



Everton's first visitors to Goodison Park in the Premier League were Sheffield Wednesday in August 1992 and since that visit Everton have played host to 11 teams on the opening day of the campaign. The last visitors to Goodison for the first game of the season were Manchester United on the evening that Robin Van Persie made his United debut.

Manchester United have visited Goodison Park for the opening fixture of a Premier League campaign more often than any other team with three appearances, whilst this seasons visitors Watford will join Aston Villa and Arsenal in making their second appearance as first day visitors. The last newly promoted club to open the season at Goodison Park were QPR in 2011, joining Watford and Palace as Goodison's first Premier League guests, following promotion.



Everton's Premier League record in opening day matches at Goodison is mixed to say the least as they have won only four of the fifteen played whilst losing six and drawing five.

The last occasion that Everton hosted Watford on the opening day of the season occurred on 19 August 2006, when the newly promoted Hornets made their bow in the Premier League. Watford had also made their First Division bow against Everton on 28 August 1982 but on that occasion it was on their home turf at Vicarage Road. Everton lost the game by two goals without reply as Graham Taylor's side sealed their first top-flight points courtesy of goals by Northern

Ireland's World Cup hero Gerry Armstrong and his fellow countryman, Pat Rice.



Watford: Sherwood; Rice, Rostron, Blissett, Bolton; Jackett, Callaghan (Taylor), Armstrong, Jenkins; Lohman, Barnes

Everton: Southall; Borrows, Bailey; Higgins, Wright, Heath; McMahon (Richardson), Johnson, Sharp, King, Sheedy



On the Eve of the 2006-07 season Phil Neville gave an exclusive interview to Dominic King for the Liverpool Echo entitled "It's down to us":-

PHIL NEVILLE raised the stakes on the eve of the new Premiership campaign when he admitted "there can be no excuses" if Everton fluff their lines this year. The Blues get back to business tomorrow when Watford visit Goodison Park and Neville has been impatiently counting down the days until the big kick-off. Fresh in his memory are the disappointments of last season, when a wretched start ruined hopes of securing a place in Europe and - for a short spell - left Everton frantically scrapping to keep their heads above water. But as David Moyes has strengthened his squad during the summer and there has been nothing to distract focus, Neville knows there is a growing expectation among supporters for the players to deliver success - and that means qualifying for the UEFA Cup. "We've had a settled pre-season," Neville agreed. "We have got a

settled squad - probably the strongest squad that Everton have had for a number of years, so there is no excuse for us now.

"As I had only just joined the club, it didn't really sink in until Christmas the effect that the start had on us because I was still settling in during that period. But in looking back, the only thing you could say it was relegation form. "To pull ourselves out of the mire like we did was a great achievement but we should look back at last season as a disappointment. When you look at the players we have got, we should have been kicking on and got into the UEFA Cup. That's our aim now." In the likely absence of David Weir from tomorrow's starting line-up - he is still feeling a tightness in his groin - Neville will lead Everton out. But if they are to start the season with a win, the 29-year-old suggests every player will need a captain's frame of mind. "It's a great honour that I've been named vice captain to Davie," said Neville. "He will always be captain when he is on the pitch. He is captain of the club as well. But this season we need 11 captains, 18 captains. We need everyone to be a captain this year. "We are going to need 11 leaders out there, not just one." Everton have yet to register an opening day victory during Moyes' reign but are hot favourites to end that hoodoo against Watford.

"By no stretch of the imagination will this be an easy game," said Neville. "Watford deservedly came up through the play-offs last year. They play a direct type of football and will want to prove a point. "They will want to show that they can stay in the Premiership and sometimes when you play without fear, you play your best, so it is up to us to produce. It should be a great afternoon."

*David Prentice reviewed the 2006 summer transfer policy at Goodison in his article: *BUY in haste, repent at leisure*. Everton were once experts in the perilous art of purchasing a player on the eve of a brand new season. A little midfielder called Mike Milligan recruited from Oldham and asked to become a new Peter Reid, was the shining example. And after that failed experiment, Daniel Amokachi, Iain Durrant and Tony Thomas all bore the hallmark of early-season desperation. Which is why Evertonians should be celebrating this summer's transfer policy. A pacy striker, a goalkeeper with authority and a young centre-half were all glaring requirements needed to address last season's shortcomings. And they were all enlisted before the players' pre-season tans had even started to fade. Andrew Johnson, Tim Howard and Joleon Lescott all feel like part of a considered recruitment policy, rather than last-ditch bids to shove square pegs into round holes.*

Which is why Everton can look forward to 2006 - 07 with optimism. Of course there will always be if only's. If David Moyes had a Fairy Godmother (or Blue Bill a rich sugar daddy) he'd ask her to conjure up a central midfielder with stature and snap, preferably young and with the ability to pass precisely. In fact, a photo-fit of the player he very nearly captured this time last year, now showing those qualities across the park.

The lack of a player like Momo Sissoko means Everton's squad still looks better equipped for the 4-5-1 of two seasons ago, than 4-4-2. But the appalling goals return of 12 months ago means that Blues fans want more than 1-0 wins to celebrate, so 4-5-1 won't be contemplated . . . yet.

The pairing of James Beattie and Andrew Johnson, with Tim Cahill and Leon Osman taking advantage of the attention defenders will give them, should result in more goal-filled afternoons. The fixture list hasn't been kind, with Watford cast as a must-win match already with trips to Blackburn and the White Hart Lane graveyard to follow, then a derby. But wasn't it the same two years ago - with Crystal Palace a second match of the season six-pointer? Everton may not repeat their heroics of 2004-05, but they can improve on last season's shot-shy fare. And that's something to look forward to.

Everton got off to just the start they wanted as they managed to overcome Watford but as Dominic King reported for the Echo, it hadn't been plain sailing.

WHILE a stadium announcer with the vision of Mr Magoo failed to spot it, just before 3.15pm on Saturday afternoon, every Evertonian crammed into Goodison Park got visual confirmation of what they had suspected all summer. On an afternoon when three points were more important than the performance, it was inexplicable that a buffoon in the stands could miss one of the most significant moments in recent club history. However, if proof were needed that the £8.6m spent to bring Andrew Johnson to Merseyside was money well spent, it came by the bucket load against Watford, during an energetic, enthusiastic performance that was capped perfectly by a debut goal.



Some will quibble that Johnson needed a deflection to break his duck, while a certain individual thought Lee Carsley hit the net, but what's the problem? Now he is off the mark, Johnson will have the confidence to hopefully get plenty more in a Blue shirt. "Obviously the most important thing was getting three points for the team," said Johnson. "But I had been carrying a thing on my shoulders about getting the first goal and I got it, so I'm delighted." "It was a very tough game. Watford are a very hard working team who made it tough for us and missed some chances. But having said that, we hit the crossbar and the post, so if they had gone in, we would have won it comfortably." Quite right. There were some long faces afterwards, a grumbling few disappointed that Watford were

not buried under an avalanche of goals. They rightly argued that Everton's play lacked pizzazz and the newly-promoted side made things difficult. But having won just four times on the opening day of the season in the past 17 years, the fact Everton have three points to their credit already bodes well. What's more, there will be times when they play better and get nothing for their efforts.

Many people may have viewed the fixture as a 'gimme' given that Watford came up through the play-offs and have a squad that lacks star names. But they were rough, tough and wanted to send out a statement, never allowing Everton a moment's piece.

Yet with better fortune, Johnson's goal and Mikel Arteta's fortuitous late penalty would have been added to. Arteta was desperately unlucky to see a free-kick cannon off the crossbar and Tim Cahill deserved better than to head against an upright.

Had either of those opportunities gone in before the break, chances are Everton would have sauntered to victory. No matter. As things stand, a 100 per cent start to proceedings gives everyone reason for optimism. "There is a long season ahead of everyone but this is a time to dare to dream and our focus is very much on bringing success to Goodison Park," said David Moyes. "That's what I want, that's what the players want and that's what [the supporters] want.

"Everyone connected with this football club knows all about the great tradition here and we all want to create some history of our own. I have every confidence in the squad here and it is my burning desire to do the very best for Everton."

In signing Johnson, Moyes has certainly brought someone to the club out of the top draw. One of the weekend's star performers, he will add a significant dimension to the Blues' play in the next 37 games.



Laboured and lethargic at times last year, Everton have missed raw pace up front since Tomasz Radzinski was sold to Fulham, but Johnson will correct that. What's more, he clearly has an eye for goal. The way he linked with James Beattie was encouraging and it was fitting that the best move of the match yielded the game's opening goal and the one Blues have spent all summer dreaming about. Moyes may have been barking at Phil Neville to play a sensible ball inside to Simon Davies, but the skipper opted to go long to Beattie and his cushioned header landed at Johnson's feet. Back and forth the ball went

between the front two at speed until Johnson had chance to gallop through on goal.

Once in the clear, there was little doubt that the outcome would end in a goal and so it proved, his effort nestling in the Park End net. Unfortunately, the anticipated flurry of goals didn't arrive but there could be few complaints at the final outcome and there is all the more reason to be satisfied with the final outcome when you think back to last season.

An opening day defeat against Manchester United was the precursor to an abominable run and Everton didn't manage to record a victory at home until Middlesbrough visited on November 6. So while Saturday's display emphasises the fact that there is still room for improvement, there certainly shouldn't be any doom and gloom. Aside from Johnson, a few others caught the eye.

Arteta was again exquisite, his deliveries from the flank causing trouble and his execution of a dead ball often leading to havoc in the danger area. Johnson and Beattie will thrive on such service. The ever dependable Lee Carsley covered acres to protect the defence, while Simon Davies was neat and tidy. With a bit more confidence and a run in the team, he will make an impact this year.

At the back, Alan Stubbs ensured a rare Joseph Yobo off-day did not prove to be costly, launching himself into tackles, jumping for headers and barking orders at anyone within his vicinity. He more than vindicated Moyes' decision to start him. If Everton are to maintain the winning habit, his lion-hearted display will need to be mimicked at Ewood Park and White Hart Lane in the next seven days. It is a tough start to the season, but not impossible. For the time being, it is onwards and upwards.

EVERTON (4-1-3-2): Howard; Neville, Stubbs, Yobo, Valente (Lescott 49); Carsley; Davies (McFadden 74), Cahill, Arteta; Johnson, Beattie (Anichebe 74). Subs: Wright, Kilbane.

BOOKINGS: Stubbs and Beattie (both unsporting behaviour).

WATFORD (4-4-2): Foster; Dooley, Shittu, Mariappa (DeMerit 46), Powell; Chambers (Bouazza 46), Francis, Mahon, Young; Henderson (Priskin 79), King. Subs: Spring, Lee.

BOOKINGS: Shittu and Francis (both fouls).

Referee: Peter Walton (Northamptonshire). **ATT:** 39,691

The following season Everton once again opened their Premier League campaign at Goodison Park; with Paul Jewell's Wigan Athletic team the opponents.



THE buzz among Evertonians walking up to Goodison for Saturday's season opener was of the millions David Moyes is ready to splash out in the transfer market. But as they later strolled gleefully home having witnessed a winning start for their team, the supporters' talk was instead of the current Everton player whose summer signing will have more influence on future success than any new arrival. Make no mistake, the five-year contract agreed with Mikel Arteta could well prove the smartest piece of business of any Premier League side during this transfer window. The Spaniard has long since been taken into the bosom of the Gwladys Street faithful following his arrival, initially on loan, from Real Sociedad in 2005, his consistently impressive performances drawing comparisons with the midfield schemers of Everton past. His displays have also caught the attention back home in Spain, with both Real Zaragoza and Atletico Madrid prepared to tempt Arteta into a La Liga return over the summer. Such approaches were rebuffed, and their loss will be Everton's gain.

No longer distracted by debate concerning his future, and with the incentive of a possible berth in the European Championships next summer with Spain, everything is now in place for Arteta to take his game on to the next level. Arteta's outstanding showing in the weekend win over Wigan Athletic, a continuation of his fine pre-season, suggests the Spaniard acknowledges that time has arrived. Just ask Kevin Kilbane, handed the onerous task of marking his former team-mate as a temporary left-back following last week's departure to Goodison of Leighton Baines.

"Can Mikel become one of the best players in the Premier League? I think so," says Kilbane, who endured a tortuous afternoon at the hands of Arteta. "He has the means to do that. "He flits and flirts and goes all over the place, and he is very hard to pick up. "He has all the attributes and is not restricted to one position. He can play anywhere across the midfield and his creativity and ability with a dead ball situation are second to none. "It has been a bit disappointing from his point of view not to have made the Spanish team because he is certainly good enough. It is a European Championship year, so he will be trying his best to get in the Spanish side. "When he first came to Everton, he was used to being in the middle. But actually being out there on the wings has improved him. He has a bit more time there and he will create chances for whoever is playing up front for Everton. "On the way up here, I thought we'd have a chance but Mikel is the kind of player who can unlock doors." For once,

it wasn't Arteta who unlocked the doors that allowed Leon Osman and Victor Anichebe to score the goals that ensured victory in Moyes's 200th league game in charge on Saturday.

But the Spaniard was the beating heart of just about every other Everton attacking foray on an afternoon when the home team clinched a three points Arteta's contribution alone merited. One moment on the half-hour particularly showcased his talents, Arteta's dancing feet allowing him to skip down the right beyond Kilbane, Caleb Folan and Denny Landzaat before being halted by Titus Bramble. The crowd screamed penalty, but referee Mark Clattenberg's assessment it was a fair tackle by the Wigan centre-back was later backed by Moyes.

The danger, of course, is Everton becoming too reliant on the Spaniard, a point Moyes readily concedes and will look to address by bringing in another creative midfielder – Manuel Fernandes remains the priority – within the next fortnight. None of the manager's new signings were in the starting line-up against Wigan as Moyes kept faith in the players who secured a top-six finish last season, meaning Joleon Lescott began the season still in the left-back berth given the absence of Baines.

After 26 utterly forgettable minutes, Osman struck the first goal of Everton's season in unlikely fashion Tony Hibbert's cross from the right wasn't dealt with by the perennially hopeless Bramble and Osman, the smallest player on the pitch, looped a header from 15 yards out that somehow dropped in over Chris Kirkland, despite the goalkeeper standing only a few steps away from his goalline. For Osman, the goal was the ideal marker given the competition for places Moyes is attempting to encourage across midfield this season.

Arteta struck a free-kick wide before Andrew Johnson was denied first by a decent stop from Kirkland and then a fine block from the impressive Wigan centre-back Andreas Granqvist. With former Everton target Jason Koumas catching the eye on the left of Wigan's midfield, the home team didn't have it all their own way and the always dangerous Emile Heskey was within inches of equalising from a powerful drive that flashed inches wide.

An alert Granqvist spared the hapless Kirkland's blushes on the hour by clearing Osman's effort off the line after the keeper twice failed to deal with an aerial threat under pressure from Anichebe following Arteta's deep free-kick. Injuries to Tim Cahill and James Vaughan, the departure of James Beattie and the failure so far to sign a new striker have handed Anichebe the opportunity to strengthen his claims for a more regular starting role.

The Nigerian striker will look to begin smoothing out the rough edges to his game without losing any of the power and physical presence that caused Wigan problems on Saturday. And Anichebe's cause certainly won't be harmed by him netting the game's decisive goal on 75 minutes, although the forward made

hard work of tapping in the lively Johnson's low cross from the left, the ball eventually crossing the line via Bramble's head and the crossbar. Steven Pienaar was finally available to make his debut in a 16-minute cameo as a late substitute, and was instantly involved in the build-up to Anichebe's goal.

Until then, Wigan had enjoyed the better of the second half without seriously troubling Howard. The Latics did pull a goal back 10 minutes from time with the best move of the match, Landzaat, Heskey and Scharner combining to present substitute Antoine Sibierski a tap-in. But a Scharner snapshot turned away spectacularly by Howard was the nearest the visitors came to earning a point they wouldn't have deserved.

Given the testing trips this week to Tottenham Hotspur and Reading, a second successive opening-day victory was an imperative for Moyes and his players. What wasn't necessary, however, was for Arteta to remind everyone of his importance to any Everton success this season.

Everton (4-4-2): Howard; Hibbert, Stubbs, Yobo, Lescott; Arteta, Carsley, Neville, Osman (Pienaar 74); Anichebe, Johnson. Subs: Ruddy, Valente, Jagielka, van der Meyde.

Wigan Athletic (4-4-2): Kirkland; Melchiot, Granqvist, Bramble, Kilbane; Valencia, Scharner, Landzaat, Koumas; Heskey, Folan (Sibierski 67). Subs: Pollitt, Hall, Aghahowa, Skoko.

Referee: Mark Clattenberg. **ATT:** 39,220.

Welcome first-day victories for the Toffees in 2006 and 2007, however, those victories have been fairly rare in the Premier League era. The previous victory at Goodison in an opening day game had come some ten years earlier when Newcastle United and Alan Shearer travelled to Goodison full of great expectations; however Shearer and company were overshadowed by Everton's Centre-Forward Duncan Ferguson and Goodison Park debutant Gary Speed, as Colin Malam of the Electronic Telegraph reported:



ALAN SHEARER was completely upstaged by Duncan Ferguson yesterday as Newcastle made an uncharacteristic losing start to a new season. Ferguson, who cost only £4 million, £11 million less than the world's most expensive player, was the catalyst of an Everton victory that asked more awkward questions about Newcastle's teamwork and tactics.

As in the Charity Shield a week earlier, last season's Premiership runners-up were made to look old-fashioned and disjointed. While their much-hyped, double-barrelled attack of Shearer and Les Ferdinand was muzzled easily enough by Everton, their own suspect defence was constantly pulled out of shape by Everton's clever use of a flexible 4-5-1 formation.

David Unsworth, with a penalty, and Gary Speed, the Merseysiders' £3.5 million signing from Leeds, scored the first-half goals that decided an unexceptional match. All Newcastle could be grateful for was that an increasingly dominant Everton took none of the many scoring chances they created after the interval.

At first glance Newcastle appeared to put out a formation more rational than the one that fared so disastrously against Manchester United at Wembley in the Charity Shield. In particular, the inclusion of Keith Gillespie seemed to offer greater width and balance on the right, not to mention a better service for Shearer and Ferdinand.

Perversely, however, Kevin Keegan, Newcastle's manager, chose to play Gillespie, a right-footed player, on the left and David Ginola on the right. Granted, Ginola is also right-footed, but at least he is used to playing on the left and has evolved a technique to deal with it.

The reshuffle cost Peter Beardsley a start against one of his old clubs. With Robert Lee chosen as David Batty's attacking partner in central midfield, Beardsley had to be satisfied with a place on the ' bench.

It was not a bad place to be, since Batty and Lee were swamped by Everton's use of a five-man midfield. From time to time, one of them, Graham Stuart, Andrei Kanchelskis or Speed, would break forward in support of the lone striker, Duncan Ferguson.

Shaka Hislop was the busier goalkeeper in the opening 20 minutes. He was not troubled unduly by Kanchelskis's shot from Unsworth's short free-kick or by Ferguson's header from Kanchelskis's flighted free-kick, but Everton would almost certainly have taken the lead had the Newcastle goalkeeper not got his hand to a teasing Kanchelskis cross before Speed met it with his head.

As Everton continued to buzz around Hislop's goal, Stuart headed an Andy Hinchcliffe centre wide before being refused a penalty for a heavy challenge on him by Philippe Albert. Stuart was also extremely unfortunate to have the ball

stolen off his toes at the last minute after he and Ferguson had ripped Newcastle open with some slick inter-passing.

Ferguson might have had a hat-trick, but he could not quite muster the finish each chance required.

Ferguson was a real handful for Newcastle's central defenders, Steve Howey and Albert. They found it so difficult to cope with his aerial power and strength on the turn that it was hardly a surprise when the tall, angular Scot won his side a penalty after 27 minutes.

Under pressure from Ferguson, Steve Watson under-hit a headed back pass to Hislop. When Ferguson then nipped in between the two Newcastle players, he was brought down clumsily by Watson in the ensuing tangle between the three of them. Unsworth took the kick and calmly sent Hislop the wrong way.

In all that time Newcastle had only once looked like scoring themselves. It was when Shearer and Albert went up together for a Batty free-kick, and a header floated over Neville Southall into the far corner. Newcastle's joy was cut short, however, by the referee's decision that Shearer had pushed a defender. Shearer went close again, after 43 minutes, when he steered a Ginola centre towards the top far corner with a twist of his neck muscles. This was Southall's 700th appearance for Everton, but he leapt to claw the ball away with all the agility of an enthusiastic teenager.

By then Everton had established the 2-0 lead they enjoyed at half-time. When Newcastle failed again to deal with Ferguson in the air, the tall striker flicked on a long clearance out of defence for Speed to celebrate his Premiership debut for his new club by beating Hislop to the ball and sweeping it first time into the net.

Everton made enough openings in the second half to have scored several more goals. Ferguson might have had a hat-trick, but he could not quite muster the finish each chance required.

Set free on the left by Stuart, Ferguson blazed the shot over the bar when a square pass would have found Stuart running unmarked in front of goal for the return. Then, when Kanchelskis picked him out with a low centre from the right, Ferguson's shot was too careful to beat Howey's intervention.

The striker's most convincing attempt was a standing header that directed a Speed centre a foot wide of the far post. Ferguson also miscued with a late attempt to chip Hislop.

Shearer, as if to remind us he was still on the field, very nearly succeeded in snatching a goal for Newcastle in the last five minutes. Each time, however, he found it impossible to beat the evergreen Southall. He saved Shearer's shot on

the turn comfortably enough, but really had to exert himself to beat away the free-kick the England striker tried to curl into the far top corner.

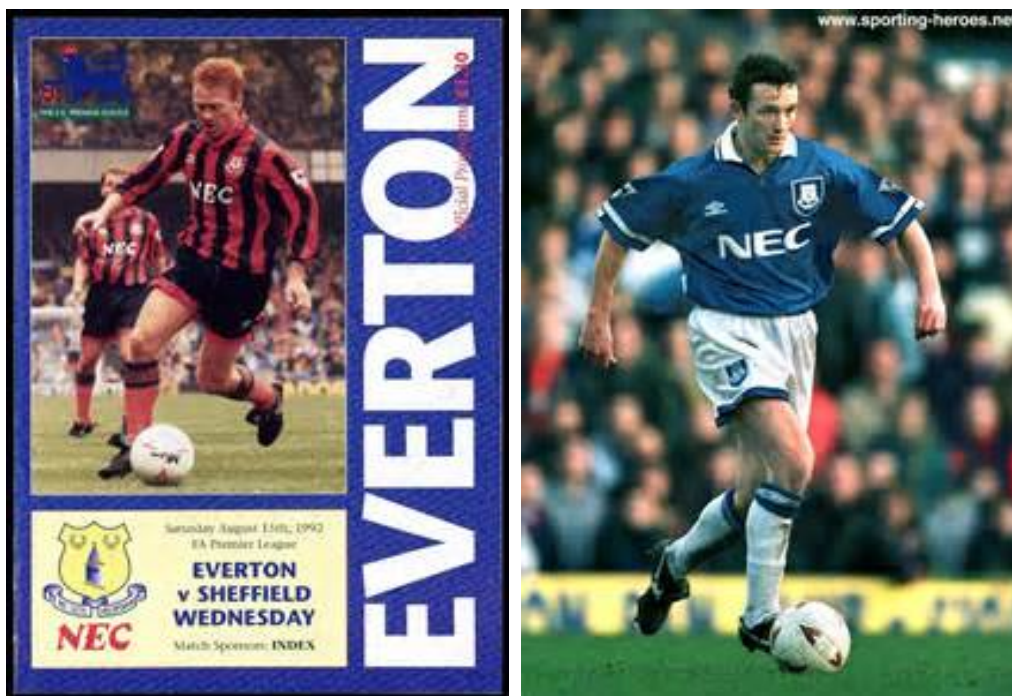
Everton: Southall; Barrett, Hinchcliffe; Unsworth, Watson (Short), Parkinson; Kanchelskis, Stuart, Ferguson, Ebbrell, Speed

Newcastle: Hislop; Watson, Beresford; Albert, Howey; Batty, Gillespie, Lee, Ginola (Beardsley); Ferdinand, Shearer

Referee: Mike Reed **Att:** 40,117

Everton's very first game in the Premier League took place on August 15 1992 and saw Trevor Francis's Sheffield Wednesday as the visitors. Barry Horne and Paul Rideout made their Goodison bows, indeed Barry Horne scored to earn Everton a point from the one-all draw with their Yorkshire rivals. Nigel Pearson had given Wednesday the lead after a quarter-of-an-hour but Horne secured a point for the Toffees with an equaliser just before half-time.

1First Premier League Programme 1992



Everton: Southall; Jackson, Hinchcliffe; Ebbrell, Watson, Ablett; Ward, Beardsley, Rideout, Horne (Warzycha), Beagrie

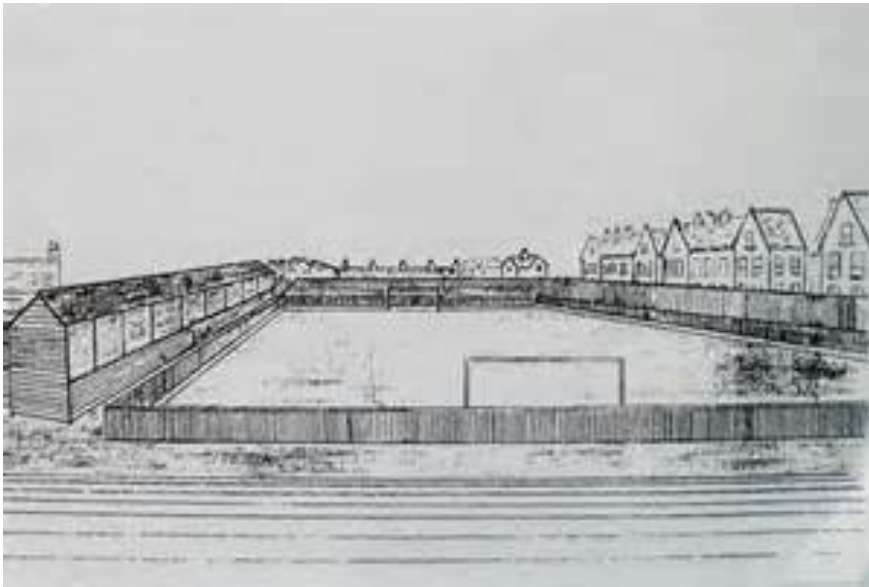
Sheffield Wednesday: Woods; Nilsson, King, Palmer, Pearson, Warhurst, Waddle (Bart-Williams), Hyde, Hirst (Watson), Williams, Worthington

Ref: Kelvin Morton **ATT:** 27,687



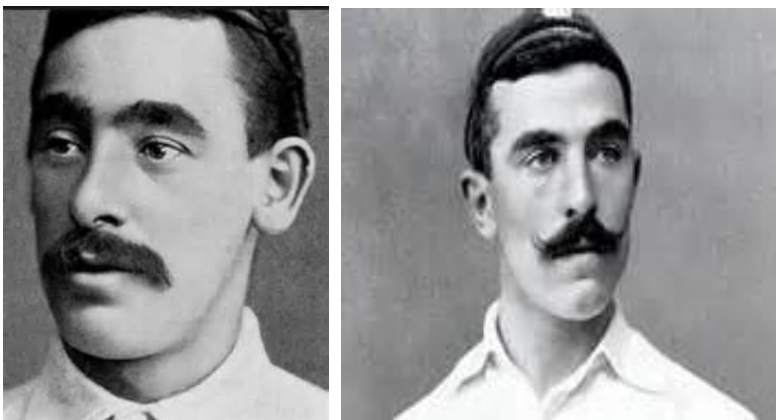
Triumphant Everton 1891

A century earlier Goodison Park had staged its first-ever opening day League fixture on 3 September 1892, when the latest recruits to the First Division Nottingham Forest became the first ever visitors for a league match. Goodison Park had witnessed its first ever match just two days earlier when Bolton were defeated by the Toffees by four goals to two in a friendly fixture to open the new ground and circa 10,000 fans were present to witness it.



2Goodison Park Sketch 1892

The Liverpool Football Echo reported that 14,000 spectators watched Everton play their first ever competitive game at their new ground on Goodison Road. The conditions were not favourable for those fans as the rain came down heavily and the wind was blowing half-a-gale. The first League goal scored at Goodison was scored by H Pike who managed to steer the ball into Everton's net from a corner-kick and gave the visitors the lead. Everton pressed for an equaliser for the rest of the first-half before Fred Geary scored what was described as a "beautiful goal", Geary, worming his way past first one player, then another, took the sphere with easy range, where he baffled Brown by making a feint to shoot one way, but placing in the opposite direction, getting through goal near the post



Alf Milward gave Everton the lead before the visitors equalised via Andrew Higgins five minutes from time, regrettably the match report doesn't describe either of those goals

Everton; Jardine, goal; Dewar and Howarth, backs; Boyle, Holt (captain), and Robertson, half-backs; Latta, Maxwell, Geary, Chadwick and Milward, forwards.

Notts Forest; Brown, goal; Earp and Scott, backs; Hamilton, A. Smith and McCracken, half-backs; McCallum, T. Smith, Higgins, Pike and McInnes, forwards.

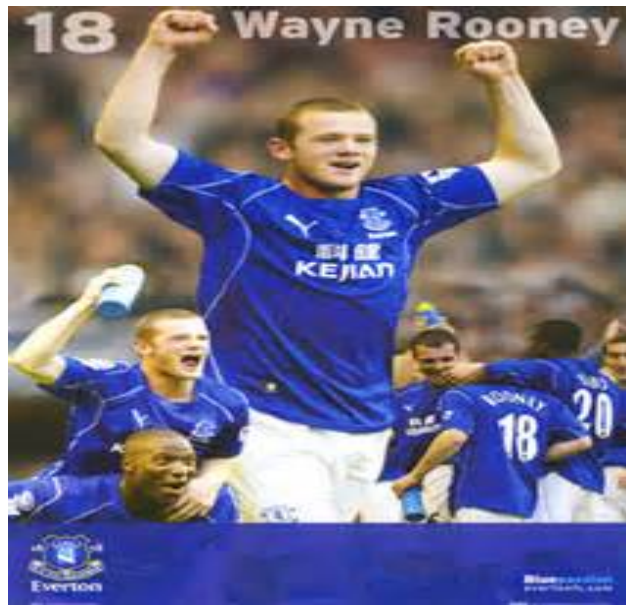
Referee: Mr. S. Ormerod

Ross Barkley was the last Everton player to make his Goodison Park bow on the opening day of the season when the Toffees faced QPR at Goodison in August 2011.



Three players made their bow in 2006 when Watford were the visitors as Tim Howard, Joleon Lescott and Andy Johnson stepped onto the Goodison Turf in Everton colours for the first time. Andy Johnson also managed to get on the scoresheet in that game the last Everton player to begin the season with a goalscoring debut in the opening day game at Goodison. In 2005 Phil Neville and Simon Davies made their Premier League bows against Manchester United although both had appeared at Goodison in the ill-fated clash with Villareal a few days prior. Marcus Bent made his debut against Arsenal in 2004.

When Tottenham were the opening day opponents at the start of David Moyes' first full season in charge, no less than four players tasted the Goodison Park atmosphere for the first time as Richard Wright, Rodrigo, Li Tie and a certain Wayne Rooney all made their debuts.



The BBC website reported the match which was played on Saturday, 17 August, 2002.

Everton's Tomasz Radzinski spared the embarrassment of new goalkeeper Richard Wright after the £3.5m new boy looked to have gifted Spurs an unlikely win. Wright's fumble saw substitute Les Ferdinand give Spurs a lead they barely deserved after Everton dominated much of an entertaining encounter. But Radzinski came to his, and Everton's, rescue to earn a point with a late equaliser.

David Moyes' Merseysiders looked on course for victory when Mark Pembroke gave them a deserved first half lead. But Spurs turned the game upside down when Matthew Etherington and Ferdinand - helped by Wright - put Glenn Hoddle's men in front. Radzinski then took charge with an excellent 81st minute leveller to ensure matters ended all square.

The day was memorable for Everton celebrating 100 years of top-flight football, and for the debut of talented teenager Wayne Rooney. He lasted 66 minutes before he was substituted, but gave glimpses of the talent that has won rave reviews.



Rooney - not 17 until October - became the second youngest first-team player in Everton history behind Joe Royle when boss Moyes handed him his debut. And he made an instant impact by troubling the Spurs defence and creating Pembridge's opener.

Spurs paraded summer signing Jamie Redknapp in midfield, while Everton had Wright and China international Li Tie on show.

The opening exchanges were predictably cautious, but Rooney demonstrated he was no respecter of reputations by clattering Teddy Sheringham at a corner.

But Everton moved into the ascendancy, and it was no surprise when they took the lead eight minutes before half-time as Pembridge crowned a sweeping move. Thomas Gravesen sent Radzinski away down the right, and when he found Rooney the youngster was aware enough to find Pembridge, who finished in style. Spurs suffered another blow in the dying seconds of the first half when defender Steve Carr, returning after a long injury absence, pulled a hamstring under persistent pressure from Rooney. He was replaced by Ben Thatcher at the start of the second half.

Rooney was a constant thorn in Spurs' side, and he forced a fine diving save out of Kasey Keller after 53 minutes with a powerful 20-yard drive. But this was to be the last bright moment for Everton in this period as Spurs turned the game on its head by scoring twice in 11 minutes to take the lead.

Spurs were level on 63 minutes as they worked the ball down the right before Redknapp laid the ball into space for youngster Etherington to lash high inside the near post and over Wright's head.



Everton boss Moyes then took off Rooney and opted for width in the shape of Swedish international Niclas Alexandersson. But Hoddle's men were in front after 74 minutes when Ferdinand - a scourge of Everton throughout his career - beat Wright with a drive the goalkeeper should have saved.

But just as Spurs thought they had snatched victory, Radzinski pounced after good work by Kevin Campbell to equalise.



Everton: Wright, Hibbert, Weir, Stubbs, Naysmith, Tie Li (Rodrigo 76), Gravesen, Pembridge, Radzinski (Unsworth 84), Campbell, Rooney (Alexandersson 67).

Subs Not Used: Simonsen, Linderoth. Booked: Pembridge.

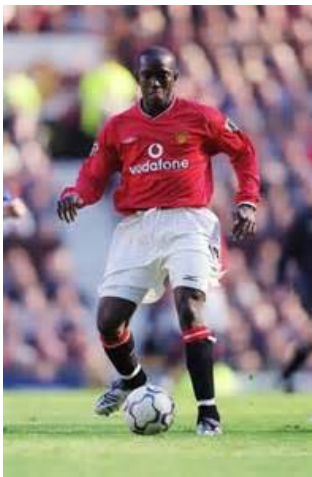
Tottenham: Keller, Gardner, Bunjevcevic, Richards, Carr (Thatcher 45), Taricco, Redknapp, Davies, Etherington, Sheringham (Ferdinand 72), Iversen (Acimovic 84).

Subs Not Used: Sullivan, Perry. Booked: Davies.

Attendance: 40,120 **Referee:** N Barry (N Lincolnshire).



Richard Gough made his Goodison bow against Manchester United (1-1) on Sunday, August 8, 1999. Dwight Yorke had given Manchester United the perfect start when he ran through to score after only seven minutes however an own goal from Jaap Stam four minutes from time secured a point for Everton in a highly competitive encounter at Goodison Park.



Everton: Gerrard, Ward, Watson, Gough, Weir, Barmby, Gemmill, Collins, Unsworth, Hutchison, Campbell. Subs: Ball, Pembridge, Cadamarteri, Phelan, Simonsen.

Man Utd: Bosnich, Neville, Berg, Stam, Irwin, Beckham, Keane, Scholes, Cole, Yorke, Solskjaer. Subs: Van Der Gouw, Sheringham, Butt, Curtis, Cruyff.

Referee: D Gallagher (Banbury)

John Collins, Marco Materazzi, Olivier Dacourt and Alec Cleland all made their debuts for Walter Smith's Everton in the opening day clash with Aston Villa (0-0). *Mr Wilkie awarded a penalty and Collins, making his debut after a £2.5m transfer from Monaco in July, stepped up to take it. Mark Bosnich seemed utterly unfazed while the impression given by Collins was that he was not going to score. So it was. He shot rather tamely to Bosnich's right and the goalkeeper dived on to the ball with solidity and certainty. It was going to take more than that to get past him.*



When Crystal Palace (1-2) visited in 1997 four of Howard Kendall's new boys made their debuts as John Oster, Gareth Farrelly, Tony Thomas and Slaven Bilic ran out at Goodison for the first time in the Premier League.





Times reporter Russell Kempson wrote: *On Saturday at Goodison Park, Attilio Lombardo, latterly of Juventus, presented himself for inspection with Crystal Palace. He is 31, smooth of pate, approaching the twilight of an illustrious career and joined Palace -- certainties for the Premiership drop, according to most pre-season pundits -- only a week ago. He had, if reports were to be believed, demanded a mansion, a maid and a butler to help to ease his transition from Serie A to Selhurst Park and perhaps soften the blow when Palace return from whence they came, the Nationwide League. He then, apparently, reconsidered, pledged his allegiance and concluded the £1.6 million deal -- minus the stately pile and servants. "That was the biggest load of cobblers I've ever heard," Steve Coppell, the Palace manager, said. "He's not a prima donna, he's not over here just to earn a few bob. He's a professional in every sense."*



Whilst Michael Staniforth for the Electronic Telegraph reported:

Everton had new signings Slaven Bilic, Gareth Farrelly, John Oster and Tony Thomas on show against Crystal Palace at Goodison Park this afternoon. And Palace had new Italian signing Attilio Lombardo and former Blackburn utility man Paul Warhurst making their Premiership debuts.

....Stuart had a goal disallowed after 21 minutes. He headed in from right under the bar after Bilic had nodded a corner on but his effort was rightly ruled out for offside...

...Attilio Lombardo marked his debut in English soccer with a goal after just 34 minutes against Everton at Goodison Park. The £1.6m signing from Juventus had managed only fleeting flashes of involvement in the game until that point. But he produced a piece of clinical finishing that had the travelling Palace fans, on their return to the top flight, dancing with joy. The balding Italian star cruised onto a pass from Paul Warhurst after Simon Rodger had fed the ball through, and neatly slid the ball under Neville Southall's body....

...Thomas went off injured at the break and was replaced by young Michael Branch, who joined Ferguson up front with Stuart switching to full-back...

...Everton were becoming increasingly desperate and threw on Nicky Barmby up front, taking off midfielder Claus Thomsen. It was Lombardo who created Palace's second goal when he raced clear into space on the left, having got in behind Stuart. When the red-haired striker-turned-defender did manage to catch the Italian, he felled him from behind for a clear penalty, which Bruce Dyer struck past Southall with a sure drive into the bottom corner....

...Duncan Ferguson got a consolation goal for Everton but by then it was too little, too late.



Everton Squad 94/95

Joe Parkinson and Vinny Samways made their Goodison debuts against Aston Villa (2-2) in 1994. A comment by an unnamed reporter who was and probably still is an Evertonian reported the following in assessing the game:

“Negative points were the defensive frailties already mentioned, combined with Nev's continued erraticisms (sic). On several occasions he came out to take crosses 15 yards from goal, or outside of the near post. He was lucky on one occasion in the first half when he was challenged for a ball on the penalty spot, was unable to catch but smothered the shot from the incoming player. This behaviour cost us the FA cup tie with Bolton last season and to be honest

should have cost us the Wimbledon game. And if a dozen season's experience of top flight football have not taught him the basics of goalkeeping, it is a little worrying.

Obviously that reporter would not have enjoyed the early part of that season and there were probably many others who thought that he had a point. But football being knee-deep in fickleness both in fortune and opinion; that fan as well as the majority of Evertonians would be waxing lyrical about the great Neville Southall at Wembley in May of the following year.



Everton: Southall 6, Jackson 6, Watson 6 (29. Parkinson 6), Unsworth 9, Ablett 7, Stuart 8, Samways 7, Ebbrell 7, Limpar 8, Cottee 6, Rideout 7

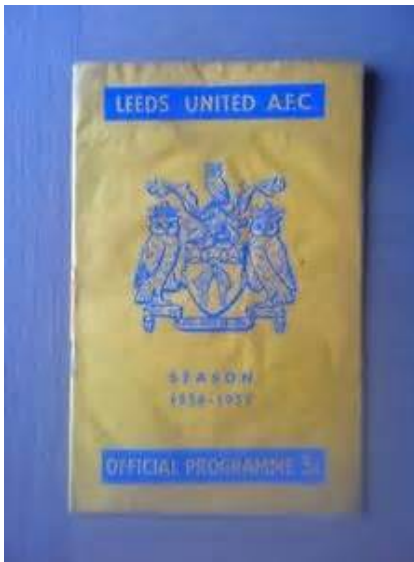
Aston Villa: Bosnich 8, Richardson 6, McGrath 8, Ehiogu 7, Staunton 6 (50. King 6) Houghton 6, Parker 7, Townsend 6, Yorke 7, Fashanu 8, Saunders 7

Subs not used: Kearton, Angell (Everton), Oakes, Atkinson (Villa)

Officiating Referee: Kelvin Morton (Bury St.Edmunds 8)

Linesmen: M. Fletcher (Smethwick), B. Lowe (Doncaster) Attendance: 35,544

David Prentice, Liverpool Echo cast his eye back on some less glorious days for the Blues in the opening day fixtures with the following being some of the low-lights with a smattering of better opening days for the Goodison outfit.



Everton 1956-7. Back (l to r): Moore, Lello, Tansley, Donnan, O'Neill, Jones, Payne, Rea. Front: Fielding, B.Harris, J.Harris, Farrell, Meyers, Eglington, Meeson.

August 18, 1956 LEEDS UNITED 5, EVERTON 1.

NEW Everton boss Ian Buchan used a cunning psychological ploy to undermine newly promoted Leeds United on their first day back in the big time for a decade.

“We’ll get off the team bus and jog the last two miles to Elland Road,” he barked. “They’ll be surprised by how super-fit we are.” They were surprised at how shattered Everton were – coasting to a 5-1 win. Buchan’s revolutionary methods saw Everton lose six of their opening seven games, and his spell as Blues boss ended after less than two years.



August 21, 1976 QUEENS PARK RANGERS 0, EVERTON 4

DAVE Sexton’s vibrant young Rangers side had missed out on the 1975-76 title by a point, heartbroken by Liverpool’s last gasp win at Wolves on the final day of the season. Billy Bingham’s mid-table strugglers started the new season at Loftus Road, where they had been beaten 5-0 that season. They even had Dave Jones sent off after 20 minutes. But sporting a smart new Umbro kit (with diamonds down the sleeves, no less) the 10-men sparkled. They won 4-0, George Wood saved a penalty and Rangers never recovered, slipping from runners-up to 14th in 12 months.

August 20, 1977 EVERTON 1, NOTTS FOREST 3



THE Toffees suffered a shock even before Brian Clough's team of unknowns arrived at Goodison. Local authorities slashed Everton's 55,000 plus capacity to 35,000 while essential building work was carried out. The Blues were stunned when a team which scraped promotion in third place the previous season ran riot.

August 25, 1984 EVERTON 1, SPURS 4



1984/85 was the most successful season in Everton's history . . . eventually. On day one, however, the sun shone, the FA Cup and Charity Shield were paraded around the ground to an expectant audience – and an acquiescent official even

awarded a soft penalty which Adrian Heath converted. Then Clive Allen woke up and showed some of the goalscoring form which would see him bag 49 goals two seasons later.

August 18, 1979 EVERTON 2, NORWICH 4



GORDON Lee hatched a master plan for the opening day of the 1979-80 season, use a pacy and mobile central defensive partnership of Billy Wright and Colin Todd against a Norwich team which hadn't won away for two years.



The only problem was that both were several inches short of six feet, while Justin Fashanu towered above them like, according to the Daily Post's colourful Horace Yates "an upstanding 18-year-old like a mountain peak standing over the rest of the range." He scored twice and Everton collapsed.



There you have it the vagaries of the opening day, very often the performance or even the result doesn't necessarily herald the dawn of a glorious new era or end the hopes of an entire season. However, like most supporters I like to see Everton FC get the points on the board as early as possible and hopefully that will be the case on the opening day of 2015.



Let's all hope we have more moments like this in 2015-16