

# Red-Faced at the Riverside

by Joe Young

The year was 2009, very much in the pre-Pozzo era. Malky Mackay was our manager and Danny Graham was the star player in what was, compared to today, a limited team. The only player to remain from the day's line up is Craig Cathcart. Who would have thought it?

It was one of my earliest away games; a brutal trip up north to Middlesbrough in the middle of October for my father's stag do. An entourage of about eight of us took the train up, had a few pints then went on for a glorious lunch at a Subway restaurant.

Our convoy reached the stadium, only for me to realise that I had idiotically left my bag, with the tickets in, in the Subway. That was one costly sandwich. My friend and I decided to run back whilst my dad waited outside. The clock was ticking – there were about fifteen minutes to kick off and we were completely bag- and ticket-less.

We began our journey into the heart of darkness (Middlesbrough is an ugly place), both enthroned with yellow scarves, and we ran into what seemed to be half of the population of Middlesbrough. After several cries of "You haven't lost yet!" and "The ground's that way fellas!" we began to make a game of it and counted the amount of jokes/insults thrown our way during the grim run back to Subway.

There were about twenty in total.

We reached the Subway, grabbed the bag and sprinted back to the ground, thankfully now running in the correct direction.

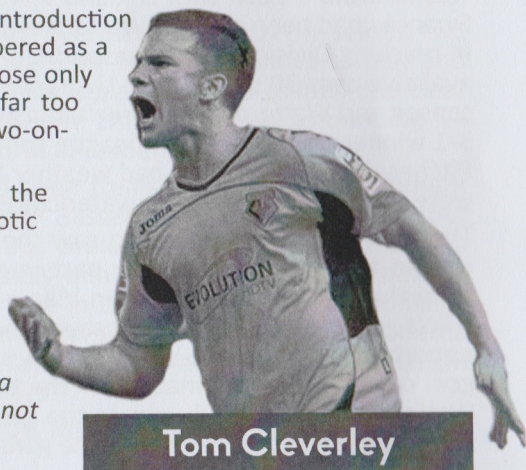
We encountered my father having a pleasant chat with some friendly young Middlesbrough fans outside the ground (they are not all bad), completely oblivious to the roasting we had just been on the end of.

Thankfully, we had the last laugh as Watford ran out one-nil winners thanks to a brilliant link up between loan star Tom Cleverley and Danny Graham. The away end goes into bedlam and I hold up my bag as a sheer sign of victory.

The day was only slightly blighted by our introduction to the useless Nathan Ellington, remembered as a permanent stain on Watford history, whose only contribution was to hold onto the ball far too long on a break and completely ruin a two-on-one situation.

Still, he can surely rest easy with the knowledge that he was not the most idiotic attendee at the Riverside that day.

*Joe Young has been a committed patron of Vicarage Road since a 0-0 draw with Aston Villa in the last season in the Premiership, where Watford finished in a very unspectacular 20th position. He has not looked back since.*



Tom Cleverley