-the-ball creative midfielders less fashionable, although they still exist.⁶⁸

The important question is: if England, France and Czechs have goal scoring problems – albeit for a different reason – why Eric Batty is suggesting that England should win the group and even reach the 3rd place in the finals? With all the previous knowledge about Eric Batty's views about English football – “not real football” - what makes the difference between before mentioned countries? There are some facts available to him about the English team in the tournament and he sees that besides the problem of scoring goals England has tactically taken a step forward. Sometime before the writing of the article national team manager Ron Greenwood has started to use libero – or at least had once used libero - in England's defensive line. Thus Eric Batty is more supportive of England's future campaign because finally Eric Batty can agree with tactics of the national team - at least on the defence. He proclaims that

“...These same alleged experts were critical of Ron Greenwood using Ray Wilkins as a libero, but in my view this was the most sane step ever taken by any manager.”⁶⁹

First of all there is the point that England is using libero, and one can see that Eric Batty fully agrees with Ron Greenwoods decision to field one. But also in the same sentence he lashes out against the nationalistic element of the media - press and TV - who is against this tactical

⁶⁸ Tim Vickery 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/7539910.stm>

⁶⁹ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

decision. Before it was mentioned that Eric Batty is a part of the critical school, and he wants see changes in English football. It was also noted that their antipode was nationalistic press which valued the English playing style. While important in understanding the mind-set of Eric Batty, it is also important to note that this journalistic discourse did not interest many Englishmen outside working class. Football simply wasn't a mass sport in England in which all classes participated. Before 1990s English football followers consisted mainly of the working class men and few middle class enthusiasts. Thus several of the quality news papers wrote very little – if any – about football.⁷⁰ Those papers that did cover the football prior to 1990s had sensational and populist style, which incorporated little or none critical aspect in their writing.⁷¹ Beyond that dispute Eric Batty gladly notes that England has finally taken heed from the continent. He goes even so far as to declare:

“England will not play English football in Spain, he (Ron Greenwood) will cheat by getting his players to play his way, and he will make all the Fleet Street experts eat their words.”⁷²

By “cheating” Eric Batty means that other nations don't expect England to play with new, more continental, tactical formation. He sees that the continental teams, and others, expect that England will carry on by playing the old way. Thus according to Eric Batty everything beyond the tactical 4-4-2 formation with flat back four isn't English football. 4-4-2 with libero equals “not English football”. Another thing is that when it was previously noted that there is some sort resistance to taking influences from abroad in England, Eric Batty now puts the same thing clearly in front. There other side of the statement is that he sees that the change doesn't please all of the football followers in England. According to him the “Fleet street”⁷³, which traditionally has been the upholder the nationalistic sentiment in football, after this tournament has finally have to recognise that change for continental tactics is for good – influences are good. Although the change is good and it improves national team's changes, this time the change might not be enough to carry them all the way through since Eric Batty notes:

⁷⁰ Russell 2007, 29-31

⁷¹ Russell 1999, 23

⁷² Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

⁷³ Fleet Street was the name of the street where editorial offices of press were situated, thus the name of the street became synonym for the English journalism.

“The plain fact is that England are right out of step with the rest of the world, for from Algeria to Zanzibar, everyone has used a libero for years and it is only common sense that England should fall into line”,⁷⁴

To Batty even within the unknown and little football nations – is (was) Zanzibar a nation? - Without mentioning the big ones, libero is the order of the day. All others have used libero for some time and are accustomed playing with it, making it a slight advantage to them when compared to England. According to Eric Batty it is about time England follows the suit and learns to play with a libero. But he also acknowledges the problem which comes with this change from flat back four to back line with libero, and it is that English players aren't used to playing this way. The gist of the problem here is

“Mr Greenwood knows that English centre backs are only required to be good in the air, and are never required to think. He has also seen the centre forwards of Switzerland and Spain pull the English defence apart by good running off the ball.”⁷⁵

Thus Eric Batty understands that problems in the tactical mind-set can not be fixed overnight, but there are tactical advantages in using a libero when compared to 4-4-2. He addresses these problems faced with English version of the 4-4-2 when he notes that continental sides “pull the English defence apart by good running off the ball”. This means that English defenders still prefer to man mark their attackers, although other trend had been developing in Brazil for decades.

How did the 4-2-4 formation develop in Brazil is still a matter of controversy, and for our purposes it is not necessary to track all the suggested ideas behind the development, but important to note is that the 4-2-4 formation was never a truly a 4-2-4 formation to begin with. The fourth defender, when team attacked, was supporting the midfield, thus creating a 3-3-4 formation. When team defended the one of the attacking line of four dropped to midfield to cover the space, thus creating a 4-3-3 formation. The development did not stop here – two more modifications followed. The Brazilian 4-2-4 formation discarded man-to-man marking as it was known in the WM-system, and used instead zonal marking. This gave more fluidity to Brazilian game and allowed before mentioned tactical development to flourish – fourth defender could help the midfield in attacking phase and one of the four in

⁷⁴ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

⁷⁵ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

attacking line could help the midfield while defending. Another new feature to Brazilian football was the attacking fullbacks, which game to prominence in 1950s, because midfield of two had plenty of room in wide to take advantage of. The only tactical difference between Brazilian 4-2-4 formation and Hungarian “4-2-4” formation was number on forwards shirts who withdrew himself to midfield. Tactical formations might have been very much alike, but the attitude was very different. Hungarians had a sense of purpose while they played – their aim was to score a goal – and Brazilians were more artistic. And eventually this was what they learnt from Bela Guttmann before the 1958 World Championships.⁷⁶ These shortcomings in the English 4-4-2 system, with man-to-man marking defence - and thus the lack of vision in tactical thinking – could be fixed with a libero:

“England will need a man who can cover that space”⁷⁷

A libero is player who doesn't have to mark anybody; his task is to fill gaps in defensive line. Eric Batty is reasoning that English defensive lines can't be pulled apart when there is a libero. Thus using the libero could be the remedy for tactical backwardness of English football. If England sticks to its libero defence, Eric Batty thinks that England can make it as high as the 3rd place in World Cup – as noted. As mentioned before, Eric Batty says almost nothing about the attack, and previously noted problems – one sided attacking patters and lack of wingers – if you don't count in for the “England has problem of scoring goals”. Can it be concluded that contemporary football matches are won by defensive tactics? His analyses about the games seem to indicate that future games are going to be resolved with few scored goals.

“I can see France and England drawing, then Czechs beating Kuwait by perhaps 1-0, maybe even with a penalty taken by Antonin Panenka. Then England will beat Czechoslovakia, perhaps only 1-0...”⁷⁸

Previous article I suggested that Eric Batty is criticising English football not because they don't play beautiful football, but because they don't do well. And the above mentioned quoted proofs my point even further. Eric Batty isn't saying “England should outscore their opponents”, on the contrary he is talking about tightening the defence line with libero and

⁷⁶ Wilson 2008, 119 - 122

⁷⁷ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

⁷⁸ Eric Batty, England should win this group. World Soccer, April 1982.

talking about how games are decided with one goal differences. Tight defence seems to be the word of the year.

2.4 A lesson in history

“Most clubs still cing⁷⁹ to the 4-4-2 formula to which everyone switched after the England won the World Cup in 1966 with only two men up.” Eric Batty⁸⁰

The last article that is being analysed from Eric Batty is taken from the year 1980. The other articles have progressed in chronological order and they were all about the national team. This article makes an exception to that rule because the piece is concerned with the whole vast field of English football – it is not a mere tournament analysis, a game analysis or a tournament preview – thus making it a very good specimen to examine Eric Batty’s views about English club football. As will be seen later on, he has slight difficulties in keeping his overall vision of English football coherent. But the first thing that Eric Batty delves into in his article, which is titled, “A shortage of wingers in England”, accounts the history of English football which has left England in a situation mentioned in title of Eric Batty’s article. The quotation in the beginning of this chapter is connected to this historical presentation and it notes that English football has used about 16 years the same formation and tactical mind-set. To be precise the problem isn’t the formation, but the fact that English 4-4-2 formation is not utilizing any wingers. Why there are no wingers in English national side has been covered before in this study and the subject will not be returned here.⁸¹ Before advancing ahead with the analysis of this “historical burden”, it is in order to cover the definition of a winger more closely, because it reveals why Eric Batty is objecting the English 4-4-2 formation. In fact Eric Batty’s article gives plenty space to this subject matter about wingers. From Eric Batty’s piece can be found three different types of wingers:

⁷⁹ Since this research is concerned with words, and what their subtleties mean, it is in order to mention that dictionaries such as Oxford English dictionary don’t have the word “cing” in their vocabularies. From the phrase it can concluded that it has similar means as the word “cling” – thus making it a misspelling? – but even with the help of the article its connotations remain vague.

⁸⁰ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁸¹ See Glanville 2007, 53 - 54 or Wilson 2008, 146 - 150

“Barnes is like the old fashioned wingers of the fifties, an out and out striker by nature though unfortunately he does not get many goals himself.”⁸²

Earlier in this research this type of winger was called “wing forward”, and its demise from English football has been discussed earlier in the text. And the second type:

“If Barnes is naturally a winger who stays upfield, Coppell is what I call a half and half player. With England in possession he moves up to become an orthodox right winger, positioning wide, raiding down the flanks and getting in good crosses as well as going inside to get a few goals himself”⁸³

As can be seen from above “old fashioned winger” – or a wing forward - is a player who utilises width of the field and who hasn’t got defensive responsibilities. The second type is similar to the first one, but he has defensive duties as well – that is what “half and half player” means. As can be seen from the quotes there are players like this in England, but according to Eric Batty above mentioned players are one of the few and what’s more important national team doesn’t use them. The third type, which England doesn’t have, is what Eric Batty calls “modern wing raider”:

“When the play develops on their side (talking about Grzegorz Lato and Jairzinho) of the field they play and orthodox winger role, but if attacks develop on the left, or up the middle, they get inside to become a right-sided striker looking for goals.”⁸⁴

The common denominator with these above mentioned types is their attacking ability. Old fashioned winger is a whole-hearted attacker utilising the sides and “half and half type” can be told apart from a left (or right) sided midfielder because of his (her) attacking ability – same can be said about “modern wing raider”. It is safe to postulate that Eric Batty wants England “to attack more” because he is describing England as “the wingless wonders” which means that the team’s midfield players are lacking in attacking ability. Perhaps the phrase “to attack more” is bit misleading, because in fact Eric Batty means that all the current tactical options at disposal to a football manager can not be utilised in the national team [of England]. Thus to say that tactical thinking isn’t optimal, is to say that English coaches are lacking tactical ability because don’t use wingers and English football is lacking because it doesn’t

⁸² Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁸³ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁸⁴ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

produce wingers. To emphasize the point that Eric Batty is continuing in the same vein as noted previously – England is lacking variation in attack and need influences - he also points out that the World Cup winning Brazilian playing style of the 1970 with wingers was 4-3½-2½. My point is that if one wants to dispose of those halves then the formation could be marked either with 4-3-3 or 4-4-2 formation⁸⁵ making it about the (tactical) roles of the players. To prove his point about tactical backwardness even further, and to remark that playing with a winger doesn't compromise the defence, Eric Batty goes on to mention later on in the article that even Italy “the most defence orientated in the world” has the advantage over England.

“All over the world, all the top class international sides are playing with at least one winger, and many of them with two, even if one of them is of the half and half type. Even Italy had right winger Franco Causio... (and they) are still the most defence orientated in the world.”⁸⁶

Back to historical burden discussed before winger issue. In the first quote presented in beginning of this analysis it was noted that English clubs have used the same, then successful 4-4-2 formation for 16 years, but another worthy point here is that also “everybody” else switched to the same (English) 4-4-2 formation after 1966 because England achieved World Cup victory with it. And it is safe to say that everyone doesn't only mean English club sides since Eric Batty elaborates:

“For a while after 1966, many foreign clubs and national sides followed the successful English formula of having only two central strikers up field...”⁸⁷

If one looks Eric Batty's writings about international football, then there is evidence that when it comes to football England is not like the others. Previously it was noted that Eric Batty wants England to change their playing style, and in this article it becomes evident why they don't change it – club sides won't (?) and thus national side can't without proper wingers. The quotation above repeats the before mentioned fact that after the World Cup of 1966 other national sides followed England's suit and adopted the (wingless) 4-4-2 formation. The noteworthy phrase in that sentence is the word pair that begins it - “for a while” – because it also expresses the definition that England's time in the vanguard of tactical thought

⁸⁵ The coach of World Cup winning Brazilian side of 1970 Mario Zagallo has himself described the then Brazilian formation as 4-5-1. Vickery 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/7383705.stm>

⁸⁶ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁸⁷ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

was a short lived. Others soon realised that the English 4-4-2 formation was not the way to go, and when Eric Batty continues his thought, he notes foreign clubs' and national sides' decision to move away from the 4-4-2 formation was the right one...

“...but wisely the best coaches soon reverted to playing with wingers. So it was that four years later when Brazil won the World Cup in Mexico with two wingers the rest of the world was quickly able to adapt, and in world terms, wingers came decisively back in fashion.”⁸⁸

The success of England in 1966 made it look like 4-4-2 formation without wingers was a successful formation, but other countries sooner or later reverted back to using wingers when Brazil achieved something positive with it – a World Cup victory. Eric Batty also points out that the Brazilian side was not the only team which has conquered the World Cup with help of wingers - West Germany did it in 1974 and Argentina in 1978. According to Eric Batty England seems to have been an exception to this rule, since he uses the phrase “rest of the world” in this context – and in the first quote from his article wrote about “cing to the 4-4-2 formula”. Why English clubs didn't change back to using wingers? Eric Batty's answer to this question lies in the word “adapt”. Rest of the world's decision to revert back to playing with wingers had something to adaptation, and English club sides weren't able to adapt. Naturally the next question will be, why they weren't able to adapt?

Although the issue of English 4-4-2 formation revolves around the world cup victory of 1966, Eric Batty doesn't clearly write it out straight, and there aren't any clear undertones in the text, connecting current English state this victory. In other words he is not clearly proclaiming that this past achievement has considerably contributed to this situation. Maybe to blame English historical consciousness is too abstract reason, or maybe it is that victory of 1966 had a role in enhancing of English resistance to change, and it was not the point were it begun. This claim sounds valid since it was noted that critical school was born in the aftermath of the Hungary game of 1953, and for 27 years it was campaigned for continental influences – without visible results. When it comes to their antipode it can be said that it is highly probable that they have existed for even longer, but at least the birth of the critical schools shows that they have been around since 1953.

⁸⁸ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

The last section of Eric Batty's article is about English club football on practical level, meaning that in addition to historical reasons for dearth of wingers, he points out that there are practical reasons for this as well. The starting point to this practical analysis is his discussions with club side managers. He notes about these conversations:

“Some managers I have spoken to, tell me that they would like to field at least one winger – if they could lay their hands on one – but they are in very short supply at the moment in England, and can seldom be bought.”⁸⁹

In the first analysed article it was perceived that English managers are plagued with casual part-time attitudes, and are unable to coach the right things to their players. Likewise it was noted in this article that there is some kind of structural inability to adapt, and to produce and use wingers. On a side note it can be asked: if managers would use wingers then what is causing this resistance to change? On practical level the reasons for dearth of wingers is very different. First reason mentioned by Eric Batty in this article, is the prizes of goal scoring central strikers, which have gone up and led to a situation where clubs want to produce their own front players. And this preference of front men to wingers is one reason why there is a lack of wingers - in England that is. Second reason being the *Zeitgeist*, which in Eric Batty's mind, is against formation of wingers.

“...because youngsters today are not as naturally skilled as their predecessors, and in addition the vast majority of young players have decided against playing up front because of all the kicking and general foul play they are subjected to with little or no protection from referees.”⁹⁰

In addition to preference to central strikers and foul play against skilled players, reasons for lack of wingers are still very practical – excluding the part about previous generations' natural ability. I write it once again - because there are problems with reconciliation of these two different views - When Eric Batty writes about national side in the same article, he wants English sides, club sides and national team alike, play with wingers like continental sides do. In that part of the article the reason had something to do with “adaptation” and intelligence since he also wrote about “wisely the best coaches soon reverted to playing with wingers”. And on 1st division level the problem has very practical reasons. Why recap the year 1966 and its achievements – or damages – in a manner of this article if the reasons for lack wingers can

⁸⁹ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁹⁰ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

be found in present time? There are several reasons that can explain this bundle of contradictions.

One point that could explain the difference is that European championships of 1980 – which were held in the following summer - ended England’s exile in international competitions, and furthermore England passed the qualification with ease⁹¹. Thus Eric Batty might have been optimistic about English football after a disappointing 1970s, when England missed both of the World Cups after participating them in 1970.⁹² Furthermore after European Championships of 1968 England didn’t qualify for the European Championships in 1972 and 1976.⁹³ Thus in this article charges against English football have been tied down, because Eric Batty believes positive changes are around the corner. Perhaps the quote from the managers was a sign showing that things are changing for better because club side managers are starting to think about playing with wingers. 1966 was it used to be – thus historical recap – how it should never be again. And after the English national side “failed” in European Championship of 1980 the tones became more hard-edged and the optimism faded. When England played European championships of 1980, Eric Batty realised that wingers aren’t the only thing that England is lacking. Their inability to play against continental was not just about wingers, it was wholesome inability to understand continental defences.

The second explaining factor could be the nature of Eric Batty’s observations. If one wants to say something concrete about English football, one has to create an ideal type or stereotype of English football, in which one has to simplify things and make it look more homogenous than it really is. Without stereotypes the picture of English football would be a complex one, and the point which one is about to make could disappear to this complexity. The point is easier to grasp if you one says “clubs in England need practice differently” that if one says “32% of English club sides are practicing wrongly, where as 20% are doing something right etc”. Overall problems of English football – real or perceived - need a big picture to make them

⁹¹ England passed the pre-tournament qualification group for the European Championship comfortably. Out of eight games England won 7 and draw one – furthermore its goal difference was 22-5, which means almost 3 goals average to a game. Hence the qualifying wasn’t a problem for England and average of 3 goals to a game isn’t quite good. <http://www.thefa.com/euro2004/History/Postings/2003/01/36706.htm>

⁹² From Glanville 2005, World Championships of 1970 p. 168-169, World Cup 1974 p. 205-206, World Cup 1978 p. 234-235.

⁹³ Italy 1968: <http://en.euro2008.uefa.com/history/season=1968/index.html>
West Germany 1972 <http://en.euro2008.uefa.com/history/season=1972/index.html>
Yugoslavia 1976 <http://en.euro2008.uefa.com/history/season=1976/index.html>

more understandable and the problem called dearth of wingers can be approached with more practical outlook.

The third reason could be that Eric Batty perceives the national side as the foremost representative of English football. If national side is lacking, then whole English football is lacking. I think that this train of thought comes visible when Eric Batty writes about English club sides. He notes about Liverpool (FC):

“Clearly Liverpool have found their 4-4-2 formula plays best and they will not change it until they can be persuaded by a string of bad results.”⁹⁴

To Eric Batty it doesn't matter if Liverpool was the dominating club side in Europe, because its preference to English 4-4-2 formation is damaging the national team. He notes about Tottenham which also plays with 4-4-2 formation:

“Tottenham play with only Jones and Armstrong up, even if their gifted midfield or Ardiles, Hoddle and Villa makes them very attractive to watch.”⁹⁵

Eric Batty speaks well of Tottenham, but among those words of praise there are those words “play only with” and “even if” when connected together indicate that the question is about wingers. I comprehend that Eric Batty would still prefer to see wingers in Tottenham's line-up. To him it doesn't matter if Tottenham play “attractive football”, because they are not using wingers. Nothing sums up his ideas better than when he writes about off form Everton:

“But the inclusion of a winger would add a new dimension to their play and open up all sorts of different possibilities...”⁹⁶

And finally he concludes his article by questioning the integrity of the coaches he spoke to:

“...I feel sure that most club managers have settled for 4-4-2 without wingers because they feel that is the best way to play giving maximum insurance against defeat.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁹⁵ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁹⁶ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

⁹⁷ Eric Batty, A shortage of wingers in England. World Soccer, January 1980.

To Eric Batty World Cup victory of 1966 was at least a hindrance if not the starting point to continental influences. Because England won the title, it meant to most of the Englishmen thought that no influences needed. I think that same train of thought goes with the club sides, if they are successful with English 4-4-2 formation, then they aren't going to change to their playing style, which for one hampers national sides alternatives.

3. English football according to Leslie Vernon

3.1 English football is quite good

“Nevertheless, in this era of declining standards, the English League is a very strong competition, and it is no accident that two of our teams reached European finals.” Leslie Vernon⁹⁸

Leslie Vernon's article in question – written for World Soccer football magazine - is an evaluation of the past English 1st division season. In the quote above he states that the standard of contemporary football is going down, but on the other hand the bright side is that English club sides are doing well in European competition(s). When Leslie Vernon is typing about the era of declining standards, is he writing about English 1st division football or football in general? Before exploring the thought further, it is noteworthy detail that era means a passing period of time. Thus it seems that the decline to the writer is a passing phenomenon and not a structural flaw. And this are means the whole field of European football in general, not just English football. This kind of reasoning can be argued with the overall context of European football in 1980s – defensive attitudes and lack of goals⁹⁹ - thus this larger, historical context could on its behalf suggest that Leslie Vernon is indeed writing about football in general. Furthermore if declining standards are only affecting English clubs, then how can English 1st division be a very strong competition?

The reason for declining standards is:

“I abhor the domination of the 4-4-2 formation, and regret the passing of the old-fashioned winger.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

⁹⁹ Richard Giulianotti's views about 1980s football was covered in this research page 24

¹⁰⁰ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

In above seen quote Leslie Vernon professes himself as an opponent of the contemporary, wingless, 4-4-2 formation. The reasons for dislike are the lack of goal opportunities and disappearance of fluent football. According to Leslie Vernon in the place of fluent football contemporary football matches provide cluttered up midfields, where players are – using Leslie Vernon’s words here – “fighting for possession”. Furthermore, where a clever through ball beats the cluttered midfield, it is likely that offside trap(s) and referee’s whistle stop the attack. In contemporary football games two lone forwards are marked by four defenders, which severely limits forwards task of getting goals or even creating goal scoring opportunities. And even if a forward can hold the ball, the only possibility for him is to keep it in possession and then pass it back to upcoming midfielder.

When I earlier suspected that Leslie Vernon is writing about declining standards in general, now it must be concluded that he is writing about English football - the above given description fits perfectly to previously mentioned English playing style¹⁰¹ – the 4-4-2 formation without wingers. This does not mean that continental football is any better, it simply means that Leslie Vernon is sticking with his task – analysing English 1st division football. To Leslie Vernon when all the previously noted things about English playing style are combined the outcome is that football matches have become boring. The underlying reason for these boring games of football is, as Leslie Vernon notes in his article:

“They all stem from that negative philosophy that teams must not be beaten, and the first commandment of the modern game is - they shall not score”¹⁰²

According to Leslie Vernon this is all wrong, because team(s) should go out in to the field with a different philosophy.

“... but I feel that they have got their priorities wrong. In the past, for instance, the great Hungarian team of the fifties stepped on the pitch with the aim of scoring one more goal than the opposition”¹⁰³

To Leslie Vernon the point of a football game is also to provide entertainment for the spectators – he himself uses the adjective superb before word entertainment. Although he uses the Hungarian team of 1950s as an example of good football philosophy, there isn’t any Eric

¹⁰¹ See page 19 from above or Wilson 2008, 146 – 150

¹⁰² Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹⁰³ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

Batty-esque criticism in his words. Both Leslie Vernon and Eric Batty want to bring the winger back to the game but when Eric Batty sees prevailing deficiencies in the English football – the lack of wingers is caused by some sort of structural defect - Leslie Vernon just regrets the modern, defensive atmosphere around English football. Contemporary teams are playing “result football”. Thus in Leslie Vernon’s mind the Hungarian team of 1950s seems to be a just example how this should be done, and how they used to be better, but he is not demanding influences from abroad.

Previously it was noted that English club sides favour the English version of the 4-4-2 formation and England in this way is a unique country for having almost homogenous football culture when it comes to tactics – before 4-4-2 it was the WM that was commonly favoured. Although this generalization is, if not a lie, then an adaptation of the truth, but this generalisation helps to understand why English football is the way it is – not like anybody else. This comes clear when one looks at the football histories from the continent. Continental countries have developed altogether differently from England.

What kind of Football influences Germans incorporated in their game depended on the region where they were living. Northern parts, such as Hamburg, adopted English style of playing while Southern Clubs leaned towards Southern European and Austrian style of slick and technical passing game. Eastern clubs, like Dresden, adopted Hungarian style with insistence on delicate beauty, and Western clubs, Schalke, added a workman’s ethic that said nobody cared what your method was as long your hearth was in it.¹⁰⁴ Although Southern clubs were leaning towards the south, in the last years of 19th century and first years of the 20th century (till 1st world war) they were heavily influenced by British coaches and managers. Clubs such as Karlsruhe and Fürth appointed English coach, and as history tells Fürth’s new manager taught them “the Scottish passing game”. And South German football Union (a forerunner of the South German FA) had even Briton called Archibald White as their chairman.¹⁰⁵ In the middle part of the 1920s the situation was such that Southern clubs favored a “slow football”, and the style of play centered on good technique and the stringing together passes. Their tactic was based on them trying to draw opposition defense out of position and creating space for their inside forwards. In the north most club favored what was called either “English” or “Flying Hussar” style based on pace and directness – ball was played to wingers to cross to

¹⁰⁴ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003,10

¹⁰⁵ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003,38

centre-forwards. During the mid 20s Hertha Berlin was able to develop a playing style that combined the southern and northern styles, until they in 1931 were the first German team to adopt Herbert Chapman's WM formation.¹⁰⁶

The First ever national team coach Otto Nerz, coached the national team 1926-1936, was also a stout Anglophile and he began to use the WM formation in the national team. He also worked hard to persuade German club sides to adopt the WM formation. The football audiences questioned his methods when he failed to get the best out of technical and skilful players and he was accused that his formations were too much based on running straight lines.¹⁰⁷ The main point of discontentment was the Otto Nerz was not able to fully exploit the talent of the Schalke 04 team of 1930 nicknamed "Spinning top" (Kreisel in German), because he favored the English style – fast, physical and always going towards the goal.¹⁰⁸ They (Schalke) never used a long ball to advance; instead they strung together an often bewildering succession of short, fast passes and playing the ball on the ground. Its tactics were similar to the Austrian Wunderteam of early 1930s. Schalke 04 critics called the tactic ineffective and unproductive.¹⁰⁹ National team with seminal importance was the "Breslau-Elf" which truly combined the aspects of the northern and southern style. The team was formed in 1937 for friendly game against Denmark in Breslau, and where Otto Nerz and Josef Herberger shared the responsibilities of the head coach. The core of the team was cultivated by Nerz but Herberger was able add more flair to the team. Team only lasted briefly because the Anschluss changed the geographical (and football) map of Germany, but it was noted the team was first to use the WM formation with one withdrawn centre-forward not used as a target man thus avoiding it man-marker – much like Hungary team in 1950s.¹¹⁰ As can be seen Germany had been a melting pot of influences when football was forming in the country, and thus the ideological climate was quite different from England.

Leslie Vernon mentioned the great Hungarian team of the 1950s and its philosophy of football. Noteworthy thing about them is that they tried to copy the English style of WM-formation but when they couldn't, they developed it for their needs. In England the tactical thoughts of the WM system (3-2-2-3) required a strong centre-forward to battle it out with

¹⁰⁶ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 43 - 45

¹⁰⁷ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 57 - 59

¹⁰⁸ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 71

¹⁰⁹ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 64-65

¹¹⁰ Hesse-Lichtenberger 2003, 80

central defender. English managers were tired of strong central defenders ousting the dribbler out the ball, thus developed the “Bull at the gate style” of battering ram attacker. When the Hungarians started to prefer the WM-formation to old 2-3-5 formation, they had a problem since very few “battering rams” existed in their style. Márton Bukovi, the coach of the MTK, had to reinvent the WM when his “tank style” of centre-forward left to play for Italian club Lazio. Instead trying to force players in to the mould of the tank, he thought that he could withdraw “tank” into midfield – thus creating a formation of MM (3-2-3-2). At the same time the two wingers pushed on to create front line of four players. Now the problem was the when “the former centre-forward” dropped deeper in to the midfield to link the attack and the defense found to that his space conflicted with the wing-halves. The solution was to drop the other wing-half to almost fourth defender when the other could continue to support the midfield play.¹¹¹ Hungarian national team of the 1950s played with similar formation which had the advanced tactical formation, technical skill and fluidity. When full back pushed forward to fill the space in front of them the central defender dropped a bit deeper to cover their advance. When other wing-half supported the attacker then the other dropped (almost) next to the central defender. The problem with this system was “three man defense” – because the other wing-half only “almost” dropped to the defensive line – and the fact that when full backs tucked inside to support central defender the their flank had space for wingers to be exploited.¹¹²

When England lost to France in 1931 – which was, using German football magazine kicker’s words, “like a bombshell over the Continent – the reason was that Frenchmen were faster than English, their passing was better and their goal-keeping was infinitely superior. Some were alarmed about the result, but these sorts of remarks were nothing new since 1920s there had been warning voices about English football practices. Football men such as James Catton and Ivan Sharpe noted that English players need to practice if England is to retain their crown as best football country in the World – Scotsmen had always been the exception, they favoured skill. Nothing happened and the loss was written as a one of. One of the factors that contributed this was the fact that in the inter-war years England lived in a state of splendid isolation as Brian Glanville has put it. England left FIFA in 1928 and did not participate in the first two World Cups, and they never came up against the powerful South Americans such as Argentina and Uruguay. England played their first South American opponent in 1951 when

¹¹¹ Wilson 2008, 88 - 89

¹¹² Wilson 2008, 92 - 94

they faced Argentina at Wembley – and only in 1953 they travelled to South America to play.¹¹³ Since the consequences of the victory in 1966 have already been covered, I brought this up because it might explain the Leslie Vernon's thoughts – certainly explains thoughts of some Englishmen. It seems that England has ignored others countries football wise while it was on top of the game – and even when it was not – and what better way to bring ignorance back when English clubs sides are winning in continent.

Is it such that Leslie Vernon agrees that English football isn't beautiful – in fact he called it boring - but while English clubs sides are winning their continental opposition everything is fine? As previously noted, for Leslie Vernon football isn't all about winning, spectators should also be taken into account, and nothing proves it better than when he goes on to elaborate more about Hungarian team – this time in the time of defeat:

“...and even when they were beaten, they went down with style.”¹¹⁴

To Leslie Vernon declining standards mean that entertainment value of the games are in decline. When this is taken into account it can be noted that “declining standards” and “English League is a very strong competition” aren't contradicting one another. Overall look of the English 1st division might not be entertaining, but the best teams have this aspect as well. What are the other elements - besides success in Europe – that are giving Leslie Vernon a cause to appreciate the English League? When he goes on to write specific details about the teams - in fact he is making a critique of them - there is a clear indication that he does value English football for two reasons. His reasons for commending some teams are obvious when he states:

“I am now talking about the teams which were worth watching because of their style of play, and because they have achieved something positive during this season”¹¹⁵

There are five different teams that he commends separately, and those are Liverpool, Manchester United, Ipswich, Nottingham Forrest and Arsenal. From the above quoted phrase the word combination “their style of play” is the relevant one, because it proves that Leslie Vernon doesn't praise these teams only because they were successful. In fact when it comes

¹¹³ Glanville 2007, 5 - 8

¹¹⁴ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹¹⁵ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

to Liverpool – the author calls them “perfect practioners of the dreaded 4-4-2” – the before abhorred 4-4-2 formation in itself is not a hindrance. According to Leslie Vernon Liverpool is good because they have a solid back four and a good goalkeeper. And the aspect that separates them from an average team, the before described 4-4-2 team, is their midfield:

“...their midfield is adventurous, and their frontrunners are mobile and inventive.”¹¹⁶

This indicates that their midfield players are doing more than just cluttering up the midfield and fighting for possession. Likewise Liverpool’s forwards have an air of cunningness around them – they don’t just hold the ball and pass it back to midfield. An indication of the fact that they are better than average English 4-4-2 team is their success. Liverpool did achieve something positive by winning the 1st division, and being in the Euro Cup final, hence Leslie Vernon declares them to be “worthy champions” and “one of the best teams in world football today”. A point mentioned before, but important to note again, the formation, whether 4-4-2 or 4-3-3, it is not important as it is but how it is used. The thing that should be considered here is: how English is Liverpool?

In 1973 staff of Liverpool (FC) had a meeting in the now famous boot-room, where the topic was “Why is there no success in European competition?” It was there and then that the Liverpool manager Bob Paisley (with other participants) noted a problem in Liverpool’s playing style. They understood that Liverpool had been using a central defenders with too limited skills, and this harmed their attacking possibilities – for now on central defenders with playing skills are must! With skilled players – not just central defenders – the breaking out to attack after winning the ball was lot easier, and important lessons was that you can’t score every time you win the ball to your team. To Liverpool, football was like a cat and mouse game, you move the ball and opponents regroup accordingly, when you have (and move) the ball long enough a change for a break will appear. Thus a man without the ball is as important a man with the ball. Thus Liverpool style of patient control and pass approach was created. It was also adopted by Nottingham.¹¹⁷ Thus although Liverpool is in fact from England, their playing style wasn’t back then very English – there was no long ball. The remaining four teams on the shortlist have a thing in common; they all play with wingers. The second on

¹¹⁶ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹¹⁷ Wilson 2008, 278 - 282

Leslie Vernon's list is Manchester United plays which plays with different formation than Liverpool:

“Runners-up, Manchester United play a different game altogether. They might even claim to line up 4-2-4 with two wingers, Coppell and Thomas.”¹¹⁸

Although Leslie Vernon notes that Manchester United's wingers aren't orthodox wingers, they seem to have, if read between the lines, the same adventurous spirit that Liverpool has. Formation (4-2-4) might suggest that they have orthodox wingers, but Eric Batty also notes that “these two are frequently withdrawn into the midfield”, which make them half and half players. When on team is on defensive they participate in it, and have defensive duties, but when on attack they have a strong attacking formation. This means that they also defy the cluttered midfield by spreading their game. This adventurous spirit, mentioned with Liverpool and suggested with Manchester United, comes up often as he considers the teams and their positive merits. The playing styles of Leslie Vernon's the top 5 teams are different, Manchester United has a target man in front line to which wingers cross the ball, but Ipswich is on different plain altogether.

“But the Ipswich style is mainly fashioned by the Dutch pair Muhren and Thijssen, who keep the ball on the ground most of the time, and feed the forwards with shrewd passes.”¹¹⁹

Common denominator between the teams is defiance of cluttered midfield. Ipswich differs from Manchester United's the target man tactic by keeping the ball on the ground most of the time, and they also use differ from Liverpool by using 4-3-3 formation - the more accurate formation is 4-3-1-2 when Leslie Vernon wants to be exact. Liverpool, Manchester and Ipswich all differ from the wingless English 4-4-2 formation, but they also differ from the “direct football school”, that was in creation for example in Graham Taylor's Watford.

English football saw a development called “direct football”, more popularly known as “the long ball”. The main supreme behind this tactical thinking was Charles Hughes who built his thoughts on previously made game analysis. This tactical analysis showed that most of the goals originated from the final third of the pitch, thus the ball must be played there as quickly as possible and as much as possible. It could be exciting and creating a lot of goal mouth

¹¹⁸ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹¹⁹ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

action but it also could be very dull football without any creativity. But it also showed that managers begun to have a methodical outlook to football and they influenced team's tactics. When team played with long ball players had to be told how they should play and where they could express themselves in the field. Jack Charlton, one of the earliest exponents of the long ball tactic claimed that this was necessary because of the offside trap team were using. Charlton's plan was by pass the congested midfield by using the long behind the defensive line to midfielders to run to and thus evading an offside trap. Other had more pragmatic reasons for using the long ball, and this was the increasing gap between the rich and the poor clubs. Wimbledon's Dave Basset expressed this when he said "limited talent means limited skills and I have to plan the strategy accordingly."¹²⁰ Fourth team on the shortlist is Nottingham Forrest, and they are valued because they have not been bitten by the "clean sheet bug" as Leslie Vernon describes it. He writes about them:

"...and even their defenders – Anderson, Burns, Lloyd, Gray - are adventurous players who come forward with the ball at the slightest opportunity."¹²¹

Arsenal also has creative and adventurous players, but the reason why Leslie Vernon likes them is their solid defence. With Arsenal he goes out of his way, and declares:

"Arsenal have a very solid defence. They are difficult to beat. Perhaps this is not a tag which makes them crowd pulling attractions, but one cannot argue with success..."¹²²

To go along with good defence and success they have a creative midfield with one half and half winger. Thus above-mentioned quotation doesn't give a true conception of Arsenal. When it comes to the rest of the English League teams, Leslie Vernon notes that

"...the rest were rather ordinary, even the bright promise of such teams as Crystal Palace, Norwich and Southampton didn't survive the searching test of a hard English domestic season... As long as they play 4-4-2, they will be just plain mediocre"¹²³

These are the teams that were described in the beginning of the article, and gave English 1st division its overall look. And it must be noted that they are a majority in English 1st division,

¹²⁰ Carter 116

¹²¹ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹²² Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

¹²³ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

but Leslie Vernon summarises the English League season by saying the seasons as a whole wasn't "vintage, but not too bad either".

The previously analysed Eric Batty's articles, and those views about the state of contemporary English football, differ from Leslie Vernon's opinions. The difference between the two pundits is an agenda – Eric Batty has got one and Leslie Vernon doesn't. When Eric Batty wrote about English 1st division football, he noted that Tottenham was, for example, "attractive to watch" (without wingers), but since his objective was to convince readers that wingers are essential in modern football, the attractiveness of Tottenham was beside the point. Whenever Eric Batty wrote his context was the world of football, the English national side, and the history of English football. In this Leslie Vernon's article the context simply is English 1st division, and his assess are based on present day. Articles of these two pundits aren't easy to compare, since there weren't "simple valuation" of English 1st division season from Eric Batty. In the second place there is strong case to be made with the fact that Leslie Vernon values English football more than Eric Batty does. First there were the comments about "strong competition" and "it is no accident that two of our teams reached European Finals."

On the tactical side it is noteworthy that Leslie Vernon clearly implies that Englishmen have the proper know-how by declaring that English managers have what it takes to succeed in European competitions.

"I was greatly amused when I heard that Ted Croker, the F.A. secretary, wanted to call a special seminar to teach English coaches how to deal with two-legged Cup-ties. This call for help came after our wholesale dismissal from the UEFA-Cup, which was due to the fact that that our UEFA representatives were an off-form, sorry bunch at the beginning of the season. If such a seminar ever held, such experts as Bob Paisley, Brian Clough or Terry Neill could give lecture on ho to deal with home and away fixture - there is no need to seek advice from abroad"¹²⁴

First noteworthy thing is "there is no need to seek advice from abroad", which means that "F.A. secretary" Ted Croker wanted to bring continental influences to English coaches. Leslie Vernon's counter argument for this is that in England's representatives weren't that good in the first place, and there are enough skilful managers in England to speak in the seminar - thus

¹²⁴ Leslie Vernon, Modern football is unattractive. World Soccer, June 1980.

no foreign influences needed. Of course it must be remembered what was noted above. Bob Paisley created playing style with a continental twist in Liverpool, and Brian Clough was the manager of Nottingham – another team using continental influences. It must be noted that one of the three specified managers isn't English but from Northern Ireland – Terry Neill. The others mentioned are Robert “Bob” Paisley and Brian Clough. In this context, to Leslie Vernon, it seems to be irrelevant that Terry Neill is from Northern Ireland since he belongs to a same English football tradition than others. On practical level Leslie Vernon has logical reasons to defend English know-how. On club level, which is the issue here, England had done remarkably well in the main European Cup competition - from 1977 onwards English club sides dominated the European Cup and this domination lasted to 1985. Although UEFA Cup¹²⁵ and UEFA Cup Winners Cup¹²⁶ victories mainly evaded English teams during this period, I think there is no need to explain Leslie Vernon's opinions with patriotism, etc. Because of the success in European Cup, Leslie Vernon is also entitled call 1st division “strong competition”.

3.2 The national side is also rather good

“So, with all the others in apparent disarray, the door is wide open for England to make a telling challenge for the trophy.”¹²⁷

This time the purpose of Leslie Vernon's article is to give the readers a review of European Championships 1980. From the quotation two points should be noted. Firstly, England has a fair change of winning the tournament, and secondly, this is partly because “all the others (are) in apparent disarray”. The usage of the word disarray doesn't imply that playing standards of contemporary football are going down. It simply means that:

“The signs don't augur well for the standard of football as the participants struggle in their “warm-up” matches scarcely justifying their presence in the Finals.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ UEFA cup statistics can be found from <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/ec3b.html>

¹²⁶ European Cup Winners Cup statistics can be found from <http://www.rsssf.com/tablese/ec2.html>

¹²⁷ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹²⁸ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

And later in the same paragraph he elaborates this thought even further when he talks about the nations that qualified for the European Championships.

“But what have they done recently to convince us that they are true challengers of the European crown?”¹²⁹

Other than that, there aren't any other reasons or explanations for his gloomy thoughts. Even though there aren't any clear explanatory reasons for this slump in the form, it can be said that it happens to be all-inclusive – except no special mention, or otherwise, for England. One reason that might explain this poor picture of the future is Leslie Vernon's highly positive conceptions about the last European Championships four years ago – they seem to have been exceptional.

“Four years ago, the European Championship Finals provided a rare fiesta of football...the matches were marvellous. Scintillating play, goals galore, extra-time finishes, and characteristically, a penalty decider in the Final itself, were enjoyable fare indeed.”¹³⁰

When one looks at the description of the previous tournament, one can not help but to notice that the adjectives used here are rather flamboyant. Four years might not be a long time but it might have erased the bad - not so good - memories aside thus highlighting the good ones. When combined with participants' bad result in warm-up games this might be one reason why future of European Championships looks gloomy. More practical reason might be the fact the European championship Finals in 1976 were last of its kind, because for the first 1980 there were more than four teams in final tournament. When 1976 saw only four teams playing semi finals, third place final and the actual final, championships finals of 1980 had (or were going to have) eight teams divided in two groups, where the group winners would advance to final. If Leslie Vernon is having another reason besides these ones, he's not sharing it. However it maybe Leslie Vernon still believes that England has what it takes go all the way.

“I stick my neck out and forecast that England will win the European Championship.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³⁰ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³¹ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

It has become obvious that Leslie Vernon does support the national side of England, but is not only because of patriotism, etc. He has a pragmatic approach towards national team's tactical selections, and his reasoning is logical. This can be seen when he defends national side against unnamed critic(s), who don't agree with national team's tactical formations and their abilities.

“In my opinion, the present England side is slightly under-rated by some of our “experts”.”¹³²

In his article he doesn't specify who these “experts” are, but one can reduce the number of possible suspects by simple elimination. Firstly, since the Fleet Street is usually very supportive of the national side and its traditional playing style¹³³, it can be ruled out?

“The players are full of confidence, they play like a club side, the balance is absolutely right, and only Watson and Keegan seem irreplaceable.”¹³⁴

From the phrase above one can see, if one reads between the lines, that England is still using its standard 4-4-2 system. I think that the phrase “play like a club side” indicates that clearly, since 4-4-2 is the standard, English club side, tactic. If this holds out, then Fleet Street is definitely out of the question. Thus could it be that the Leslie Vernon is referring to the members of the critical school, commentators like Eric Batty? There is no way of verifying this for sure, but as one has seen Eric Batty has been very critical of national side's defensive and attacking abilities. And here Leslie Vernon notes that the critics of the national team are saying just that

“They (National side) are criticised, for instance, for having a suspect defence.”¹³⁵

Leslie Vernon counters these critics of the English defence by saying that their statements have been generalised from too small sample of defeats. According to him, under the manager Ron Greenwood, England has good overall record and the few loses can be seen, as Leslie Vernon himself writes, as an “aberration” of the usual trend. Other facts that in some way point to Eric Batty – and other similar critics - is that he is critical of the national side's defence and its playing style as well. No waterproof evidence here, but clearly Leslie Vernon

¹³² Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³³ Russell 1999 24-25

¹³⁴ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³⁵ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

doesn't share the same amount of critical thoughts that these unnamed pundit do. When it was noted that the phrase "play like a club side" could indicate that England is using 4-4-2 formation thus eliminating the Fleet Street for the list of suspects, it actually indicates something more. In the first article Leslie Vernon "regrets" the passing of the winger, but in this article his attitude towards it is even more pragmatic.

"To use a winger or not has been a moot point..."¹³⁶

And further down the chapter he continues about the English wingers available to national team:

"They (talking about Peter Barnes and Laurie Cunningham) play well for their clubs, but in an England shirt they tend to be erratic and "disappear" for long periods."¹³⁷

Furthermore the management also merits applaud.

"Apart from strength of the squad, which is considerable, credit must also be given to the first-class management of Ron Greenwood and his faithful lieutenants."¹³⁸

Hence the difference, when compared to Eric Batty, is distinctive. When Eric Batty laments English football culture for neither producing nor using winger, Leslie Vernon has more practical attitude towards it. One cannot find any critical attitudes towards English football culture here. For example Leslie Vernon confesses that the usage of wingers has been in the discussion, but since England doesn't have in-form winger there is no point of using them.

But again the difference between Leslie Vernon and Eric Batty can be explained with purposes. As noted Eric Batty has an objective and Leslie Vernon doesn't. Leslie Vernon reasons that if other participating countries are in disarray and England is in form, and other aspects of the games are in order, then England could win the European Championships. In this context the wingers issue is dealt with hard realism, "if there isn't any, they can't be used".

¹³⁶ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³⁷ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

¹³⁸ Leslie Vernon, England find right balance. World Soccer, May 1980

3.3 Cross league European club competitions are poor quality

“It has been a deeply disappointing competition (European Cup), and yet another undistinguished Final, which has aptly demonstrated the poverty of real talent amongst the Continents top clubs”¹³⁹

The title of the Leslie Vernon article is “Applaud Liverpool? No, not me!” and the subtitle elaborates that he is going to review the English football season. But despite the title and the subtitle of the article – which are misleading – the piece also covers world of football in general. In his article Leslie Vernon writes about two European Cup competitions – European Cup and Cup Winners Cup - and international football alike. The tone of the article is different from the other Leslie Vernon articles dealt in this research, as can be seen from the first quote above this paragraph. From the first article it was noted that English 1st division season wasn’t a vintage one, but there were some good aspects as well. In the second article Leslie Vernon defended English national sides against other pundits who thought that it isn’t good enough. Point being, neither of articles had an overall condemning feeling in them like the first quotation from this article does – they were more analytical. In this article there seems to be nothing good about the European Cup and those several highly disapproving words in quoted sentence, such as “deeply disappointing”, “undistinguished” and “poverty of real talent” tells it all. Thus the previous somewhat more positive, and analytical, thinking patterns have turned rather negative. Although the tone of his writing is changed, the reason for disliking modern football is same as before – lack of entertainment value.

“The Liverpool chairman is perfectly entitled to claim that “Winning is the only thing that matters”, but we neutral observers are equally within our rights when we ask for a dash of style, a touch of enterprise and a certain amount of adventure.”¹⁴⁰

Above one can see the Leslie Vernon perspective to football, and it is a viewpoint of a neutral observer. According to him if there is “a dash of style”, “a touch of enterprise” and “a certain amount of adventure” the end product is good, but these elements are nowhere to be found in this year’s European Cup, because winning is the only thing that matters to the teams. Although the quotation writes about the Liverpool chairman – hence Liverpool - it isn’t the only team “suffering from” this negative attitude, thus the whole contemporary football is descended into a state where:

¹³⁹ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

“The sad truth is that teams are so afraid to lose these days that they are not willing to risk anything, and simply refuse to play attacking football – even at home!”¹⁴¹

I think that this close to draconian condemnation of contemporary football is due to the nature of the competition in question. Leslie Vernon is writing about The European Cup which is a competition, where teams play two games against one another – one game at home and one away. The team that has scored more goals proceeds to next round. If after two games the score is even, the team with more away goals wins, otherwise its extra time and penalty kick decider. When compared to a regular series of top level football, for example English 1st division, the German Bundesliga or any other top league, the cup competition differs from these leagues because smaller scale events have bigger consequences. In the league a team has 30 games or more to struggle the way to the top, but in European Cup the elimination can happen just after two games and with margin of just one goal. Thus the teams in European Cup tend to play their away games with extra caution, and try to decide the two game pair at home. The point that I am trying to make here is that the nature of before mentioned competitions is completely different, and that is the reason why Leslie Vernon is more critical of the standard of football than previously. According to Leslie Vernon the reason for this lack of entertainment value is the smaller club sides that are involved in the competition. Leslie Vernon states this clearly when he notes:

”The blame for this lack of entertainment value should be placed at the doorstep of Malmo, Bruges and Nottingham Forrest – they all played purely defensive games...”¹⁴²

To pin the blame on the smaller club sides is a proof of Leslie Vernon’s thoughts in itself. This condemning critic arises from the fact that smaller teams have fewer resources, and thus the only way they can compete with bigger club is to have a solid defence against them. Malmo, the Swedish team mentioned by Leslie Vernon, is a telling sign of the tactical thought in early 1980.

Sweden sought a manager for their national team after the Second World War, and Englishman called George Raynor was appointed. He brought with him the WM-system with man-to-man marking which was used in Sweden due to amateur ethos of Swedish football association (SvFF) until late 1960s. When professionalism was finally sanctioned in 1967,

¹⁴¹ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴² Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

and in the aftermath of Sweden's failure to reach for World Cup of 1970, Lars Arnesson, a leading coaching instructor envisaged a unified playing style across Swedish football. But almost immediately counter-movement sprang up and alternative playing style was envisaged. This "alternative playing style" was installed in Malmö and Bk Halmstad by English managers called Bobby Houghton and Roy Hodgson. They both had been participating in Wade's coaching courses, where coaching drills directly related to match-situations were favoured. The main thought was that individual skill was less important than the shape and the distribution of the players in the field. Hodgson and Houghton favoured hard-pressing, zonal defence and high offside line. They counter-attacked with long passes played behind opposition defence. They were successful in Swedish football, winning five out of six league titles between them - Houghton even took Malmö to European Cup final in 1979. After Sweden failed to qualify for European Championships in 1980, Swedish FA (SvFF) decided that the English "robot football" was neither to be played in national team nor taught in Swedish football coaching courses. Houghton and Hodgson moved on from Sweden, but their mantle was carried by a Swede called Sven-Göran Eriksson. His Gothenburg side was hard to beat, but also hard to watch. He moved on to Benfica in 1981.¹⁴³

Leslie Vernon's "they all played purely defensive games" is an indication of this fact, since he goes on to note that Cup Winners Cup Final was a worth while event, in which there were two lesser football clubs competing against one another. When he talks about Cup Winners Cup winner Dynamo Tbilisi, he notes:

"In the back, Chivadze impressed me with his adventurous style. Here was a team that weren't afraid to attack, thus giving the crowd good value for their money."¹⁴⁴

Dynamo Tbilisi is valued by the same standards as other teams where previously reckoned - they are an adventurous and attacking side. If Cup Winners Cup produced a worthy final, the final verdict of the European Cup gets a colder reception. Leslie Vernon notes:

"And it is clear to me that there are no outstanding club teams in Europe – Liverpool are the best of a mediocre bunch, and this situation may persist for some time to come."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Wilson 2008, 297 - 300

¹⁴⁴ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴⁵ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

Previously it was noted that Leslie Vernon blames smaller club sides for being too defensive in their games. And the above mentioned quotation doesn't bring any new nuances to his thoughts because from the beginning it was been clear that Leslie Vernon wants more attacking football. Only this time this demand comes out with more poignancy. He expected the top talents of Europe to produce better games.

Latter part of his article covers issues concerning several national teams. It seems that his conception of the national team of England has changed, when he goes on to note:

“The truth is that this is not a very good national side, and it is unreasonable to resent criticism the way Kevin Keegan did. Ron Greenwood is not to blame, he did his best with the players at his disposal.”¹⁴⁶

The important part of the phrase is “did his best with the players at his disposal”, which purely indicates that England had several key players unavailable do to a various reasons. He notes about the absence of players:

“...And no national team manager should be expected to produce good results with such a handicap.”¹⁴⁷

Thus his views haven't changed at all? There is perhaps an indication about a possible change in Leslie Vernon's conceptions. First of all he notes:

“England side is certainly capable of qualifying for the World Cup Finals, but it is unlikely that they are going to win the trophy.”¹⁴⁸

Previous article was about European Championship, in which he thought that England might go all the way, thus there isn't any significant change in attitudes, since now he is talking about World Cup finals. The first vague indication that England isn't that good comes when, he notes:

“The trouble is, perhaps, that Greenwood would like to see his team play sophisticated football, but the players' upbringing in the hard grind of the league makes this difficult, because they acquire their habits with their clubs.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴⁷ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴⁸ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁴⁹ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

It seems like Leslie Vernon is starting to think like Eric Batty? The first article was about English football league without a comparison to continent and the second was an upbeat review of European championships. He stuck his neck out for England, but the results weren't what was expected and now he is starting to see that lack of "sophisticated football" in England is the key? Perhaps his thoughts aren't that different from previous article, since it seems that everybody in Europe is missing something, when he notes

"...but just as on club level, on full international level, there is nobody really outstanding in Europe. The Brazilians? Right now, they are on a different planet..."¹⁵⁰

His reason for admiring the Brazilians is:

"They play "real" football, their technical ability to master the ball is highly impressive, they are no mean finishers, and they have an above-average defence."¹⁵¹

According to Leslie Vernon the Brazilians seem to have the required "dash of style", "a touch of enterprise" and "a certain amount of adventure" that Leslie Vernon requires from a football team. Leslie Vernon's praise of the Brazilians tells it all. Tim Vickery notes that from the "birth of" the great Holland side in 1974 Brazil has had little success in the world of football. The years all the way to the mid 90s were a time of decay and reformation in Brazilian football, because the Dutch challenge got the Brazilians to rethink their game. When they first faced the Dutch side they lost, and after that they tried to cope by imitating the Dutch style of "total football". This experiment was done with little success because the physical power of Brazilians was inadequate. To amend this they then tried revive the old days of beautiful football in 1980s also with very little success.¹⁵² In the 80s the Brazilians might have played beautiful football, but they weren't winning their games. Thus it can be concluded that winning isn't everything for Leslie Vernon, but it's how you play the game - no matter if you are, as Brazilian player called Dunga calls them, "specialists in losing"? Maybe the difference is that Leslie Vernon is making propositions about Brazilians from too small amount of current samples?

¹⁵⁰ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁵¹ Leslie Vernon, Applaud Liverpool? No, not me! World Soccer, August 1981.

¹⁵² Vickery 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/internationals/6900356.stm>

3.4 English football has excellent entertainment value

“David Pleat, the Luton manager, in his speech on the occasion of the launching of the Rothmans Football yearbook, said that more attacking football would draw the crowds – “The decline of the gates means that we must act now to excite the crowds – attack and be damned”.”¹⁵³

Article in question is called “Spare us the tears Kevin!”, and the top left corner of the same page elaborates “Personal Opinion by Leslie Vernon”. This time his contribution deals with several topics from transfer of Kevin Keegan to Newcastle, declining crowd numbers in 1st division and to Liverpool’s playing style. The theme that gets the largest amount of space is declining crowd numbers and the first quotation in the beginning of this chapter is connected to this question. As can be seen, according to David Pleat the cure for sunken attendance is more attacking football. But according to Leslie Vernon Jeff Powell has other ideas:

“Another observer, Jeff Powell of the Daily Mail, thinks that the old, traditional English virtues would draw the public. He calls for grit, determination, a “get stuck in” attitude, or, one might say, “carry on kicking”. According to Powell, we cannot copy the Brazilians, so we might as well play typical British football.”¹⁵⁴

Leslie Vernon disagrees with both of these pundits and argues that there is nothing wrong with English 1st division.

“My contention is that there is nothing basically wrong with our League football, it is in fact marginally better since the introduction of the three-points-for-a-win system, because teams have realised that there is no point in playing for a draw away from home”¹⁵⁵

And he even goes on to commend English 1st division as excellent entertainment:

“Yet, I have seen several matches already this season, and apart from a Chelsea v Wolves bore, they were all good value for money, excellent entertainment.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

¹⁵⁴ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

¹⁵⁵ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

¹⁵⁶ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

As was seen, Leslie Vernon refuted both of the above seen explanations for declining crowd numbers. The point he is making is that declining crowd numbers aren't declining because of the game, but because of the surroundings around the game:

“The football could be more adventurous, but the real reason for the dwindling crowds is lack of money. In these days of recession... (And later on the paragraph) At the moment, they are not coming, not because the product is bad, but because they simply can't afford it”¹⁵⁷

Leslie Vernon thereby makes a point that the game in itself is not to blame for the declining number of spectators, but the (economical) recession. Further hindrances for the viewers to arrive to football matches are dirt and rubbish surrounding the grounds and hooliganism. Interesting thing about Leslie Vernon's comments is that they are contradicting one another. First he noted about English 1st division “nothing basically wrong...”, then “excellent entertainment” and finally “the football could be more adventurous”. I think that “nothing basically wrong” refers to David Pleat's and Jeff Powell's arguments and it indicates that these pundits are looking reasons from the wrong places. Reasons are outside the pitch and not on it. “Excellent entertainment” referred to (most of) the games he had seen – Chelsea v Wolves game was a bore – and thus “the football could be more adventurous”.

His standpoint is bit different when he talks about Liverpool's new tactical formation. From the three topics that are covered in this “personal opinion” another important topic to my analysis is Leslie Vernon's writings about FC Liverpool – Leslie Vernon's opinions about transfer of Kevin Keegan don't tell anything significant to this research. Briefly at end of his article he writes about Liverpool's domination in the 1st division, and even at the early stages of the season, he is confident enough to proclaim that Liverpool is going to win the season. He notes about their playing style.

”And I notice with interest that they play a 5-3-2 formation...two highly mobile centre-backs and a sweeper.”¹⁵⁸

Leslie Vernon notices the 5-3-2 formation “with interest” because it is a change to the wingless 4-4-2 formation – a standard in English football. Besides the new formation there is also libero in defensive line, which was also a novelty in the English 1st division. Previously it

¹⁵⁷ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

¹⁵⁸ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

was seen that Leslie Vernon abhors the contemporary 4-4-2 formation – Liverpool’s 4-4-2 formation wasn’t on that list - thus he values this tactical change? He elaborates:

“When I questioned Bob Paisley about his “Italian system”, he angrily retorted that his team do not imitate anybody, such as the Brazilians and the Italians, but the players at his disposal are perfect for this tactical formation.”¹⁵⁹

The reference to “Italian system” is clearly an indication of Liverpool taking foreign influences, which Liverpool manager Bob Paisley isn’t confessing. Although I’m not sure that Leslie Vernon knows what he means by “Italian system”. 1980s the development Italian football was not only about 5-3-2 formation, sweeper and two highly mobile centre-backs.

The roots of the Italian catenaccio aren’t clear, because the possible influences from the Switzerland and a man called Karl Rappan are not verified. The first Italian who begun to use, “the right of the weak” as the catenaccio was called, was manager of a small Italian club in Salernitana called, Gipo Viani. His idea was to use extra defender behind the defensive line to catch to attackers (and attacks) who slipped past the first line of defense. Mr. Viani advised on of his half-backs to drop into the defensive and thus freeing one of the defenders to drop behind as a sweeper. Their attacking tactic was to sit deep and wait as opponents committed an extra-man to attacks then by using the space in opposition’s defense to counter attacks – idea has similarities with Herbert Chapman’s thoughts. Other smaller sides began to use similar tactics of sitting deep, but usually winger was drawn back to free full back to play as a sweeper. Because most of the club sides using this new formation were small sides and being – with or without a sweeper – constantly sitting back because of necessity the development was still extemporaneous. The first notable case of catenaccio was Nereo Rocco in Triestina. He transformed the club, which was sitting in the bottom of the Serie A in 1947. In his first season they finished joint-second, and in the next two there where places in the top 8 – well done for club with limited means as Triesina. From “the right of the weak” catenaccio transformed into something, with which big clubs could achieve success when Alfredo Foni adopted the style with Inter. In the season 1952-53 Inter won the scudetto with catenaccio with using right winger Gino Armano for marking opposition’s left winger thus enabling right back Ivano Blason to drop as a sweeper. Ivano Blaso became the first great libero by being a hacker and belting the ball every time he could and Gino was the first tornanti – returners –

¹⁵⁹ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

wingers who tracked back to help defense. They scored 46 goals in 34 games, 27 less than Juventus.¹⁶⁰

Nereo Rocco's friend Brera had unusual idea of perfect football game, namely it would finish 0-0. Rocco did succumb such extremities but he loathed when ball was lost in the midfield with meaningless sideways passes. He also preferred – or insisted – that the forward track back as well to defend. When Nereo Rocco moved to Ac Milan, the team won the scudetto 1961-62 and scoring 83 times, furthermore Cesare Maldini, who was employed as a sweeper was a different type than Ivano Blaso – Maldini was a gentleman player with style. With more scoring ability and more style in their sweeping play than Inter, they still used very questionable tactics in the field. There was lots of shirt pulling, unnecessary kicking and foul play.¹⁶¹

When Helenio Herrera arrived at Inter, the first seasons went without noticeable success. In the third as a manager year Herrera converted his team to catenaccio formation where midfielder became a sweeper thus enabling left-back to attack. Herrera's attacking tactic was to use "vertical football at great speed", with no more than three passes to get to the opponents box". Inter found success with using left-back Facchetti to support attacks, and it worked because other teams had opted to use tornante, thus leaving Facchetti more room to roam upwards.¹⁶² As more and more team adopted the catenaccio it became apparent that the midfield could be flooded, and it would be impossible to mark all the players who made runs from the deep to the box. Tornante could ease the problem but this constrained his attacking duties. Glasgow Celtic got the better of Inter in 1967 European Cup final by using 4-2-4 formation with strongly attacking full-backs.¹⁶³ I would say that "the Right of the weak" is not the way to go if one wants more entertainment – more goals - in football fields. Nevertheless Leslie Vernon ridicules Bob Paisley by noting:

"It is curious that Liverpool had exactly the same players last season and didn't play with three central defenders...not have an argument with Paisley, but merely to point out that the one English team which had no need to learn from the World Cup, did, but the others carry on their traditional way."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Wilson 2008, 173-175

¹⁶¹ Wilson 2008, 177-178

¹⁶² Wilson 2008, 184-186

¹⁶³ Wilson 2008, 190-192

¹⁶⁴ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

In Leslie Vernon's mind there is no doubt about it that Bob Paisley has taken influences from abroad since Liverpool (FC) has the same players as last year when they played with different formation. Furthermore he notes that (FC) Liverpool could have done without the advice – “had no need to learn” - but still took it, when other who could have used it didn't take them. Thus Leslie Vernon is saying that Liverpool - formerly know as “the perfect practioners of the dreaded 4-4-2 formation” - have changed their game although they could have managed with the old English formation. And the other mediocre and boring teams could have used the advice to advance their game. In short Leslie Vernon isn't saying that English football teams need to change their formation from 4-4-2 to something else, because the change is only needed when the team cannot play “entertaining football” with 4-4-2 formation. Leslie Vernon concludes his article with notion of the English “self-sufficiency”

“Pity that the Liverpool trio consists of an Englishman, a Scot and an Irish player, otherwise Bobby Robson could use them “en bloc”. But, of course, he would never imitate the Italians...”¹⁶⁵

Leslie Vernon notes that the biggest obstacle to continental influences is the unwillingness of the Englishmen to change. In generalized, and with bit of satire, one can conclude that first thing to being an Englishman is to decline all European influences and secondly, if you do take them, don't admit it. “We don't imitate anybody” attitude is not something uncommon in English football.

4. English football according to Ken Goldman

4.1 Attacking football - Gone with the Wind!

“IN the musical “Kiss Me Kate” one of the characters sings: “Where is the life that once I led – gone with the wind.” That question applied to bright attacking football would end up with same answer – gone with the wind! “¹⁶⁶

Above written quote, taken from Ken Goldman's article for World Soccer football magazine, summarises the main point of the article – attacking football has gone with the wind. The piece was written in September 1980 in the aftermath of European Championships. According

¹⁶⁵ Leslie Vernon, Spare us the tears Kevin! World Soccer, October 1982.

¹⁶⁶ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

to Ken Goldman there was a lack of goals in the tournament which was caused by the overall negative attitudes towards attacking. This led him to summarise contemporary football with before mentioned thought. Although the article has negative attitudes towards contemporary football tactics, there aren't particular ill-feelings reserved for England – every team that participated in the tournament was in it together.

“[talking about shooting]...the continentals do have an edge over us in that department but it is not so great judging by the shooting results in the recent European Championships, or by results in the last four European Cups all won by English Clubs.”¹⁶⁷

The quotation above is the only time in the article when he references to “the dispute” about standard of English football. And as one can read, he does not seem to think that the cap is too wide. All the teams in European championships had poor quality – including England – and England has something extra when compared to the other continental countries since English club sides have won the last four European cups. In conclusion, to Ken Goldman continentals may have slightly better (shooting) technique, but it does not matter when the trophies are fought – meaning that negative attitudes towards attacking football are the primary concern for Ken Goldman.

About the negative attitudes he notes that these aren't only to be found in the playing field, they also exist among the football pundits. In his article Ken Goldman mentions “panel of experts” – the inverted commas can also be found in his article, thus making it some sort of a sarcastic comment – which talked on television during the tournament, and constantly had negative attitudes towards attacking. And according to him, these experts discussed football almost exclusively on defensive terms. This combined to level of football in the tournament, leads Ken Goldman to note the reasons for this:

“Indeed the final tally of goals per match was so low and equated so nearly to the panel's contentions that I was led to believe that there had been a change in the laws of the game and it was now prohibited measure to play with three or indeed four attackers up front. A quick re-read of the laws showed no one had passed such a rule-change but only those who have charge of teams had adopted it to avoid defeat.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

¹⁶⁸ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

One could endlessly write about the “measure to play with three or indeed four attackers up front”, but it would only lead to the history of inverting the pyramid from 2-3-5 tactics of the old to the dominant 4-4-2 formation of the 1980s. Furthermore the main points of this tactical transformation have been covered before in this study. But one should note that to Ken Goldman the tactic of having “two attackers in front” has got the “adopted it to avoid defeat” mind-set featured in it. I would conclude that this negative conception of Ken Goldman towards the 4-4-2 formation is, at least partly, based on World Cup winning “standard English 4-4-2 formation”.

The developer of the English type of 4-4-2 formation was Alf Ramsey - England Manager from 1963 to 1974. When he started his career as an England manager, England played with 4-2-4 formation. But the post season tour in South America made him realize that something more was needed if England was to succeed. Alf Ramsey noted that 4-2-4 formation was sufficient to beat lesser sides, but it would leave the defense too open against more prominent – skilful - opposition. Thus defensive midfielder was needed, but then there would be another problem. If one of the two midfielders was replaced with a ball winner like Nobby Stiles, it would leave unreasonable burden for the other midfielder to create the play. Alf Ramsey’s decision was to convert to a formation where the fourth attacker would track back to support the midfielder and still leaving one orthodox winger to the team – thus making it a 4-3-3 formation. The tactical change from 4-3-3 to 4-4-2 happened when Alf Ramsey realized that with four man defensive line the times of the (orthodox) winger in England were numbered. In the WM-formation there were sufficient amount of space in the flanks when full-back cut in to support the centre-half, but no such acceleration space, curial for wingers to gain momentum, was found in the four-man-backline. What is the use for a winger is there is no space? Thus the formation that developed – although then still called 4-3-3 – was a formation without wingers and was more like 4-1-3-2, where third man in the (upper) midfield trio was free to advance forward to support the attack when needed.¹⁶⁹ The Alf Ramsey 4-4-2 was negative in a way that it used a defensive midfielder. When in defense the players had dropped to defend the ball, and when they regained the possession midfielders had to labor more to create space and advance to support the attacks. But England has not got the sole right to 4-4-2 formation, and I think that Ken Goldman is not aware of this. Argentine has

¹⁶⁹ Wilson 2008, 146-150

developed its own kind of 4-4-2 formation, and furthermore the history of Argentinean football resembles English football history when it comes to denial.

”Futbol rioplatense” (football from the river Rio de la Plata) is (was) based on a superb technique and keeping the possession of the ball with endless touches. Attacking plays are centred on rapid changes of rhythm with the main aim of surprising the opponent. Argentineans and Uruguayans played the game with different tempos: very slow in the middle of the field and very fast when the ball approached the goal. In contrast of kick-and-run football, the style was associated with play with different tempos and possession of the ball – even if it meant back passing. Argentinean football gained image of being a football without tactics, when Uruguayans – the other the of the “Futbol rioplatense” – dominated South America with tactical intelligence. This meant that there were lot of space between defenders and attackers in 1930s. Thus the forwards had plenty of space and time for their movements – they could think what they did with the ball and where to put it. Furthermore defenders never tried to close down the space with co-ordinated movements and never practiced man-to-man marking. The Second World War interrupted the player movement to Europe and Argentine dominated South American Football, it is also noteworthy that Argentina was also absent from World Football between 1930 – 1958. The Brazilians and Uruguayans developed 4-2-4 formation against dominating Argentinean attacks. Both midfielders were considered attacking players with no duty of regaining the ball for the team. Argentinean team of San Lorenzo de Almagro had a profound influence to European football with its European tour in 1947. The team had central ideas of Argentinean football: quick tempo was replaced by the search for space through keeping possession until attacking opportunity was created.¹⁷⁰

Teams in Argentina mainly stuck with the old 2-3-5 formation, but after 1939 the eventual change began and teams started to play with the WM-formation - or more accurately with its Italian variation called “metodo”. In the coming years Argentinean football developed in isolation due to the Second World War and Peronist isolation. The slow ball moving, relaxed attitudes towards defending were typical for Argentinean football of that time, and because of the isolation there were few internationals to shake their belief. The foreign tours and international games Argentinean sides played tended to strengthen their belief in their superiority. Then came the World Cup of 1958, and it was a real eye opener for Argentinean

¹⁷⁰ Archetti 2002, 204 - 208

football, because the tournament did not go as well as they thought it would - the most humiliating point in the tournament was their defeat in their last game to Czechoslovakia 6-1. The unexpected loss changed the way Argentines thought about football. Greater physicality and emphasis on speed and power of the Europeans had shocked Argentines, and it was widely believed in Argentina that Czechs simply ran them over. Noteworthy was that Brazilians won the tournament with (almost) similar approach to the game (as Argentines) but that passed unnoticed. In the aftermath of the tournament Argentinean football changed more than just in tactical formations, football fans were disillusioned and angry, meaning that crowd numbers declined in Argentinean league. Philosopher Tomas Abraham has said that “It was then that European discipline appeared” (to Argentinean football), which meant that the value of defense grew heavily. The club sides like Boca Junior and Independiente based their playing in early 1960s in tight defenses, strong marking and counterattacking. In the preparation of 1958 World Cup Argentinean football federation insisted on European approach – libero play was tried but it did not succeed, and 4-2-4 formation was selected for the World Cup. 1966 World Cup saw the emergence of classic Argentinean formation 4-4-2 with diamond formation in usage in midfield – it could also be marked as 4-3-1-2. It was similar formation as England, but Argentinean full-backs were expected to support attacks and England’s defensive midfielder Nobby Stiles nullified Argentinean playmaker Onega (who was playing on the top of the diamond). Thus England had specialist defender in midfield while Argentina had specialist attacker in midfield.¹⁷¹

Eduardo Archetti has noted the same thing. Because Argentina stayed within the South America – meaning the isolation - the image of World’s football superpower remained years to come and Argentinean style was conceived as the best in the world. Thus the defeat 6-1 to Czechoslovakia in the 1958 World Cup came as a huge shock for the Argentine - they had to rethink their football. From Brazil it was necessary to import the 4-4-2 formation and from Europe the strength of the players - Style of zonal marking was also introduced. The new style of Argentinean football disliked the old way and developed more European influence, although these were only perceived – or imaginary - qualities, because to Argentines the European tactical discipline became to meant running faster and tackling harder and without mercy.¹⁷² Latter years of Argentinean football have been struggle between “traditionalist” (Archetti calls them essentialist) and “modernist” (relativist for Archetti). How should the relation be in Argentinean football? Should the old ways return or is it more important to

¹⁷¹ Wilson 2008, 200-204

¹⁷² Archetti 2002, 209 – 212

follow international development? This fundamental question was never solved, and the World Cup winning teams of 1978 and 1986 aren't remembered as classical football teams like Brazilians in 1958, 1970 and 1982, or the Hungarians 1954, the Dutch team of 1974, or the French team of 1982. The World Cup of 1978 is remembered by terrible political climate, and rough and physical style of the some of the players. 1986 is still remembered as Diego Maradona's year.¹⁷³ Thus although writing that all the teams have flawed tactical thoughts – at least European sides – Ken Goldman is solemnly referencing to European football history – one could say English football history - with the claim about defensive 4-4-2 formation. This piece of English football history is referenced in the article when Ken Goldman notes:

“Obviously the lack of wings and wingers has a great deal to do with the dull play exist today. Even if teams wanted to use them it is difficult to find the players to play there because all the youngsters have been conditioned to becoming midfield player of one type or another.”

Noteworthy thing here is – again – that Argentinean tactics aren't mentioned. Argentineans did not have wingers but the width was utilised with the usage of overlapping fullbacks. For the Europeans Ken Goldman continues

“Indeed it is a general malaise caused by refusal to play enough men up front and whilst for a long time I would not go along with Brian Glanville on systems being so important I have now come round to his way of thinking.”¹⁷⁴

When national team of England is concerned, the system taking over development happened as early as in Alf Ramsay's managerial period – it should be remembered that before it was noted that on World level it happened after World Cup of 1970. As noted above, Alf Ramsey began his managerial career in 1963 with deploying two (orthodox) wingers.¹⁷⁵ His attitude towards tactics was - as can be seen from the answer he gave to Jackie Charlton when he asked Alf Ramsey about it - “Well, Jack, I have a pattern of play in mind and I pick the best players to fit that pattern. I don't necessarily pick the best players.” Nobby Stiles was one of those players that fleet scorned for not being skilled enough for England team, but for Ramsey

¹⁷³ Archetti 2002, 213 - 216

¹⁷⁴ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

¹⁷⁵ Glanville 2008, 42

he filled his purpose. The system had won!¹⁷⁶ Because of this there aren't any wingers available, and according to Ken Goldman the solution for this problem would be as follows:

“It is plainly obvious that if two men upfront play four at the back they the strikers have almost next to no change. Better to send up four men and play 3-3-4 or 4-2-4 or play with wingers or indeed play with a Beckenbauer type of sweeper as John Cartwright is doing with his successful England youth team...”¹⁷⁷

Ken Goldman has the old English problem; do not try to develop something new, stick with the old. After the Hungary defeat in 1953 and defeats of the club sides that followed it became increasingly obvious that English invincibility was a myth. The (English) pundits knew that WM-formation was now old-fashioned – although it remained in usage - and something had to be done, but they were not sure what. Perhaps a telling sign of English conservatism was that some respected English pundits were suggesting a return to the old 2-3-5 formation.¹⁷⁸

Ken Goldman does not seem to realise that the difference with “the old football” and “the new football” lies in the commitment of the players in the field. When in the times of old (football) some players – usually wingers and attackers – would have little to do with the defense, the formation of new tactical ideas changed all this. Neil Carter accounts the crucial development when he talks about the early 1970s when football saw the invention of “total football”. It was pioneered by Ajax and Dutch national team, both coached by Rinus Michaels. In this tactical “formation” defenders and forwards frequently inter-changed positions, placed the emphasis on speed and the exploitation of space. The lynchpin of this system was strong defense and talent of Johan Cruyff. In football generally there was increasing emphasis on pace and fitness which favored the north European club sides who started to dominate European club competitions. The difference was “the pressing” game which meant that opponent with the ball was constantly harassed and squeezing out of space by defenders pushing up halfway line.¹⁷⁹ But the pressing game is a peculiar phenomenon, and Ken Goldman was not the only one who had problems dealing with it. The pressing game was developed in Soviet Union, was successfully used in Argentine 1960s and later used by such men as Rinus Michaels in Ajax, Valeriy Lobanovsky in Dynamo Kiev and even Graham Taylor in England. But when it years later arrived (or was developed) in Ac Milan with Arrigo Sacchi in late 1980 it was

¹⁷⁶ Glanville 2008, 53–54

¹⁷⁷ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

¹⁷⁸ Wilsnon 2008, 129 - 130

¹⁷⁹ Carter 2006, 115

hailed as ground breaking.¹⁸⁰ According to Ken Goldman, English club side football has the same problems – too defensive – but he gives it an altogether different reason, one team is too dominant.

“But we now come to the knob of the problem and that is Liverpool are so good and they have “Psyched”, rather like Mohammad Ali, everyone into believing that they are so good, that no one is prepared to attack them.”¹⁸¹

Ken Goldman has clear vision why football is defensively orientated – too few attackers and the lack of wingers – and Liverpool’s domination is having psychological effects on other teams. Other than that his remedies for the situation are simple.

“When attack and goals are the order of the day there will be a change in the direction of the wind and the football life that once we led will be back with us and so will the vast crowds who used to follow the game.”¹⁸²

And

“While all seem to recognise that it is essential if our game is to survive none want to be the first to experiment.”¹⁸³

Ken Goldman’s thoughts could be summarised with the following sentence “bring back the old football”.

¹⁸⁰ Wilson 2008, 161

¹⁸¹ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

¹⁸² Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

¹⁸³ Ken Goldman, Attacking football has gone to the wind. World Soccer, September 1980.

4.2 One bright spot in football management

“It is quite clear that Peters is a thoughtful, dedicated man, who will bring credit to the Sheffield United Club and will one day make an exceedingly good manager.”¹⁸⁴

In his article Ken Goldman writes about his meeting with Martin Peters, and the player’s transformation from player to player-manager and his thoughts eventually becoming a manager. The article deals on with domestic English football and has some clever insights about English football and its managers. The piece was written in February 1981. The quote above summarises Ken Goldman’s thoughts about Martin Peters’ future in football management. But what are the reasons for Ken Goldman to predict good – if not excellent – managerial career for Martin Peters? Do his opinions say something more about English football in general?

As it was noted, English football had been pervaded by anti-intellectualism, and it had generated authoritarian tendencies. The attitudes about theoretical and tactical knowledge have been described as inferior since “practice is more important than theory”. Because of this greater emphasis is placed upon physical strength of the players than the technical side of the game. Attributes such as stamina, courage and loyalty became more important than skill. In contrast, when continental Europe has placed on its emphasis on tactical knowledge, British Isles have been unable to develop enough players with the understanding of different tactics, constructive and intelligent movement (with and without the ball) and sophisticated ball control.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore the managers and coaches were usually picked from a pool of ex-players, because it was the conceived wisdom that ex-players make good managers. Other fact that hindered formation of individual, self-thinking, managers, was club directors wanting themselves to make most of decisions – selecting players for games included.¹⁸⁶ In the continent it atmosphere was different, because engineers were responsible for many clubs that were formed. This created a technocratic mentality towards management and coaching. In addition, the game in continent was “white collar” game. And more emphasis was put to national team than the club sides. Those English managers that returned faced an opposition from the players about the (new) methods that they had learned from the continent.¹⁸⁷ So is

¹⁸⁴ Ken Goldman, Football – a game of contrasts! World Soccer, February 1981

¹⁸⁵ Carter 7-8

¹⁸⁶ Carter 66–67

¹⁸⁷ Carter 2006, 66 - 67

Martin Peters cut from the old vein of English managers and coaches? Is he becoming a manager from, and because of, the ex-player category?

“I asked whether this was the most sensible way of entering into managership and Peters immediately confirmed by saying: “I look at it as an apprenticeship and think that it is important for me to learn this way. When Harry Haslam eventually gives up the team I will take over”...”¹⁸⁸

Now it might seem that Martin Peter is following the usual route to football manager by learning by doing, but Ken Goldman’s above mentioned description “will one day make an exceedingly good manager” means something else as well. Namely, Peters has been doing more than just learning by doing.

“Coming from West Ham initially where one always was taught to think about football it is quite natural to be involved in coaching and whilst I was at West Ham I obtained my preliminary coaching badge.”¹⁸⁹

For learning by doing, but also learning by studying, makes Martin Peters have one of the few (?). According to Neil Carter England was lacking behind in the attempts to create coaching system. In fact as late as 1970 and 1980s attempts to implement European style licensing system for managers did not succeed, because club directors and former players weren’t interested participating in it. The FA was acutely aware that managers in England were behind their continental competitors. In West Germany, for example, six-month course was needed before a person could gain employment in a first division club. In England efforts for training club managers and coaches were tried in two separate occasions, 1969-1973 and 1979-1982 but yet again there weren’t enough participants to continue the project.¹⁹⁰

Although both of these projects could be called failure, the attitudes improved somewhat in England. During the 1970s and 1980s with a greater pressure to win managers had to change their views. In order to succeed it now became more important to develop tactical thoughts of their own – does not necessarily mean learning by studying. Furthermore this was also reflected in the change in managers attitudes when they started think that coaching was one of the most important aspects of their duties in their club. The club director became more increasingly aware that managers should have this freedom to decide their own tactical

¹⁸⁸ Ken Goldman, Football – a game of contrasts! World Soccer, February 1981

¹⁸⁹ Ken Goldman, Football – a game of contrasts! World Soccer, February 1981

¹⁹⁰ Carter 2006, 107

formations and team selections – club directors should not mingle with team selection and tactical formations.¹⁹¹ To Ken Goldman Martin Peters must have been one of the need breed of managers who could do well by learning the trade both ways. Also the attitude changes – coach being more than sergeant-major figure - can be seen in the interview:

(Peters tells to Goldman) “I do all the coaching at Sheffield United and it is not as strange as people might think. I was always involved with Norwich on the tactical side of the game and I used to have lots of discussions with John Bond about the way the game should be played.”¹⁹²

Martin Peters is talking about his playing days in Norwich when he was not a player-manager yet. The final verdict depends on the fact about John Bond’s character and whether he was one of the few non-authoritarian managers, but here it can be seen that players and managers figured – or at least discussed – the team tactics in cooperation.

After the war, and in light of the closer relationship between manager and players, as well as managers’ greater autonomy, managers increasingly made themselves responsible for the playing strategy of the team. Despite the Hungary victory in 1953, which exposed flaws in English tactical thinking, the situation was not that bad as new tactical formations emerged. Manager Arthur Rowe – who had been lecturing in Hungary¹⁹³ - in Tottenham used a variation of continental push and run method. He believed that the more team retained possession, the greater changes of scoring, and this was best achieved by short passing. Tottenham won the league 1951 but by the mid-1950s Rowe had difficulties finding players skilled enough to fill the void of those who left. Stan Cullis in Wolverhampton Wanderers implemented more traditional British “kick and rush” tactic with a pressing game, forcing the opponent to mistakes and didn’t let the opponent enjoy easy possession. The manager wanted the game to be played in opponent’s half. As the game speeded up, and through greater contact with European teams, formations and teams became even more flexible. Ipswich won the league in 1962 under Alf Ramsey with 4-3-3 formation with one withdrawn winger. This allowed the left-winger Jimmy Leadbetter to make runs to penalty area unmarked. Alf Ramsey was interested how team worked as a unit and the time he managed the English national side there weren’t any wingers because he couldn’t find any to fit his tactical thoughts. In 1966 World Cup Alan Ball and Martin Peters were used because they could “tuck

¹⁹¹ Carter 115

¹⁹² Ken Goldman, Football – a game of contrasts! World Soccer, February 1981

¹⁹³ Wilson 2008, 130

in” and reinforce the midfield.¹⁹⁴ These might have been the few mavericks of tactical thought in England, but majority still preferred the old WM-formation. And as the years progressed whole new “commonly agreed playing style” called the direct football emerged. If one believes Ken Goldman’s words Martin Peters would have helped Arthur Rowe

“He was the complete footballer being able to use both feet well, to head superbly and with a ability to volley the ball second to none in the country.”

English football saw a development called “direct football”, more popularly known as “the long ball”. The main supreme behind this tactical thinking was Charles Hughes who built his thoughts on previously made game analysis. This tactical analysis showed that most of the goals originated from the final third of the pitch, thus the ball must be played there as quickly as possible and as much as possible. It could be exciting and creating a lot of goal mouth action but it also could be very dull football without any creativity. But it also showed that managers begun to a have a methodical outlook to football and they influenced team’s tactics. When team played with long ball players had to be told how they should play and where they could express themselves in the field. Jack Charlton, one of the earliest exponents of the long ball tactic claimed that this was necessary because of the offside trap team were using. Charlton’s plan was by pass the congested midfield by using the long behind the defensive line to midfielders to run to and thus evading an offside trap. Other had more pragmatic reasons for using the long ball, and this was the increasing gap between the rich and the poor clubs. Wimbledon’s Dave Basset expressed this when he said “limited talent means limited skills and I have to plan the strategy accordingly.”¹⁹⁵

The before mentioned rich clubs could employ more sophisticated tactics than the long ball. International club competitions were a fine place to get influences, to adapt and to develop more continental style of football. For example in 1974 when Bob Paisley became the manager of Liverpool, the club combined the best aspects of both worlds: while opponents where still constantly pressurized, Liverpool’s players were still able to pass and control the ball like continental sides. Also Nottingham Forrest adopted similar tactics and succeeded in

¹⁹⁴ Carter 2006, 93-94

¹⁹⁵ Carter 116

continental competitions. The overall picture of English football was still the long ball and most of the players were still lacking in passing and ball skills.¹⁹⁶

To Ken Goldman Martin Peters was an exceptional player with superb skill, and also he will be exceedingly good manager. The reason for Ken Goldman to predict a bright career for Peters is his way of learning. He has learned by doing, but what is also important, learnt by studying in the courses. Carefully thought it can be suggested that Ken Goldman wants to see more managers like Martin Peters, but there is no clear critique for English coaching system or otherwise – that is not function of the article.

4.3. Where are the characters?

“THE opening of the 1981-82 Season saw crowds some 8,000 down on the corresponding opening day last year despite the fact that start of the season was delayed for two weeks to allow for holiday periods and that the teams are playing for three points for a win now instead of two.”¹⁹⁷

The third Ken Goldman article in this study, from which the quote above has been taken, is called “Where are heroes and characters?” and the subtitle is “All time greats Len Shackleton”. The piece was written in October 1981 and primary subject matter is a player called Len Shackleton – the clown prince of soccer as the article calls him. When Len Shackleton, and his exceptional skill to entertain, is put together with the first presented quote, one can see what undertone of the article is – the audiences are in decline because the game isn’t entertaining enough. And the reason for lack of entertainment is that the fantastic ball dribbling individuals – skill level as such has not declined - are gone, as Ken Goldman points out:

“The pity of Shackleton is that although the crowds adored him, too many believed that functional football should replace the star system. That this has failed as an idea and a maxim is obvious and while it is true that the greater majority of players are overall more skilful these days, the lesser number have the great ability and the skills which Shackleton and some of his ilk possessed.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Carter 2006, 117

¹⁹⁷ Ken Goldman, Where are heroes and characters? World Soccer, October 1981.

¹⁹⁸ Ken Goldman, Where are heroes and characters? World Soccer, October 1981.

According to Ken Goldman “functional football” replaced “the star system” which means that – as previously discussed in this study – the best players are replaced by the players who fit best in coaches’ tactical system. His observation about the change from free flowing to tactically disciplined football is correct, but it is not behind the declining crowd numbers.

Matthew Taylor has other explanation to the declining audience numbers in 1980 – similar reasoning was seen previously in a Leslie Vernon’s article. In English club side football the season 1948-49 attendances were at its peak 41.2 million, although this wasn’t due to the elevated standard of play but because of the minimal unemployment and continued rationing – people had money to spend and only few things to spend it on. In the same vein as football, cinema audiences also peaked during late 1940s. The eventual decline was slow at first and unevenly spread – lower divisions suffered more. Between seasons 1948-49 and 1956-57 eight million spectators were lost and, following a mild recovery, a further steep decline of nearly 4 million took place during season 1960-61. This was caused not by declining standards of play but new thoughts about individualism – family instead of pubs and football - cars ownership and television were preferred to “Spartan conditions” at football terraces. Thus those who had money opted for something else, while those who had little were priced out from the terraces.¹⁹⁹

The decline in crowd numbers continued after a short period of revival after the World Cup victory in 1966. The numbers who came to see games was 28.1 million in 1971-72 and 24.5 million in 1978-79. Numbers continued to drop in 1980, reaching its lowest in 1985. From season 1960-61 to season 1980-81 attendances dropped 36.4 percent in 1st division, but decline was even deeper in lower division where during the same time span percentage was 55.5%. There are many reasons behind this decline. There were, previously mentioned, changed patterns of consumption and competition from other forms of entertainment – television and cinema. Football related reasons aren’t widely agreed and some are still debated. Biggest explanations and the most commonly agreed are hooliganism and lousy facilities at stadiums, but some argue – Taylor isn’t precise who is or are “some” - that declining amount of scored goals and thus the declining standards of play were not a reason of this decline. Also it has been highlighted that football clubs were lousy at marketing their product – no dropped gate prices in the time of decline, etc.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Taylor 2008, 192-196

²⁰⁰ Taylor 2008, 264–266

When compared to other football nations, England has better place for smaller football clubs than other countries. This can be explained with English limits in maximum wage and restrictions on transfers, which lasted to early 1960s. This meant that small English clubs could hold on to their star players – Tom Finney played his whole career in Preston North End – and this way punch above their real weight in English domestic football. Elsewhere – like in South America – there have always been few clubs in a given country that have collected the supporters and trophies.²⁰¹ Similar development can be seen in Spain where Real Madrid and Barcelona are the dominant teams. Perhaps this is what Ken Goldman means when he talks about “lack of characters”.

“In the years following the second world war up to the early 1960s, there where dozens of characters enlivening and enriching English soccer...”²⁰²

The early 1960s was a time when limitations to wages and transfers were abolished, and similarly to Ken Goldman it was a time when characters disappeared. Thus rising domination of some clubs – Manchester United and Liverpool – has made English football less fascinating. At least it is a fact that English football lacked foreign talent from the continent. Post-war British football was more open to foreigner labourers than it had been before, they were still few. For example captured German paratrooper Bert Trautmann played as a goalkeeper for St Helens Town and signed for Manchester City in 1949. Furthermore there were polish army exiles Alfie Lesz and Feliks Starocsik and internationals such as Switzerland’s Willi Steffan and Iceland’s Albert Gudmonssen playing in English leagues. According to Matthew Taylor British leagues nevertheless continued to look like more parochial than cosmopolitan in personnel and outlook.²⁰³ The effective ban on the importation of non-British professionals that had been implemented in 1931 was reversed in 1978 because of European Commission’s decision which concluded that footballers as workers should be guaranteed a freedom of movement. This created first significant influx of foreign players to the British leagues. Scotland had no such rules, but only handful of Scandinavian amateurs had previously tried their luck in their league. The freedom of movement in English 1st division saw the arrival of such (star) players as Ossie Ardiles and Ricky Villa to Tottenham and Arnold Muhren and Frans Thijssen to Ipswich Town. Although the first wave has tiny, this was the beginning of “Europeanization” or “internationalisation” of British professional

²⁰¹ Vickery 2009 http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/timvickery/2009/02/uruguay_a_nacional_question.html

²⁰² Ken Goldman, Where are heroes and characters? World Soccer, October 1981.

²⁰³ Taylor 2008, 119

football. The “Celtic phase” of English football lasted from 1946 to late 1970s were Scottish players were predominant “foreigners” in Football league”. By mid 1980s “International phase” was more dominant and “international players” recruitment had passed Scottish and Irish signings.²⁰⁴

Ken Goldman’s reasons for the declining crowd numbers maybe overly simplistic but it is clear that he has tendency to agree with Eric Batty about the state of English football. Meaning, there are no real talents in English football, and there only few exotic, foreign players to see. The thing that separates Ken Goldman and Eric Batty are views about tactics. Eric Batty sees English football as old fashioned and wants influences from abroad while Ken Goldman is inclined on nostalgic thought patterns – “bring back the old football” could be Ken Goldman catch phrase. The lack of real talents is summarised by following statement:

“Alas there would appear to be no one playing these days who could remotely hope to achieve that standard of ball control with the possible exception of Glen Hoddle.”

During the 1960s British football was in many respects on top of the world. England won the World Cup in 1966, following year Celtic became the first British side to win the European Cup. Manchester took the European Cup the following year. Over the next decade and half, British (especially English) club came to dominate European competition. Between 1968 and 1985 British clubs took 8 European cups (appearing in 11 finals), 9 Intercities Fairs/UEFA Cups (11 finals appearances also) and 5 Cup Winners Cup (out of 8 finals). When compared with other European leagues, they couldn’t match with England’s haul of trophies – German clubs won 8, Dutch and Italian clubs won 6 each and Spanish clubs just 4. But the national team achieved much less than the club sides. Scotland at least continued to qualify for World Cups, but England has in freefall. Furthermore English playing style seemed to have become outdated and redundant when other had developed more sophisticated approaches to the game. In this context the word “decline” became the catchword of sports journalist. Off the pitch, there were fewer reasons to be cheerful. Dropping attendance numbers, bad behaviour of the fans and racism gave weakened the image of football. In the 1980 political commentator Lincoln Allison in his “Condition of England” (1981) concluded that football was less attractive and important than before. Stephen Wagg noted in 1984 that football was in a state of continuing crisis, because there was too much television exposure, no money and

²⁰⁴ Taylor 2008, 307 - 309

football was alienated from the public. When previously football was seen as a good reflection what was positive in Britain, now it came to represent the bad sides of urban environment.²⁰⁵ It is safe to say that Ken Goldman could not agree more.

4.4 English football is losing talent

“OVER the past couple of years there have been some sad departures of players and coaches from English game who have sought fresh pastures abroad.”²⁰⁶

The fourth Ken Goldman article was written in 1982 and it deals with departure of English youth team coach to abroad – he took a job in Kuwait. The article contains also parts of the interview – quotes from Cartwright if one wants to be accurate – and a critique of English (youth) coaching system. This time Ken Goldman’s critic has similar features as Eric Batty, but the suggestions for correction of the situation are nowhere to be seen. According to the writer the loss of John Cartwright – the coach in question – is bad thing for English football because he steered English youth team to success in European youth championships and World Youth Cup. Excluding John Cartwright Ken Goldman does not specify the players and coaches mentioned in the quote who have left England to play and coach abroad.

Until the 1960s the limitations on player’s freedoms where a reason to leave English football fields and go abroad. Firstly, the maximum wage of 12£ in 1945 and 20£ in 1958 were a source of dissatisfaction for players. When other employment areas had salaries dependant on the economic situation, the football players had a fixed salary. This meant that while common working man increased his wages thru the years, players’ wage development was left almost as it was – the wage difference between a footballer and a worker was decreasing. Secondly, players couldn’t change their club even when their contract ran out – unless their current team allowed them to leave. These two things combined led to situation where players from Britain left to abroad to play where payment was better – wages might have been smaller but there were bonuses that made the deal worth it. One of the first to leave was England international Neil Franklin who broke his contract and left to play a rogue league in Columbia, while

²⁰⁵ Taylor 2008, 251 - 252

²⁰⁶ Ken Goldman, Cartwright departure is a loss to England. World Soccer, August 1982.

Welshman John Charles went Italy.²⁰⁷ Although the contractual situation got better after 1960s, continental leagues still had upper hand financially, and some players took advantage of this and left abroad. Departure of the better players might have slightly decreased the standard of play in England – perhaps the effects were even non-existent – but the departure of able coaches got Ken Goldman thinking:

“Thus for the sake of the future of our game it is absolutely essential that we do not continue to lose top coaches of the calibre of Cartwright.”²⁰⁸

Not every coach was lost, some were sent on as English football missionaries – most of the English football people still thought England was the football country in the world. Thus FA send 15 coaches to Norway and Sweden after the WWII, and by December 1947 there were at least 34 British coaches around Europe. National teams such as Netherlands, Portugal, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Egypt were all managed by Britons.²⁰⁹ Furthermore the Dutch football – one of the most prominent football countries in 1970s - developed under the guidance of two British managers after the Second World War. The first one was called Jack Reynolds and his successor was Vic Buckingham. In fact Jack Reynolds had been with Ajax before the Second World War, but it was only after the war that his fingerprint was starting to show. He understood the importance of technical training, created junior academy to Ajax football club and instilled his with the idea of attacking football. The other Englishman Vic Buckingham arrived to Ajax in 1959 from Tottenham, where he had been influenced by the possession and passing football of the Hotspurs – he also implemented variation of WM-formation to Ajax. Ajax was noteworthy exception because most Dutch sides switched from 2-3-5 straight to 4-2-4, and thus passing the rigid man-to-man marking of the WM-system.²¹⁰ Even before World War 2 there were Britons who developed continental football to significant level.

These coaches who went overseas to teach football skills to continental sides of Europe were usually more dedicated to ball skills than an average British coach. One of such examples was a Scotsman called Jimmy Hogan who was the biggest advocate of “the old Scottish game” in central Europe – the great Hungarian team coach Gustav Sebes once said “we played football as Jimmy Hogan taught us”. This meant that ball was played in an intelligent, constructive

²⁰⁷ Taylor 2008, 228 - 230

²⁰⁸ Ken Goldman, Cartwright departure is a loss to England. World Soccer, August 1982

²⁰⁹ Taylor 2008, 202

²¹⁰ Wilson 2008, 218 - 222

and progressive, on-the-carpet-manner. His teaching was well received in continent because his students were mostly students with intellectually curious mind-set to the game.²¹¹ Thus the early on the coaches who could not find a suitable ground for their coaching ideas went abroad and found the ideological climate more favorable to them. And in a way this was still the situation in England several decades after. Ken Goldman points the reasons for Cartwright's departure:

(English clubs did not let their best (youth) players to participate in international tournaments) "...this lack of co-operation from the League Clubs who put Club before Country so regularly which so frustrated him that he views pessimistically the future of the game unless there is a complete change of emphasis."²¹²

Ken Goldman sees that although Cartwright was only allowed to coach a third choice team, he succeeded were well. But in the quote above only tells that English club sides still favour club football instead national teams – a point that was noted before. And Ken Goldman continues:

"Even if the players are actually released for the match there will be no change to get them together early to weld them into a unit."²¹³

The players are released for national duty in a last possible minute, meaning that the time in which to teach team tactics to players is almost non-existent. In the 1st article from Eric Batty the similar situation was noted with national team when he demanded longer preparation period for national team. Furthermore - according to Ken Goldman - the declining economic situation has caused the clubs to cut-back their coaching staff and first on the elimination list are the youth side coaches. Instead of playing with other youth players, they are too quickly forced in to reserve teams, which mean that:

"This creates a late start for our kids who in any event are too much involved in a competitive environment with not enough time given for them to develop their techniques and skills."²¹⁴

The loss of able coaches, declining resources for youth teams and lack of co-operation for clubs have cause a situation in English football where Ken Goldman agrees with Eric Batty:

²¹¹ Wilson 2008, 27-29

²¹² Ken Goldman, Cartwright departure is a loss to England. World Soccer, August 1982

²¹³ Ken Goldman, Cartwright departure is a loss to England. World Soccer, August 1982

²¹⁴ Ken Goldman, Cartwright departure is a loss to England. World Soccer, August 1982

“However, despite some success in the recent World Cup it was obvious we were second-raters when it came to control of the ball, and to producing fine techniques and outstanding skills.”

Ken Goldman agrees with Eric Batty, but he does not have a plan to rectify the situation. There is no elaborate analysis of the condition of English football or clear indications that Ken Goldman wants influences from abroad. Furthermore it was previously seen in the first article that English club sides have what it takes to conquer Europe. Hence it could be said that English football could be all right if the able English coaches would stay in England?

5 Conclusions

The known member of “the critical school” Eric Batty has not changed his views about English football. He still wants influences brought from abroad and the necessary changes implemented, because structurally English football - training methods and understanding tactics – is old fashioned. The anti-intellectualism of the working class still prevails among the football people, and hard work is considered more important than intellectual knowledge. The victory of 1966 has caused the disappearance of the wingers and this is what separates English sides from the continent – they still use them. Although his views are highly critical, he does not consider English football as bottom of the heap. With minor (continental) tactical changes England could do quite well in international competitions. The slight contradiction can be explained with fact that other European countries had problems as well. Italian had stagnated in its playing style and others were going thru a generation change. As it was shown European football in 1980s has in state of decline – defence was value more than attack. To Eric Batty the successes of English clubs sides does not matter because English playing is still dominated by the old-fashioned 4-4-2 system with long crosses to forwards – the few teams playing with a style resembling continental tactics is not enough.

Leslie Vernon does not share Eric Batty’s overall criticism of English football, although he acknowledges that contemporary football is too defensive and the lack of goals is persistent in the leagues all over the Europe. The positive thing is that English club sides are doing well in international competitions. The negative attitudes could be corrected with inclusions of wingers and to embrace the philosophy of the great Hungarian team – games are won by over-

scoring your opponents. The difference between Eric Batty and Leslie Vernon is that the latter has, what could be called, “neutral spectators perspective” where entertainment value of the games is what matters. Besides where Eric Batty is concerned about the national team and almost completely ignores the positive aspects of the domestic game, Leslie Vernon has more detailed vision about English club side football. Thus when top English league, clubs such as Liverpool and Nottingham, have entertaining playing style with a continental twist – although Leslie Vernon does not promote the continental aspect in any way – that is enough for him to complement English football. When it comes to national side he has more pragmatic outlook than Eric Batty. When England has good record against its opposition, and the opposition has fallen out of form, England can succeed. It must be remembered that this is what Eric Batty also thinks, but he puts it differently – the negative aspects get all the attention and changes are pronounced in a subordinate clause. This pragmatic outlook does not mean that he is simply nationalistic writer. For example he values the Brazilian team highly because they are highly entertaining. And when the entertainment value is poor, even the English sides get their share of the critique as in the case of European Cup. And with his views about the decline of crowds in the stands, one can note that Leslie Vernon definitely is a analytical football pundit without clear ideological view points – besides the favouring attacking football.

Third writer in the research was Ken Goldman, and his views lay between the before mentioned writers. With Leslie Vernon he shares the viewpoint that English clubs sides are doing well in international tournaments, and the differences in tactical and technique are not that great. Furthermore he also abhors the modern defensive orientated football. With Eric Batty he agrees that when it comes to management managers should educate their selves, and break-free from the old-fashioned sergeant-major school were ex-players (without learning) were most suitable managers and coaches. When it comes to the domestic English league football he sees it as too functional, where character with superb skill have vanished – although he confesses that overall the tactical ability of the players have increased. The thing that worries Ken Goldman is that able English managers are leaving from England because club sides put their interest before the national sides. And this is unacceptable for Ken Goldman because standard of English football is not what it should be.

When the results are interpreted one can note that the overall picture of English football in early 1980s is more vivid than in the constructed “critical school” or nationalists’ viewpoints

show. The top club sides such as Liverpool and Nottingham have taken at least minor influences from abroad and developed a playing style leaning towards the continent with ball-on-the-ground-passing. But transformation of the few successful club sides has not caught on in the less successful club sides, and what is important national team is still upholder of the traditional English 4-4-2 football with its long crosses and high work ethics. Furthermore football was in a state of change in 1980s. The ideals of the old football were still alive after 10 years of its demise, but the system orientated tactical thought was making its way with pressing game and more tactical planning. It appears that early 1980s this led to situation where defensive attitudes were valued because the change was not completely understood. This lack of comprehension can be seen from the pundits' articles. Others think that the wingers are the way to bring back the old football, and others can grasp the coordinated team work in pressing. Meaning that solution for the situation is to propose tactics such 3-3-4 or standard 4-2-4, when modern football theory knows that attacking it is not about the numbers on the tactic board but it is about the task given to the players.

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