Nomads Nostalgia

Share your cherished memories and stories of the Nomads! Current and former players, officials, and supporters are invited to contribute their anecdotes.

Please send your Nomads nostalgia to npfreestone@gmail.com

Des Bates: Goalkeeper, Nomads 1956-62 and 1968-71

I remember the time that Sid Crisp, the treasurer charged me an extra one shilling for a meal because the allowance was 7/6d and I had a mixed grill that was 8/6d and I think that was on the way back from playing Matlock Town.

We had been going through a torrid time of results and we were due to play Skegness Town who were flying high in the Central Alliance and Syd Smith the bucket and sponge man and sort of trainer (Sid was the local wet fish salesman around Anstey with a van and also played trumpet in a local band called 'The Melody Boys') and during the journey he told us that he was getting a couple of blokes he knew to come into the dressing room before the match to give us a pep talk and relax us before the game. Sure, enough, about 2 o'clock the two guys came in and started entertaining us with jokes and messing about in general. The guys were a new double act, Mike and Bernie Winters, who were appearing in a show on Skegness Pier that week. Syd knew them from his days doing his stuff with them in the clubs. They went on to become quite famous on the TV but unfortunately, it didn't do us any good because I remember we lost the game 6-0.

I injured my hand in a game and wasn't fit to play in the next game, but I went along to a game at Belper Town to watch and I can't remember the name of the reserve keeper (maybe Stanyon) who took my place. The bus started from Anstey Nook and picked the rest up outside the Pineapple Pub next to St Margarets bus Station. However, one player didn't turn up there, so we went with 10 men. There were no subs in them days so (I think it was a committee man Jack Holt) said 'Des you will have to play on the field we'll borrow you some boots and you will play outside right. I remember that we drew 1-1 and I scored the goal. The reserve goalie played OK so at training the next Tuesday I pronounced myself fit and was picked at outside right again. I turned this offer down, so I was selected in goal.

The training night at the Nomads was Thursday during the season starting at 6pm. Obviously it was mainly dark during the winter months, so we only had the clubhouse lights which shone halfway across the pitch. We started off and did about 3 laps at jogging pace to loosen up and then about10 laps running. After that we did stretching and bending and other exercises, then some of us played a five a side for about ½ hour had a cold shower (heating took about 2 hours to warm up) and then to the Coach & Horses pub in the Nook for a couple of pints of Pedigree. The committee would be there in the snug selecting the 3 teams for the Saturday games and arranging transport. Things improved when the committee decided to put 2 lights over the car park so that we could have the 5 a side there because the groundmen Les Matts, Sam Raynor and George Draper didn't like us to use their pitch and most of the winter it was unfit anyway. I can't remember anyone actually organised the training we just turned up and did it. The spasmodic managers we had Reg Warner Jack Holt and a few others, said a few words but nothing important phrases like 'Get stuck in' 'Take your chances' 'Keep a clean sheet' come to mind.

Goalkeepers did get no specialist training, all players did the same, so I learnt by experience. One thing I do remember is that the President John Walker the local butcher every Boxing Day match sent 3 homemade large pork pies and a couple bottles of vintage port for the players to have at half time instead of a cup of cold tea and half an orange (brought in by Ray Smart). The Committee then decided for the obvious reason that we should have the feast after the game rather than at half time. This was my first spell playing for the Nomads 1957-1962 but in my 2nd spell with the club 1968-71 ish things had improved, and we were a much more professional Club with a proper manager and trainers.

The above is how I remember things, but it is almost 70 years ago.

PLAYERS I PLAYED WITH 1956-62 and 1968 -71
As a keeper I had great affinity with my centre half and both full backs. Being the only truly amateur team in a semi-professional league we were under pressure most of the time.

FRANK MARSTON Right back
I played with Frank in both my spells with the Club and he was a typical old –fashioned full back, uncompromising, very tough tackler, and the opposing winger knew he was in for a very hard time. He didn't 'build from the back' as instructed he just hoofed the ball as far up-field as he could. In a match against Loughborough United I was running out to collect a centre and Frank running back to cover and we collided and I was out of action for nearly 6 weeks. That's how strong and tough he was. His brother ERNIE MARSTON was also a very good footballer playing left back and left half more cultured and faster than Frank and he was good enough to get a trial for the England Amateur International team.

FREDDIE FAIRWEATHER Left back.
In his earlier days he played professionally for Bradford Park Avenue in the 3rd Division North, and his positional play was brilliant, he always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. He wanted to send me up to Bradford for a trial during the summer months he said I would do well, but I never went as I was too busy playing cricket.

TONY PAYNE Full back
Tony was a very fast player and got us out of trouble many times with his speed. He also overlapped his winger and scored a few goals which is something full backs did not do in those days.

DENNIS FREER Centre half
He was probably the best centre half I ever played behind. He signed for the Nomads from Whitwick Colliery who played in the Birmingham League and also the County. Early in my second season with the Nomads he was carried off badly injured when he turned and tried to cover, and he never played football again.

GEORGE PRESTON Wing half and Centre half
He was an Anstey man and did well with the Nomads in the early 50's and played in the great Nomads Amateur Cup side in the early 1950's and went on to Rushden and Bedford Town and he received 3 County badges, Leicestershire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. He as only a slightly built lean, fit, man and I guess he was only about 5ft 10in max, but he was very good in the air. His son Geoff Preston followed me to goal at the Nomads along with Tony Ford, but size was against him.

BILLY WHITTAKER Versatile

Another player signed from Whitwick and was a very versatile player and played in many positions for the Nomads both in attack and defence.

GEOFF PAYNE Left Winger
Another player who played in the Nomads Amateur Cup side in the early 50's and was a regular County player for many seasons. He took most of the penalties we won, and I never saw him miss. His job took him away from Leicester to the London area and he played in the Isthmian League for Enfield for many seasons even in his forties.

DENNIS BEASLEY Centre Forward
Signed from Whitwick and he was the Nomads top goalscorer for the years he played at Cropston Road. Strong in the air and both footed and very fast. I crossed swords with Dennis many times later on the cricket field as he played at Rothley.

ALAN STAFFORD Left Winger
I played with Alan for Anstey Juniors, a very successful under 18 team in the Mutual League and he got in the Nomads first team just after me. He was only a very small guy but was very quick off the mark and a good crosser of the ball. At a very early age he suddenly stopped playing football, but I don't know why. What a waste of talent!

1968-71
In my time with the Nomads this was their most successful time when we finished in the top four of the East Midlands League to Roe Farm.

KEN COULTER Centre forward
Ken was one of the best players I ever played with I think he was on Aston Villa books as a youngster. I first played with him at Bentley Eng. F.C. and amazed how high he jumped for a smallish guy and a lot of his goals were headers.

PETER CROOK Right winger
Peter was a simplistic winger, very quick over ten yards and very accurate with his crosses right onto Ken's head. Another Bentley player.

JOHN INGLEBY Inside forward
John was a schoolteacher at New Parks School, and he could score and lay goals on for other people especially Ken. He only played for about a season and a half and turned up for one match and told us he was leaving, and I asked him why and he said he had just broke into Leicester Tigers 1st 15 and he was going to concentrate on his Rugby.

EDDIE WARDLE Inside forward
A Markfield lad joined young but was such a good player and creator of chances for others and was getting better with each game. We used to joke that the team needed two footballs in a game, one for Eddie and one for the rest of us.

GEZ FITZPATRICK Inside forward
Very good player could score and lay on goals for others. Left the Nomads and made a bigger name for himself at Friar Lane Old Boys F.C.

The other players in that team were Paul Jackson, Frank & Ernie Marsden, Henry Hoskins, Bill Berry, Ronnie Mayne.

I have the photo of that team which includes the manager Reg Cramp (former Nomads goalkeeper) Roger Sutherington (trainer)

In all the years I played for the Nomads I never won a football trophy, however we did win the Roland Black cup a couple of times, which was the village cup where all the churches and pubs and larger companies entered a team and was played in the evenings but that was for CRICKET!

Harry Staniforth

I first visited the ground in 1948 aged 6 with my father and many relatives. I believe that the ground was donated to the Nomads for one pound and by Miss Pratt from the shoe manufacturing family. There was 8 in the village at one time. She lived in the big house opposite the Co-Op. The early dressing room was previously a workroom at Pollards Box factory The Nomads name was suggested by a Maurice Wain who played cricket for Leicester Nomads. In the 1940's and early 50's the teams were picked by the Committee who met at the Coach and Horses on a Tuesday night. If you wanted to know if you were playing you had to look in the Coach and Horses or J.G. Walkers butchers on a Wednesday as the team sheets were placed in the appropriate windows.

A supporter from 1947 to the present and playing in the 60's as captain of the second team and odd forays with the first there are a lot of memories that I could share. Many of them that that are unusual. Like the time the nomads lost 5-0 at home and all of the goals were own goals and the time when in the fading evening light cars were lined up behind the top goal so a penalty shootout could take place. I remember well the time of the Amateur Cup when the Nomads played Hayes Athletic, and a large stand was erected behind the top goal. We also had star players such as Reg Warner who was a schoolboy International and became brother-in-Law of Frank McLintock.

It was in the early 60s and we were playing away to Gresley Colliery. They were in their heyday and on top form. This was the time when kick off times were brought back to 1-30 as there were no floodlights in those days. The problems began as the bus left as we only went with 10 men. No subs in those days. I was picked at centre half and came off working nights and only had 4 hours sleep coming off the night shift at a local factory. In the dressing room one of the committee men said he would play. Now Jack Holt was in his 40's and had not touched a football in over 20 years. So we lost the toss and kicked up the hill in the first half. The Gresley centre forward was one Mr Davies who I was told had been on Derby Counties books. I was reminded of Tommy Docherty's comments when asked of his opinion of George Best. His reply was that he saw more of Lord Lucan than George. I felt like that at half time when we went in 5 nil down and Davies had scored 4.

The second half we came back and the final score was 7-2. But as we were walking off it came over the tannoy that the Gresley committee had awarded the man of the match to the Anstey goalkeeper one John Saley who was playing in his first game for Anstey. And yes it could have been double figures.

Kieran Doody

Chesterfield (h) October 2022

I remember getting home and listening to the FA Cup draw on the radio in my brother's room. A few fixtures were announced before us but then we heard 'Anstey Nomads' and our ears pricked up. Once we heard that we'd be facing Chesterfield we both shouted out. We were a step 5 club at the time and

had had some incredible games in the FA Cup run already that year, notably for me when we beat Ilkeston away on penalties in the second round qualifying, but that was completely different.

I remember waking up the morning of the game, Saturday 15th October 2022, getting ready, grabbing my ticket and me and my brother walked down to one of our mate's houses where we were all going to meet. We all walked down to the ground and it was absolutely packed. We'd seen bit attendances there before but this was in the thousands. I remember getting in and our usual spot behind the near goal was taken so we had to settle for going down the far side and standing on the grass behind the other goal. We could barely see the game.

Despite the score, we were all still in such good spirits at full time, purely for the fact that we had just seen our little village club go up against a former league one side, in a televised match where we made a good name for ourselves. What a day!

Skegness (a) March 2023

Skegness away was the game which birthed the Nomads singing group. For a few weeks before this we had seen on social media that there was another lad who had a similar vision to us with flags and stickers, but we never knew who he was as his account was anonymous.

Skegness away, however, we finally bumped into each other as we both had our flags out, and we decided to properly organise a dedicated singing group. Since then, we'd all meet behind the near goal and make up songs on the spot. Now we are still behind that goal, years later, with flags, stickers, a purpose made group chat and a refined repertoire of songs which we all know by heart; and it all started at Skeggy away.

George Bryan-Dooher

Hereford away (Sept.2023):
It was the first season me and my girlfriend started attending Nomads games fully, we loved getting down to Cropston RD and backing the lads.
We were both excited for the FA cup draw as there were a few big sides in there and lo and behold we drawn Hereford! What a historic day this could be.
Matchday comes we wake up early and make our way to Cropston Rd to catch the coach, there's a real buzz amongst fans and players.
When we arrived in Hereford we made our way into the terrace and prepared ourselves for 90 minutes of backing the lads, that's exactly what we did.
Unfortunately Hereford came out 2-0 winners but we could leave the ground with smiles all round.
On the coach back all the players and fans were in party spirits with some players doing a bit of karaoke
What a brilliant day and a brilliant experience to see the Nomads playing a former League 1 side!!.