

THE GREATEST DECADE FOR HAIR by Tony Madden

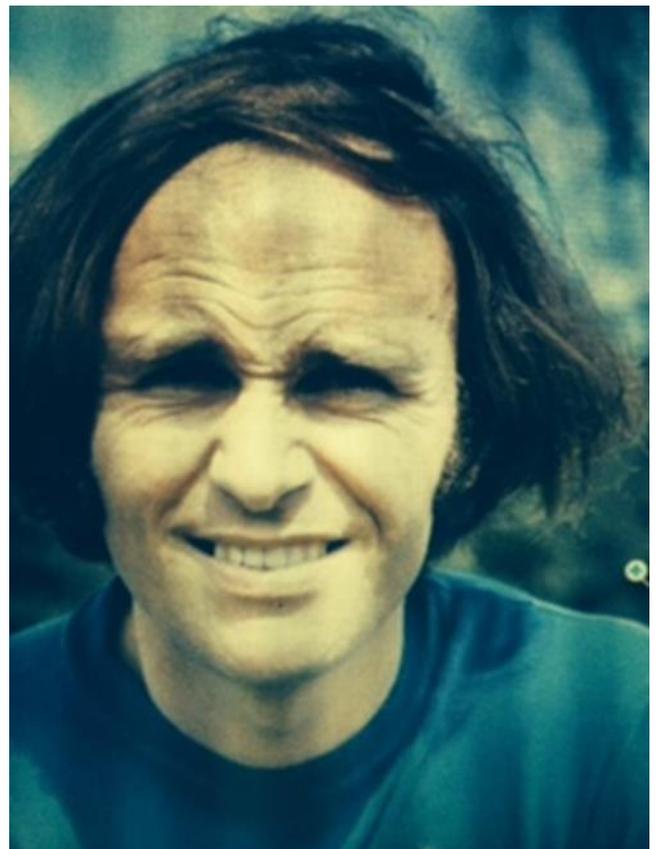
During my illustrious footballing career, spent in the highest quality arenas which the Hackney & Leyton and The Barnet Leagues could offer, I had the honour of playing against two heroes of the seventies. Two players who any student of the game will comprehend were rightly worshiped for their contribution to this unique era of the English game. John Dempsey and Ralph Coates were highly decorated players but unfortunately tragically advised by hairdressers of time. I can proudly say I've shared a pitch with both.



Bobby Charlton's comb over was probably the most famous of the decade but John and Ralph made his look amateurish by comparison. These men were the gods of bad hair in an era where it has to be said the competition for hideous hairstyles was ferocious.

As the 1960's decade drew to its end there were very few long haired coiffures in the George Best mould, most were still wearing the army issue short back and sides. It changed very suddenly; by the end of 1970 shoulder length hair and facial

fuzz were everywhere. Sideburns were in and added to the growing, and I mean growing, epidemic of hairiness. The follicly challenged were being cruelly exposed and in danger of being left out, as they were unable to grow the necessary barnet's. They had to fight back and they did; and none more so than the two princes Ralph and Johnny D...they weren't about to disappear without a contest. So long as the comb over was an option, and hair could be grown, then it could be styled!



As Chelsea won the Cup Winners Cup in 1971 and Spurs the League Cup in 1975 these men struck a blow for hairspray that we'd never forget! It didn't stop there either as by the mid-seventies icons such as Alfie Conn at Spurs were single

handily putting Gillette out of business. Men like Alfie with his wonderfully long and flowing locks, and with sideburns and moustache to match were unashamedly shaggy. The skinhead era was over and put temporarily into the dustbin of fashion.

Tinkie Winkie and Vidal Sassoon were delirious and distraught in equal measures as hair styles swung between the completely ridiculous to the utterly disgusting. There was no middle ground and no apparent shame; Alan Hudson at Chelsea and Alan Taylor at West Ham showed that lank greasy hair was acceptable and even enviable.

Move further into the decade and Kevin Keegan is credited with starting one more awful trend. He was the pin up of the football teeny boppers and almost overnight encouraged some of the most hideous images the seventies would ever see. It is argued that it was he who gave courage to men to go to go forth into new horror and then to suffer ridicule in later years that will never be forgotten or forgiven. Phil Thompson, Terry McDermott and Alan Sunderland were to hair fashion what Margaret Thatcher was to children's teeth and bones.

The perm now made women openly vomit into the hoods of nearby Parka's, whilst the men with greasy long locks had long since had grown men crying into their Bovril. These were dark times.

One player though was pure legend. He had always been a footballer ahead of his years and was to be yet another whose talent in the seventies who would go unrewarded at international level. However his was to be a different glory, for in the space of only a few years he transcended all hair fashions. Stand up the one, the only, Mr Charles George. Yes Charlie did it all.

He had finished the sixties as young 18 year old fresh off the North Bank sporting a true skinhead

haircut, but within 18 months he had transformed himself and shown just how beautiful long lank hair could be. Most would have stopped there but not Charlie. As the 1974/75 season began, and long before KK copied him, Charlie stepped out with the most hideous perm ever seen and if I'm not mistaken maybe the slightest tint of hair colouring.



I once interviewed him in person and he shared with me his view on these heady days.

'I was the first skinhead, I was the first really long haired player, and then I was the first permed player. If I played today I'd be the first bald player with glasses'!

Charlie we salute you. In decade where hair was hell; you were heaven.

Tony Madden

