

the Seasiders

THE OFFICIAL 2023/2024 MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

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SATURDAY 13TH APRIL 2024, 3PM
ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH

VICE CHAIRMAN: **ANDY CLARKE**



Good afternoon all and a very warm welcome to the AGL Arena for today's penultimate home league match against Witham Town.

Well, here we are, with three games to go and anything could happen. I'm sitting here now watching the Arsenal vs. Munich game while looking at my phone to see the final score between Brentwood and Bowers. There are five minutes plus added time to go, and then we will know a little more. So, hot off the press (or maybe not as you're reading this three days later), Brentwood have gone down 3-1 at home to Bowers. Ideally, a draw would have been perfect for us tonight, but we now know what we have to achieve in the remaining games. Three wins out of three will see us with a home playoff, possibly finishing second but definitely third. Looking at the fixtures, that is pretty much the only thing we can be sure of.

Even with only three games to go, I predict there will be some unexpected twists and

turns. I, for one, wouldn't bet on any outcome except for the fact that it will all go down to the wire.

I have mentioned this at various times in seasons gone by, but the fact that there are still three Suffolk clubs in the top five at step 4 looking to gain promotion is an absolute credit to the clubs and the county alike. This, coupled with the monumental achievement of Needham Market reaching the heights of conference football, is incredible. Many congratulations must go to not only the management, players, and staff but also the team behind the scenes running the club. We will be watching with interest next season!

Further to this, Mildenhall, Newmarket, and Framlingham all looking set for promotion from their respective leagues goes to show that non-league football in little old sleepy "SUFFOLK" is well and truly punching above its weight. Long may it continue. Only the one game since Tony's last notes, with that being the Bank Holiday fixture against Ipswich Wanderers. Not one to remember, but credit to the visitors for their work rate and resilience. Again, another side who have come to the AGL, taken the lead (a sheer fluke of a cross dropping unexpectedly in at the far post), then put nine men behind the ball and were happy to defend for their lives. Josh H got us back in the game with a piece of individual quality, but for all our endeavors, we couldn't break down the Wanderers' backline to get that vital winning goal. A point gained or two lost, very difficult to say, but I'm sure Wanderers were the happier of the two camps.

So, to today's game, one that I feel will prove to be another difficult test, with Witham having recently beaten Walthamstow, got a credible draw from Brentwood, and taken Lowestoft to the wire. They won't be a pushover

even at this point of the season. But hey, this is what the business end of the season is all about. Let's be in it to win it!

Lastly, to finish today is the small matter of the "SUFFOLK PREMIER CUP FINAL" on Tuesday, when we face Needham at Bury. It would have always been tough, but with Needham gaining their promotion, there is no doubt that they will be on a high. So for me, let's make every advantage count. To start, let's get numbers to Ram Meadow (no excuse, wonderfully Felixstowe Travel has offered free coaches to all supporters, so no excuses). Let's turn a neutral venue into a home game and rally around the boys. If we take the fight to them

on every level, you can never say never! Enjoy the game, Tuesday's final, and the run-in.



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FROM THE DUGOUT: **STUART BOARDLEY**

Good afternoon to you all and a warm welcome to our visitors Witham Town, our officials and both sets of supporters.

Our visitors seem to always be somewhat of a surprise package and have proven time and time again that they can take points away from the top teams in our league but

equally haven't kicked on in the league as maybe they had hoped for earlier in the season. They have bags of pace in attack and we know only too well how dangerous they can be on the counter from our 3-2 defeat to them earlier in the season.

Results of late have been a bit of a mixed bag and after a spirited second half turn around away at Bury all looked good heading



into our last home match against local rivals Ipswich Wanderers. It wasn't to be our day, with Wanderers putting up a robust and compact defensive performance where an early cross sailed over Blunks and into our net to give them a lead to defend. Defend it they did and we just did not have the creativity to break them down. A fantastic Josh Hitter strike gave us hope but, in all honesty we did not work their goalkeeper enough to be able to say we deserved the victory. Last weekend was a strange one, seeing all of the other teams in the league in action but for us - a weekend off!

We decided it best to give the players some time with their families last weekend in between two hard and physical sessions last Thursday and this Tuesday to keep fitness levels high. The squad is looking particularly healthy with the mini break and we hope that this will have given the players that little chance to get themselves free of any little knocks and niggles and refocus themselves on the remaining fixtures.

I didn't have chance during my last notes (due to timing's of publication) to send my condolences to Phil and his family for the loss of Jan. I didn't know Jan particularly well but hearing how highly many people around the

club spoke of her, what a deep void her loss will create for so many but as usual I'm sure the Felixstowe family will be there to support Phil in any way we can moving forwards.

Whilst remembering fondly those who have passed, we would also like to welcome a new arrival to the Felixstowe family, as Becky (our wonderful programme editor) and Bryan, welcome a new baby boy to the world - Congrats guys!

Ok... so, a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 6 games to go now that we have secured our place in the final of the Suffolk Premier Cup but also the Isthmian League Playoff's..... We just have to take each 90 minutes as it comes and try to finish as strong as possible to ensure we finish as high as we can in that top 5. Below were our key targets that we set out privately as a group at the start of the season, lots still to play for!!!

Our Key Priorities

Top Three Finish | Promotion | Suffolk Premier Cup Final | FA Cup or Trophy Run

Enjoy the game...

Boards

TODAY'S MASCOTS



A big welcome to Felixstowe & Walton United's Under 9's team who will be mascots for this afternoons match against Witham Town. The team are sponsored by Attwells Solicitors. We hope you enjoy the experience and you get to see the lads claim all 3 points!



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ISTHMIAN NORTH DIVISION TABLE 2023/24

POS		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
1	Lowestoft Town	34	24	3	7	87	38	+49	75
2	Bowers & Pitsea	33	22	4	7	66	42	+24	70
3	Felixstowe & Walton United	33	20	8	5	71	38	+33	68
4	Bury Town	33	20	7	6	80	45	+35	67
5	Brentwood Town	32	19	6	7	65	30	+35	63
6	Walthamstow	34	17	7	10	58	47	+11	58
7	Heybridge Swifts	33	16	8	9	49	41	+8	56
8	Brightlingsea Regent	33	17	2	14	62	48	+14	53
9	Basildon United	32	15	4	13	60	54	+6	49
10	Maldon & Tiptree	34	15	3	16	63	58	+5	48
11	Gorleston	33	12	8	13	53	48	+5	44
12	Wroxham	33	11	9	13	44	46	-2	42
13	Witham Town	33	10	9	14	50	58	-8	39
14	Redbridge	30	9	8	13	44	53	-9	35
15	New Salamis	33	9	7	17	54	71	-17	34
16	Grays Athletic	32	7	6	19	39	60	-21	27
17	Ipswich Wanderers	32	7	4	21	32	66	-34	25
18	Enfield	32	5	3	24	29	79	-50	18
R	Stowmarket Town	33	0	6	27	30	114	-84	6

LAST UPDATED: TUESDAY 9TH APRIL 2024 AT 21:47:16



ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH FIXTURES

SATURDAY 13TH APRIL

Basildon United	▼	Bowers & Pitsea
Brightlingsea Regent	▼	Heybridge Swifts
Enfield	▼	Ipswich Wanderers
Felixstowe & Walton Utd	▼	Witham Town
Grays Athletic	▼	Stowmarket Town
Maldon & Tiptree	▼	New Salamis
Redbridge	▼	Gorleston
Walthamstow	▼	Bury Town
Wroxham	▼	Brentwood Town



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MATCH PHOTOS

PHOTOS
BY TOM
BRADFORD

MONDAY 1ST APRIL ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH Felixstowe & Walton Utd 1 Ipswich Wanderers 1

Felixstowe & Walton United had to settle for a point against a stubborn Ipswich Wanderers side that led for over half of the match. Felixstowe had the majority of possession throughout but were too often guilty of lacking that final delivery and nerve in front of goal. Henry Barley launched a fierce strike from 20 yards early on that the keeper brilliantly turned over before Charley Barker stunned the home crowd on 20 minutes by looping an effort from out on the right, over Blunkell. Stuart Ainsley was unlucky with another strong strike from distance as the keeper again saved an equaliser. Felixstowe totally dominated the second half and were up against ten men from early on when Dunnage saw a red card for bringing down Ben Fowkes when he had shook off his man and about to race clear on goal. **Josh Hitter** produced a stunning equaliser on 66 minutes, deciding to find the top corner of the net from fully 28 yards. The remainder of the game was played in the Ipswich final third with chance after chance going begging and Ipswich hanging on for a point as the Seaside failed to find that killer instinct.



HOW WE LINED UP

1. Joshua Blunkell
2. Lamell Howell
3. Stuart Ainsley
4. Noel Aitkens
5. Tom Bullard
6. Joe Whight
7. Ben Fowkes
8. Josh Hitter
9. Josh Mayhew
10. Henry Barley
11. Zak Brown

SUBS

12. Callum Bennett
14. Sam Ford
15. Seth O'Neill
16. Andre Hasanally
17. Kyran Clements









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OUR SQUAD

Introducing the Felixstowe & Walton United playing squad and management team of 2023/2024.



STUART BOARDLEY MANAGER

Stuart started his footballing career at Ipswich Town leaving in 2004 after 10 years. He went on to play for Torquay United, Sudbury, Leiston and Felixstowe. In 2018 he was appointed as Manager of Leiston but left in 2019 to become Manager of Felixstowe & Walton United.



ANDY CRUMP ASSISTANT MANAGER

Andy returned to Felixstowe & Walton United as Assistant Manager following the appointment of Stuart Boardley in 2019. Having enjoyed success in previous spells at the club as both player and First Team Coach.



DANNY POTTER GOALKEEPER COACH

A former pro footballer/TV star, Danny was cast into the Sky TV programme 'Dream Team' where he played for the fictional team Harchester United. Danny boasts clubs such as Torquay, Colchester and Cambridge as former employers. Recently appointed as Goalkeeper Coach, Danny brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and professionalism to Stuart's management team.



STUART STEVENSON COACH

After hanging up his boots Stuart joined Felixstowe Utd as a fitness coach/physio, then on to Trimley to help coach his son's team from the U8s-U16s. Stuart rejoined the Seasiders to coach the U18s which lead him on to being part of the first team staff. Stuart is an FA level 2 coach and an FA level 1 mentor.



CHARLOTTE LONG SPORTS THERAPIST

Charlotte graduated from the University of Worcester in 2014 with a BSc (Hons) in Sports Therapy. She had previously worked with Leiston FC before joining the Seasiders in 2019. Her main focus is overseeing the recovery programmes of injured players through her private practice.



DOUG FRENCH **KIT MAN**

Doug started his career in 1986 and played for East Anglian Customs, Walton United, Felixstowe United and Tattingsstone, breaking his leg four times in the process. Whilst playing for Ipswich Wanderers vets, Doug finally hung up his boots. Having found his vocation in washing players dirty pants, Doug is excited for a new challenge with the Seaside.



JOSHUA BLUNKELL **GOALKEEPER**

Josh joined the club in January 2024. The former AFC Sudbury keeper signed a professional contract with Wycombe Wanderers after impressing in Sudbury's televised FA Cup in 2021. Previous clubs also include AFC Sudbury, Bowers & Pitsea, Braintree Town and Kettering Town.



STUART AINSLEY **LEFT BACK**

Stuart joined the club for his second spell in 2014 from Lowestoft Town. Previous clubs include Chelmsford City and AFC Sudbury. Stuart spent 10 years at Ipswich Town, winning the FA Youth Cup in 2005. Stuart has a sweet left foot and a great work ethic.



JOE WHIGHT **DEFENDER**

Joe came through the ITFC Youth system before playing for the likes of Needham, Bury and most recently AFC Sudbury where he captained their side. A left sided defender, Joe offers composure, a wonderful left foot and a toughness and desire to defend to the back line.



CALLUM BENNETT **RIGHT BACK**

Callum is in his second spell at the club having re-joined in late 2018. An attacking full back with one of the best ball deliveries in non-league football. Callum has plenty of experience from his time at Ipswich U18s, Stoke City U21s and Notts County.



JACK AINSLEY **DEFENDER**

Rejoins from Stowmarket. Jack played professionally for ITFC after coming through their academy and went on to make 4 appearances playing under Roy Keane. Jack went on to have spells at Step 3 Lowestoft and Leiston but finds himself back at the Seaside where many describe him as a "Rolls Royce" type of player who can play in any position for the team.



TOM BULLARD **DEFENDER**

Another who joins us from Stowmarket. 'Bully' has experience across Step 3 and 4 with long and successful spells as captain at both Leiston and Bury Town. Tom is a serial winner who's experience, defensive qualities and leadership skills will add to an already impressive back line.



BILLY HOLLAND **MIDFIELDER**

Billy started life at Ipswich Wanderers and has had spells at Needham, Leiston and AFC Sudbury. He's established himself as a mainstay in the centre of midfield. Players player and Supporters player of the year last season has led to him being appointed captain for the forthcoming year.



NOEL AITKENS **MIDFIELDER**

Noel's signing for the club in 2020 caused a stir amongst the non-league world, joining from step 3 Leiston and being described by manager Boardley as "the best midfield player in this area". Noel is quick, strong, can tackle, is athletic and can really play football!



LEON OTTLEY-GOOCH **MIDFIELDER**

Leon signed for the club in 2020 and is another vastly experienced player at step 3 and 4 level. Previous clubs include Leiston, Bury Town, Hadleigh Utd and Stowmarket Town. Leon is very versatile but is predominantly a dynamic midfield player.



JOSH HITTER **MIDFIELDER**

Josh signed for us in 2021 having played his football at Step 3 side Leiston for the previous three seasons and gained a vast amount of experience at that level. Josh is a dynamic attack minded player who likes to arrive in the box late and score goals.



CALLUM HARRISON **MIDFIELDER**

Former Colchester United, Needham, Sudbury and more recently Chelmsford midfielder joined the Seasiders for the 22/23 campaign. A highly sought after creative and technically gifted midfielder that loves to get forward and provide the team with both goals and assists.



IVAN COSTA **MIDFIELDER**

Promoted into the first team squad from our Academy after a strong pre-season. Ivan is an industrious central midfield player whose work ethic and attitude is second to none.



KUBI KUSSAN **MIDFIELDER**

Another young player promoted to the first team squad from our Academy. Kubi is a technically gifted midfield player who enjoys moving with the ball. He has an edge to his game that has impressed the management throughout pre-season.



HENRY BARLEY **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Henry signed for the club in 2019 following his contract expiring at Ipswich Town. Another popular young player who had also been on loan from the then EFL Championship club the previous season.



LAMELL HOWELL **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Lamell signed from Brightlingsea Regent in 2020. He can play on both wings or in the number 10 position and brings pace and trickery to the side. He has previously played for Stowmarket Town, Debenham FC and Brantham Athletic.



CHARLIE WARREN **MIDFIELDER/FORWARD**

Having initially joined on loan from Needham Market, Charlie made an instant impact on his debut in the FA Trophy win at Hastings. Following a number of impressive performances, manager Boardley moved quickly to secure the permanent services of one of Suffolk's brightest young players.



ZAK BROWN **FORWARD**

A sought after and highly rated young striker with blistering pace and a great goal scoring record. At just 17, Zak penned a two year pro contract with ITFC where he was a regular marksman in the U23's. Zak started life in the Seasiders Youth sections and has returned to lead the forward line as the clubs No. 9.



SAM FORD **FORWARD**

Having spent a successful period with Arbroath last season that saw them just miss out on promotion to the Scottish Premiership, Sam spent the Summer with Hume City FC in Australia before returning to Felixstowe. Coming through ITFC and later West Ham's academy, Sam is a local talent who will provide real firepower in front of goal.



JOSH MAYHEW **FORWARD**

Josh joins us from promotion winners AFC Sudbury. An experienced front man who has been prolific at Step 4 and 5 with an impressive spell at Stowmarket yielding 136 goals in 173 games. Josh's physical presence will bring a focal point to our attack as well as a being natural finisher who is a proven goalscorer at this level.



ANDRE HASANALLY **FORWARD**

Andre joined the Seaside FC for his third spell at the club in February from Maldon & Tiptree. Previous clubs include Colchester United and St Neots. A versatile forward with the ability to create as many as he scores.



KYRAN CLEMENTS **DEFENDER**

Kyran signs for the Seaside FC from Bishop's Stortford. Centre back Kyran has been playing at step two for the last six years, including five years at Braintree Town, and previously featured more locally for AFC Sudbury, Leiston and Bury Town, plus a loan spell with the Seaside FC in 2015.



SETH O'NEILL **MIDFIELDER**

The 18-year-old right back/midfielder has been on loan with Stowmarket Town for most of this season, captaining the side on a few occasions. Seth has been at Town since the age of 13, joining from AFC Sudbury before becoming a full academy player in the summer of 2021.



BEN FOWKES **FORWARD**

Ben Fowkes signed from Peterborough Sports in National League North. The prolific forward scored 50 plus goals over two seasons at Needham Market and Leiston before signing for the Step 2 side last summer.

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THE OTHER SIDE WITHAM TOWN FC



PHOTOS BY NIGEL HAKES
from Witham Town FC website

Origins and Early History

Witham has a history of football teams going back to the 1830's when the first recorded match involving a side representing the town was played at Lanham Green near Cressing. This was before the 'modern' game was codified in England in 1863 following the formation of The Football Association, whose 'Laws of the Game' created the foundations for the way the football is played today. The first formation of a Witham side, post-FA creation, was in 1876 when Mr.H.Green, Mr.W.Rust, Mr.F.Bridge and Mr.E.Turner sought permission from a farmer to play football in a field next to the River Brain in the town, close to Saul's Bridge. This site was Witham FC's home for a few seasons with play later being transferred to The Park, a pitch nearby, which was shared with the town's Cricket Club. The 1885-86 season saw the very first Witham player appear for the County side with that honour going to R.H.Stevens. After some years, however, the cricket side objected to the damage being done to the surface of the pitch, so another move was made, in 1894, to 'The Grove'. The Grove itself was a large private house that was built in the late 1600's, which was eventually demolished in 1932. The pitch, noted as one of the best in the county, was located to the rear of the property not far from the old Witham to Maldon Railway line, which roughly corresponds with today's Mayland Road and Abercorn Way. Mr.P.E.Laurence, a local sports enthusiast and President of the club at that time, owned this field. The entrance to the ground was via Chess Lane, which is now a short cut to an industrial estate. The occupants of the cottages there on 'Finals' days reaped a bonanza from the two pennies charged for bicycles left in their care. Witham's first recorded appearance in a final, that of the very first Essex Junior Cup, came in 1893-94 when they lost 4-1 to Matlock Swifts (who went on to become Leyton FC). During this time the team enjoyed the reputation of being one of the strongest junior



sides in the country and built up a large following. They were known in those days as the 'Red Herrings' because of their all red kit. Two days after the Great War broke out in 1914 (28th July) the entire team under the guidance of Reginald Brown went to Warley Barracks near Brentwood to enlist in the 5th Battalion of the Essex Regiment.

Between The Wars

Witham FC re-formed in July 1919 after a meeting held at the Spread Eagle Hotel in the town centre. Again, the side played in red shirts, and, in one season, Witham won 24 matches and only lost once. Postman Mr. Fred Perry used to pay Albert 'Summer' Bickmore one shilling for each goal he scored. Bickmore recalled with pleasure the day he scored five. The re-formed club, which changed its name to Witham Town FC in 1921, won the Braintree & District League Championship in 1920-21, appeared in the Divisional Final of the Essex Junior Cup, won the Braintree & District league again in 1924-25 and secured the Essex Division 2 Shield in 1925-26. During these years the popularity of football seemed to have grown in the town with a Crittall's Athletic team also forming. Crittalls Windows Works, which opened in 1919, was one of the largest employers in the town and the site of the old factory is now occupied by Morrison's supermarket. For a small town like Witham this was perhaps too much for both these clubs to thrive, and, with waning support largely due to the increasing prominence of the Crittall's team, after less than a decade the re-formed Witham Town disbanded. However, local opinion must have been in favour of a true 'town' team, as after a meeting with the Spread Eagle again forming the backdrop, Witham Town FC re-formed again in July 1933. At this meeting, held by Mr.C.Ingram (who was elected club Chairman), Mr.S.Slinger and Mr.S.Howell (who was chosen to be Hon. Secretary) the decision was made to join two competitions, The North Essex League and the Kelvedon & District Junior League with club colours being red shirts and white shorts. In 1934-35 Witham reached the final of the Tolleshunt D'arcy Cup, losing to Tiptree United 4-2, and the following season they became Division 3 Champions of the North Essex League. That same year the club gained the use of the football pitch at Rickstones Road Recreation Ground. Unfortunately, as the clouds

of war slowly gathered, and with falling support once more, in 1938 Witham Town folded.

A New Beginning

In 1948 the Witham Town FC of today re-formed thanks to the efforts of a small band of stalwarts who met in an old British Legion hut under the Chairmanship of Mr.Sid Rice who was the driving force behind the club re-forming. Although the pitch was only a cow pasture with a barn as changing rooms, these basic conditions did not seem to affect the team though as in their first season back playing they became champions of the Chelmsford and Mid Essex League Division 2, winners of the Tiptree Charity Cup and the Tolleshunt D'Arcy Cup courtesy of a 1-0 win over Feering. During the following season the club moved to the Crittall Windows works ground at The Park in the centre of the town and they also became founder members of the Mid-Essex League Premier Division. Their first game at The Park was a friendly v Ipswich Town which the Suffolk side won 7-0. That year the Premier Division Cup was won. After two more seasons in the CMEI, a dispute with the League over a cup match played in blizzard like conditions, saw Witham Town switch to the South Essex League where they spent seven seasons winning the Championship in 1955-56. A supporters club was then formed and in 1958 the decision was made to join the Essex and Suffolk Border League and thus step up to an intermediate level of football.



Gaining Senior Status

During the 1964-65 season Witham won the Essex & Suffolk Border League Championship and they decided to seek new playing facilities suitable for senior football. The following season, 65-66, they won the E&SB League Cup after beating Whitton United 3-0 and were runners up in the E&SBL in 66-67. 1967-68 saw Witham just miss out on their second League Cup honour when they lost 3-2 to close rivals Tiptree United in the final. In 1970, the club was finally offered its present ground at Spa Road, although the move did not happen until after the end of the 1974-75 season due to the allocated plot being under cultivation. The last game at The Park ground was a 1-0 win against Basildon United on the 19th April 1975. In the meantime, Witham Town again won the Essex & Suffolk Border League (in 1970-71), and were invited to become founder members of the Essex Senior League and were the inaugural Champions in 1971-72, pipping Billericay Town to the title by just one point. Witham went on to spend more than 15 seasons in this league, usually finishing in the top half of the table. In 1981 Witham won the Essex Senior League Cup by defeating Sawbridgeworth Town 4-2 at Chelmsford City's New Writtle Street ground. The mid 1980's provided several top 3 finishes including runners-up in 1984-85 and 1986-87, with the Championship being won for the second time in 1985-86. March 1985 saw the Spa Road grounds' new floodlights 'officially' switched on in a friendly versus Colchester United. 1986 saw more success as Witham won the Essex Senior Trophy, defeating local rivals Heybridge Swifts 3-2, after extra time. During the following 1986-87 season Town enjoyed their best run in the FA Vase when they reached the last 16 (the 5th round), before losing 2-1 at home to Falmouth, and they also secured the Harry Fisher Memorial Trophy (the predecessor to the Gordon Brasted) after beating Sawbridgeworth Town in the final. This good run of form in league and cup competitions again led the club to seek a higher level of football to play at. They applied to join the Isthmian League and this was accepted in 1987.

The Isthmian Years

Their first match in the Isthmian League (Division 2 North) in 1987-88 saw Witham win



6-0 at Ware which ended with the club finishing in 7th place. During this time, former Southend United manager Steve Tilson started his career with the club before moving on to the Shrimpers as a player. The end of the 1990-91 season would see the two Isthmian Division 2's (North and South) 'de-regionalise', therefore making a top half finish imperative if Witham were to retain their Division 2 status and avoid the drop into what would be the next seasons new Division 3. A good finish saw Witham end up in 6th place, thereby ensuring their position in the restructured division and the club also made a semi-final appearance in the Loctite Associate Members Trophy. In 1993-94 Witham had their highest ever league finish, 5th in the Isthmian League Division 2. Back in the mid-90's there was no 2nd tier to the Conference so this was their best finish at what was then Step 4. Unfortunately, this could not be built upon and Town were relegated at the end of the 1999-2000 season to Division 3 after 13 years in Div 2. However, during the previous season, 1998-99, Witham saw their best run in the FA Cup, to the 3rd Qualifying Round, before losing out to Havant & Waterlooville in a replay. The next few years saw further restructuring of the Isthmian League culminating in a runners-up spot in Division 2 (formerly Div 3) at the end of 2005-06 as Witham took their place the newly formed step 4 Division 1 North. A goal difference of just +1 separated Witham from Brook House and 3rd place. In 2007-08 they achieved their best run in the FA Trophy, making it to the 3rd Qualifying Round. After beating Chatham Town away 3-0 Spa Road saw a giant killing over Horsham who at that time were leaders of the Isthmian Premier Division. Town crashed out in the next round though after losing at Hayes & Yeading. During 2008, one of Town's rising stars, top scorer Cody McDonald, moved on to Maldon Town and then Dartford, before being bought by the then Championship side Norwich City. This move to the Canaries makes Cody our highest profile ex-player.

A short(ish) visit to the Essex Senior League

At the end of the 2008-09 season Witham Town finished 21st out of 22 teams consigning them to relegation to the Essex Senior League. Despite the obvious disappointment at being relegated the club had the chance to start afresh in the same league where their senior aspirations were

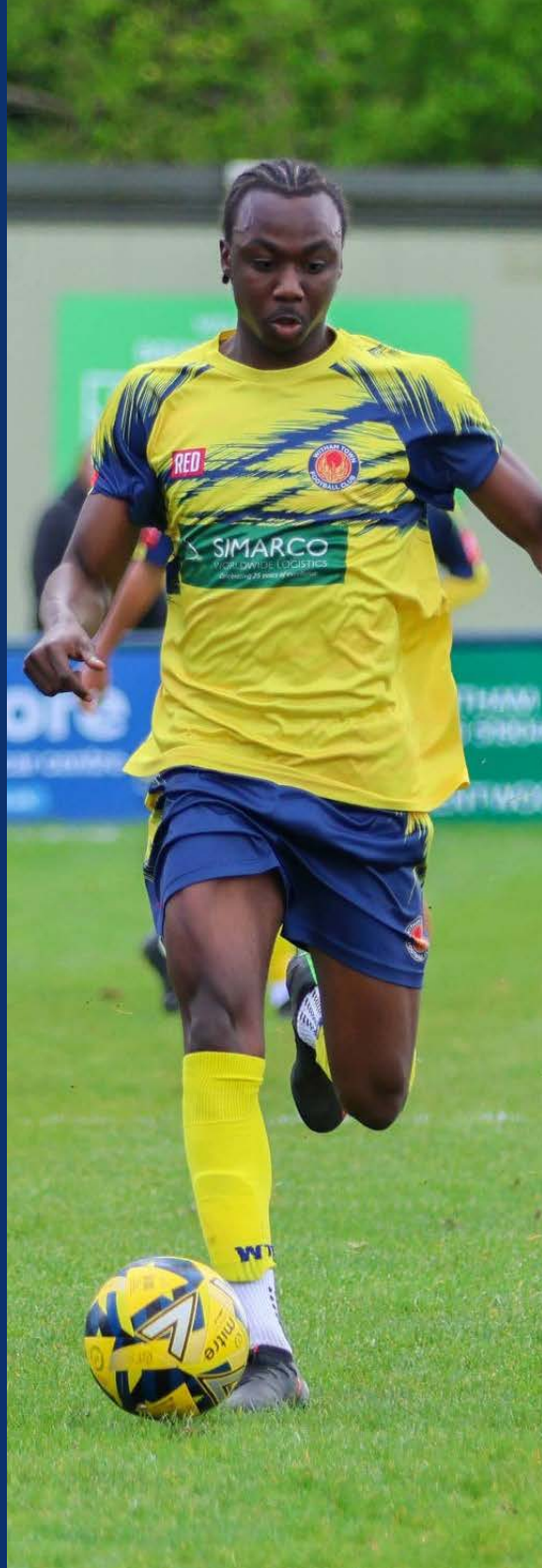


initiated back in 1971. Off the field, former player Olly Murs became the TV show X Factor's runner up in December 2009. As the 2009-10 season drew to a close, and on the back of eight straight wins, Witham earned the necessary point on the last game of the season at Barkingside in a tense 2-2 draw that guaranteed runners-up position just ahead of Burnham Ramblers. Unfortunately, this was not enough for Town to regain their spot in the Isthmian League. During the 2010-11 season, for the last 4 games, current manager Garry Kimble took over the reins as the club finished third. In the following campaign, Kimble's first full term in charge, Witham Town enjoyed what could arguably be claimed to be their most successful season ever as they broke many long standing club records on the way to the Essex Senior League title, last won in 1986, and therefore securing a return to Isthmian football. As well as the league, Witham won the League Cup, Gordon Brasted Memorial Trophy and the Tolleshunt D'Arcy Cup and remained unbeaten away in the league. Striker Billy Hunt also secured the Don Douglas Trophy by becoming the league's top scorer, with Rob Whitnell and John Watson coming second and third highest league scorers as well.

The Isthmian Years (Part 2)

The return to Isthmian level began in spectacular style as the club finished 4th in the Isthmian

League Division 1 North and qualified for the Play Offs only going down 3-2 to eventual winners Thamesmead Town. The club also retained the Tolleshunt D'Arcy Cup beating Heybridge Swifts 4-0. They went one better in 2013-14, finishing in their highest ever league position, runners up in the Isthmian League Division 1 North. In the play-offs Needham Market were beaten 1-0 in the Semi Final and Harlow Town 3-0 in the Final as Witham secured a place in the Isthmian Premier Division for the first time. A gallant attempt was made to compete at Isthmian Senior Level, but this proved too much for a club with limited resources and the club were relegated in 2014-15. The next season was a difficult one as a number of key players moved on following relegation and it was difficult to find a settled squad. With another relegation looking likely, it was time for a management change. Garry Kimble left the club and a new management team was appointed, consisting of Adam Flint and James Robinson, both of whom had spent time with the club previously. Relegation was averted and the club finished in 19th place. We finished in 13th place in 2016-17, followed by an 11th place in 2017-18. At the end of the season, Adam and James moved on to manage Bishops' Stortford. Mark Ashford became the new Witham manager before the start of the 2018-19 season. John Sussex and Kevin Wren joined later as joint assistant managers. Mark Ashford resigned at the end of the season in which safety from relegation was only assured on the last day of the season at Basildon. Marc Benterman was appointed before the start of 2019-20 and needed to assemble almost a complete squad in a few weeks to start the season. This was done and the club were in 15th place with 28 games played when Covid-19 caused the season to be abandoned. Season 2019-20 only lasted until late October 2020. Marc began the 2021-22 season with a young squad but he resigned from his role as manager in November 2021. Former Witham Town player and assistant manager Chris Taylor was appointed manager in January 2022. We narrowly avoided relegation, beating Saffron Walden Town in the Inter-Step play-off match after finishing 18th. At the end of 2022-23 we finished in sixteenth place. Chris Taylor resigned and was replaced by Garry Kimble in his second spell as Witham Town manager.



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FOOTBALLERS are often accused of forgetting their roots but that's not necessarily a fair reflection of the reality.

Even this week, Aston Villa striker – and England Euro 2024 hopeful – Ollie Watkins took time out of his end of season run-in schedule to watch Truro City take on Torquay United in the National League South.

Watkins' mate Connor Riley-Lowe is Truro captain and the 28-year-old went along to show his support.

The pair played together at Exeter City but Watkins is no stranger to Non-League football following a loan spell at Weston-super-Mare a few years back before his career really took off in the EFL and, these days, beyond.

Of course, Non-League is a haven for former top flight footballers, FA Cup winners and ex-internationals – many enjoy winding down their careers on the pitch or go into management at the level. Some even enjoy great success.

Others choose to focus on getting involved with a club off the pitch too. It will be interesting to see how many look to go that route in the future.

Former Crystal Palace winger Wilf Zaha is now involved with AFC Croydon Athletic – alongside British rap star Stormzy – and watched their Combined Counties League game at Camberley Town on Tuesday night.

In last week's NLP, Tony Incenzo wrote a revealing piece with QPR defender Steve Cook and his involvement with Sussex-based outfit Westfield.

The Mid Sussex League side are dreaming

of climbing the Pyramid over the coming seasons with Cook happy to be helping out.

"Hastings is my home town," the former Bournemouth man told Tony. "My mum and dad still live there. Westfield is only five minutes down the road and it is a lovely little village. Hopefully I can raise the club's profile to push them forward.

"I decided to get involved because my close friend Jack Stapley and his family have been running Westfield for a while. I'd often spoken to Jack about the club and a lot of my friends play Non-League. So I said to Jack: 'Oh, if you ever need a hand or want me to help out then just let me know.' And he replied: 'Yeah!'

"I've always taken an interest in life below the EFL. When I was a young Brighton player, I went out on loan to Non-League clubs at Havant & Waterlooville, Eastleigh, Eastbourne Borough and Mansfield Town (who were then in the Conference).

"It benefitted me a great deal. I came up against tough adult opponents rather than other youth players. It was a major influence on my early development and even the way I play football nowadays."

And Cook recognises the important role Non-League football plays in the English game.

He added: "It is rewarding for me to give something back to the game. Yes I am playing for Queens Park Rangers but I regularly chat to other Westfield officials via Zoom meetings which keep me in the loop.

"I firmly believe our Non-League ranks play a huge part for any aspiring footballers who want to go far."

LAST SIX MATCHES: FORM GUIDE

Bowers & Pitsea	W 4-2 v WITH..	W 1-0 v BURY..	W 3-2 v NEW..	W 2-0 v GRAY..	W 1-0 v ENFI..	W 3-1 v BREN..
Brightingsea Regent	L 1-0 v GRAY..	W 2-0 v WALT..	W 1-0 v GORL..	W 4-1 v ENFI..	W 2-0 v STOW..	W 7-0 v IPSW..
Lowestoft Town	W 4-0 v WROX..	L 2-1 v BRIG..	W 2-0 v FELI..	W 3-2 v MALD..	D 0-0 v BURY..	W 2-1 v WITH..
Redbridge	W 2-0 v WALT..	L 2-0 v GRAY..	D 0-0 v WROX..	W 5-0 v STOW..	D 0-0 v HEYB..	W 1-0 v BASI..
Wroxham	W 3-0 v NEW..	D 0-0 v REDB..	D 0-0 v HEYB..	W 2-0 v IPSW..	L 1-0 v GORL..	W 2-1 v NEW..
Bury Town	W 2-1 v NEW..	L 1-0 v BOWE..	W 3-1 v BASI..	D 3-3 v FELI..	D 0-0 v LOWE..	W 1-0 v MALD..
Heybridge Swifts	W 3-1 v ENFI..	W 2-0 v GRAY..	D 0-0 v WROX..	W 1-0 v MALD..	D 0-0 v REDB..	L 5-1 v WALT..
Brentwood Town	L 1-0 v FELI..	W 9-0 v STOW..	W 3-2 v MALD..	D 0-0 v WITH..	W 3-1 v GRAY..	L 3-1 v BOWE..
Walthamstow	D 0-0 v GORL..	L 2-0 v BRIG..	L 3-0 v WITH..	W 1-0 v ENFI..	W 3-0 v STOW..	W 5-1 v HEYB..
Felixstowe & Walton	W 2-1 v ENFI..	D 0-0 v HEYB..	W 1-0 v BREN..	L 2-0 v LOWE..	D 3-3 v BURY..	D 1-1 v IPSW..
Grays Athletic	W 2-0 v REDB..	W 1-0 v BRIG..	L 2-0 v HEYB..	W 2-0 v GORL..	L 2-0 v BOWE..	L 3-1 v BREN..
Gorleston	D 0-0 v WALT..	W 4-1 v ENFI..	L 1-0 v BRIG..	L 2-0 v GRAY..	W 1-0 v WROX..	D 3-3 v BASI..
New Salamis	L 2-1 v BURY..	L 3-0 v WROX..	W 5-1 v STOW..	L 3-2 v BOWE..	W 4-0 v BASI..	L 2-1 v WROX..
Madon & Tiptree	W 2-0 v IPSW..	L 3-2 v BREN..	L 3-2 v LOWE..	L 1-0 v HEYB..	L 1-0 v BURY..	W 5-2 v STOW..
Witham Town	L 2-0 v BURY..	L 4-2 v BOWE..	D 1-1 v STOW..	W 3-0 v WALT..	D 0-0 v BREN..	L 2-1 v LOWE..
Basildon Utd	W 3-0 v ENFI..	L 2-1 v IPSW..	L 3-1 v BURY..	L 4-0 v NEW..	D 3-3 v GORL..	L 1-0 v REDB..
Ipswich Wanderers	L 2-1 v GORL..	L 2-0 v MALD..	W 2-1 v BASI..	L 2-0 v WROX..	D 1-1 v FELI..	L 7-0 v BRIG..
Stowmarket Town	L 5-1 v NEW..	D 1-1 v WITH..	L 5-0 v REDB..	L 2-0 v BRIG..	L 3-0 v WALT..	L 5-2 v MALD..
Enfield	L 3-1 v HEYB..	L 3-0 v BASI..	L 4-1 v GORL..	L 4-1 v BRIG..	L 1-0 v WALT..	L 1-0 v BOWE..

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE NORTH: LEADING GOALSCORERS

1	Jake Reed	Lowestoft Town	29	11	Callum Harrison	Felixstowe & Walton United	13
2	Cemal Ramadan	Bury Town	26	12	Olly Sotoyinbo	Brightingsea Regent / Walthamstow	13
3	Harvey Sayer	Lowestoft Town	23	13	Ryan Hawkins	Wroxham	12
4	George Smith	Maldon & Tiptree	18	14	Mekhi McKenzie	Brentwood Town	12
5	Louis Britton	Maldon & Tiptree	17	15	Jack Adlington-Pile	Heybridge Swifts	11
6	Luke Brown	Bury Town	16	16	Adam Hipperson	Lowestoft Town	11
7	Samir Ali	Basildon United	15	17	Ryan Curtis	Gorleston	10
8	Matt Price	Bowers & Pitsea	15	18	Luke Johnson	Gorleston	10
9	Joe Waight	New Salamis	15	19	Joshua Mayhew	Felixstowe & Walton United	10
10	Ben Williamson	Bowers & Pitsea	14	20	Joshua olaoluwa Osude	Witham Town	10



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FIXTURES 2023/24

AUGUST

SAT 12	MALDON & TIPTREE <i>Holland, Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 211
SAT 19	WELLINGBOROUGH <i>Ford, Harrison, Holland, Warren</i>	A	3PM	EMIRATES FA CUP	W 4-1	ATT 135
SAT 26	BURY TOWN <i>Ford, Harrison, Hitter</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-0	ATT 401
MON 28	STOWMARKET TOWN <i>OG, Ford</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 433

SEPTEMBER

SAT 2	WOODFORD TOWN <i>Holland, Brown, Hitter, Aitkens</i>	A	3PM	FA CUP FIRST QR	W 4-1	ATT 225
SAT 9	BRENTWOOD TOWN <i>Whight (P), Aitkens</i>	H	3PM	ISUZU FA TROPHY	W 2-0	ATT 371
SAT 16	ENFIELD TOWN	A	3PM	FA CUP SECOND QR	L 3-0	
TUE 19	BOWERS & PITSEA <i>Warren, Harrison, Ford</i>	H	7.45PM	ISTHMIAN LEAGUE	W 3-2	ATT 263
SAT 23	HERTFORD TOWN <i>Harrison (2), Holland, J Ainsley, Barley, Mayhew</i>	H	3PM	ISUZU FA TROPHY	W 6-3	ATT 225
WED 27	LAKENHEATH <i>Mayhew, Warren (2), Barley</i>	A	7.45PM	SUFFOLK PREM CUP	W 4-1	
SAT 30	BASILDON UNITED <i>Whight, Bullard, Warren, Brown</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 4-2	ATT 112

OCTOBER

SAT 7	BILLERICAY <i>Mayhew (2), Ford</i>	A	3PM	ISUZU FA TROPHY	L 4-3	ATT 527
TUE 10	BRIGHTLINGSEA REGENT <i>Mayhew (3), Ottley-Gooch, Ford</i>	H	7.45PM	LEAGUE	W 5-3	ATT 402
SAT 14	WALTHAMSTOW <i>Mayhew</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	ATT 434
TUE 24	REDBRIDGE <i>Warren (2), Ford, Harrison</i>	H	7.45PM	LEAGUE	W 4-0	ATT 313
SAT 28	GRAYS ATHLETIC <i>Aitkens, Brown, Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-0	ATT 226

NOVEMBER

SAT 4	ENFIELD <i>Harrison (3), Warren, Ford</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 5-1	ATT 360
WED 8	HADLEIGH UNITED <i>Hitter, Warren</i>	H	7.45PM	SP CUP QF	W2-1	ATT 208
SAT 11	HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS <i>Warren, Harrison (2)</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-2	ATT 310
TUE 14	WROXHAM	H	7.45PM	LEAGUE	L 2-0	ATT 467
SAT 25	WITHAM TOWN <i>Harrison (2)</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 3-2	ATT 168

DECEMBER

SAT 2	GORLESTON <i>Ford, Hitter, Warren, Harrison</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 4-0	ATT 223
SAT 9	NEW SALAMIS <i>Harrison</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	ATT 78
SAT 16	MALDON & TIPTREE	H	3PM	LEAGUE	L 1-0	ATT 341
SAT 23	IPSWICH WANDERERS <i>Ford, Barley</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	ATT 232
SAT 30	BOWERS & PITSEA <i>Holland</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 2-1	ATT 302

JANUARY

MON 1	STOWMARKET TOWN <i>Holland, Whight</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	ATT 561
SAT 6	BRENTWOOD TOWN <i>Aitkens, Mayhew</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 2-2	ATT 246
SAT 13	LOWESTOFT TOWN <i>Mayhew, Holland, Harrison</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-0	ATT 431
SAT 27	BASILDON UNITED <i>Whight</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 1-0	ATT 340

FEBRUARY

SAT 3	REDBRIDGE <i>Bullard</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 1-0	ATT 83
SAT 10	WALTHAMSTOW <i>Ford, Hitter</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-0	ATT 373
TUES 13	BRIGHTLINGSEA REGENT <i>Mayhew, Barley</i>	A	7.45PM	LEAGUE	W 2-0	ATT 128
SAT 17	WROXHAM <i>Warren (2), Hitter</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-1	ATT 181
SAT 24	GRAYS ATHLETIC <i>Whight, Holland, Mayhew</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 3-2	ATT 299

MARCH

SAT 2	ENFIELD <i>Hasanally, Mayhew</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	W 2-1	ATT 132
SAT 9	HEYBRIDGE SWIFTS	H	3PM	LEAGUE	D 0-0	ATT 455
SAT 16	BRENTWOOD TOWN <i>Brown</i>	H	3PM	LEAGUE	W 1-0	ATT 302
SAT 23	LOWESTOFT TOWN	A	3PM	LEAGUE	L 2-0	ATT 971
TUE 26	LEISTON <i>Ottley-Gooch, Harrison</i>	A	7.45PM	SPC SF	W 2-1	
SAT 30	BURY TOWN <i>Mayhew, Barley (2)</i>	A	3PM	LEAGUE	D 3-3	ATT 1,285

APRIL

MON 1	IPSWICH WANDERERS <i>Hitter</i>	H	12.30PM	LEAGUE	D 1-1	ATT 513
SAT 13	WITHAM TOWN	H	3PM	LEAGUE		
TUE 16	NEEDHAM MARKET	A	7.45PM	SUFFOLK PREMIER CUP FINAL @ NEEDHAM MARKET		
SAT 20	GORLESTON	A	3PM	LEAGUE		
SAT 27	NEW SALAMIS	H	3PM	LEAGUE		

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PUBLICATION OF OWNERSHIP:

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EL MAGICO

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It can be easy to convince ourselves that our sport is meritocratic. That the talent always rises to the top, and failing is proof that a player isn't good enough, or wasn't professional enough to get there. But we ignore the role that geographical luck can have on a player's career. George Best was lucky to be born in Britain, so spotted by one of the biggest clubs in the world. He was unlucky - in footballing terms - to be born in Northern Ireland, so he couldn't show his ability at international level. But what if he had been born in a country with no footballing heritage? One away from the spotlight, before widespread coverage, and without access to a giant to develop him? What if his name was Jorge Gonzalez?



El Magico, as he was known, was born in El Salvador, not a country known for its football. He made his debut for ANTEL in the top flight at just 17, and quickly earned himself a move to the bigger Independiente, and then once more FAS, where he won three league titles. But Gonzalez wasn't just part of a team. He was the team. He developed the kind of ability that, in Europe, would have made him one of the hottest talents in the world. And he developed

the kind of discipline and lifestyle that would make Maradona blush. He was a superstar, and it wouldn't take long before he showed it.

Already a star of the national team, by 1982 he had led El Salvador to the brink of the World Cup. One game against a respectable Mexico was in their way, and for the first time *El Magico* would be in front of a significant television audience. He spent the evening trying flicks and tricks and generally being bulldozed by Mexican defenders who were aware of the danger he posed. But deep into the second period, he picked up the ball in his own half. He danced around one challenge, and then a second, and was off. Defenders chased him down, but couldn't get near him as he jinked past another. It would have been a goal of the century contender if it had been on a bigger stage and, crucially, if it had gone in. His shot from the edge of the box was saved, but too much to handle for the goalkeeper, as teammate Ever Hernandez scored the winner from the rebound.

The World Cup, at only 22, would be *El Magico's* zenith. El Salvador were hopeless, losing all three of the games. But he stood out once again. Like dropping Messi into the team from the Dog and Duck, and telling them to play Man City. They were hammered, but his quality was evident. Atletico Madrid and Cadiz made offers. He chose the latter, not because of their quality, but because of the freedom they would afford his lifestyle.

As prolific as he was on the pitch, Gonzalez was even more so off it. The king of Cadiz' nightlife, he would spend his nights in the clubs and his days rolling into training whenever he pleased. Still, his ability helped them into

the top flight, but wasn't enough to keep them there. Once relegated, a Diego Maradona-inspired Barcelona came calling.

El Magico would never link up with the Argentine. In a story befitting his career, he blew his chance on a pre-season tour of America. When the rest of the squad evacuated the hotel for a fire alarm, he remained in his room with his date. When asked why, he replied that 'I never leave things half done.'

He returned to Cadiz, but a change of manager meant that it wasn't the place for him. He was loaned out to Valladolid, who tried to instill some discipline into him. It didn't work, and Cadiz brought him back. He was a hero, and his antics only fed into his legend.

The club hired a member of staff whose sole job was to wake Gonzalez up every morning, which just meant that he had an excuse to party harder. In one match against Atletico, he fell asleep standing up waiting for a corner to be delivered. In another against

Barcelona, he had partied so hard he missed the first half. Still, he came on for the second, and scored two goals, setting up a third, and winning the match. Tests later showed that he played whilst still drunk.

By 1991, his legs were beginning to fail him, and he left his adopted home to head back to El Salvador. He saw out his playing days at FAS, in a haze of parties and alcohol.

It's very easy to point to *El Magico* as a cautionary tale of lost potential, and undoubtedly his career could have reached far greater heights. But, when Maradona was told by a Neapolitan journalist that he was better than Pele, the Argentinian great replied that 'there is a player even better than Pele and I. His name is Jorge Gonzalez.' When the journalist asked who that was, he added 'go and find out, ignorant man'. Which, I think, is pretty high praise indeed.

Enjoy the game.



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MATCHDAY SQUADS

Isthmian League North
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Felixstowe & Walton Utd FC

Manager: Stuart Boardley

Assistant Manager: Andy Crump

■ □ □	Jack Ainsley
■ □ □	Stuart Ainsley
■ □ □	Noel Aitkens
■ □ □	Henry Barley
■ □ □	Callum Bennett
■ □ □	Joshua Blunkell (GK)
■ □ □	Zak Brown
■ □ □	Tom Bullard
■ □ □	Kyran Clements
■ □ □	Sam Ford
■ □ □	Ben Fowkes
■ □ □	Callum Harrison
■ □ □	Andre Hasanally
■ □ □	Josh Hitter
■ □ □	Billy Holland (C)
■ □ □	Lamell Howell
■ □ □	Josh Mayhew
■ □ □	Seth O'Neill
■ □ □	Leon Ottley-Gooch
■ □ □	Charlie Warren
■ □ □	Joe Whight

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Assistant Manager: Mark Hawkes

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■ □ □	Ollie Bell
■ □ □	Ryan Dear (C)
■ □ □	Rowan Dorling
■ □ □	Harry Fairs
■ □ □	Luke Ige
■ □ □	Deese Kasinga-Madia
■ □ □	Freddie King
■ □ □	Anton Matthews
■ □ □	Archie McFadden
■ □ □	Kamani McFarlane
■ □ □	Munashe Mharapara
■ □ □	Shakeel Morris
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