

The Five Most Disappointing English Exports by Stuart Fuller

With the news that perennial bad boy Ravel Morrison has joined Lazio, we look back on those Englishmen who set foot on foreign soil as pioneers with the nation's hopes on their shoulders, only to return with nothing more than a sombrero, some cheap tequila and a strange rash.

No.5 – Anton Ferdinand

Some transfers will always end in tears. You don't need to be a footballing expert to see that. Take the case of young Anton joining Turkish club Antalyaspor. Ferdinand comes from a close-knit South London family. He came through the West Ham youth system and played over 130 games for the Hammers before he headed north to Sunderland. A couple of seasons at QPR where he became embroiled in the John Terry racially-aggravated public order trial before being released in the summer of 2013. After a brief loan period with Bursaspor in the Turkish Super League he joined rivals Antalyaspor. Thousands of miles from home with no knowledge of the language, what could go wrong? The Turks tore up his contract after just 3 games and 2 years left on it. He then headed to Thailand where he was unveiled as a new signing for Police United. He never played for the club, returning to England to play for Reading (twice) last season.

No.4 – Stan Collymore

Few people these will realise that Collymore actually played the game. That is unless you listen to his post-match rants on the radio where anyone who dares to have a different opinion will be challenged has not knowing what they are talking about as they have never played the game. But Collymore was once a good player. He was part of the Nottingham Forest team that looked like they would be a real threat to English football, scoring goals for fun. Forty one goals in sixty five games earned him England caps and a big money move to Liverpool. But it was when he left Liverpool, his off the field behaviour started to have an impact on performances. Handfuls of games for Fulham, Leicester City and Bradford City didn't bring any success so it was with some surprise that in January 2001 that he signed for Real Oviedo. Collymore's debut for Oviedo was as a second-half substitute away to Las Palmas on 4 February 2001. He was again brought on during the second half of his home debut a week later against Villarreal, but was then dropped by Coach Radomir Antić and warned to improve his fitness. He played just one more game for Oviedo, before he announced his retirement at the age of 30, on 7 March 2001, just five weeks after he had joined the Spanish club.

No.3 – Jermaine Pennant

The story that to me sums up all that is wrong with modern footballers is based on Pennant's very short spell overseas. In January 2011 Pennant's Porsche Turbo with his personal number plate was found abandoned at a railway station in Zaragoza with five months' worth of parking tickets. He was reported to have forgotten he owned the car after he returned to England from his year in Spain where he played twenty five times. His performances were average to say the least and there were no surprises when he returned back to England. His career has been full of moves – he is currently playing at Wigan Athletic, his twelfth club.

No.2 – Gary Charles

Another player who has had more than his fair share of brushes with the law during his time as a player. Charles was a promising youngster, breaking through at Nottingham Forest before moving to Derby County and Aston Villa. He even managed a couple of England caps, known as a mobile, attacking full-back. In 1999 Graeme Souness signed Charles to play for Benfica, and joining a growing band of British players in Lisbon including Scott Minto, Dean Saunders, Brian Deane, Michael Thomas, Mark Pembridge and Steve Harkness. Charles played a grand total of 4 times for

the Portuguese giants before leaving on the same plane as Souness. He joined West Ham, played 5 games before 3 more games at Birmingham City before retiring from the game aged 30 years old.

No.1 – Jonathan Woodgate

“#WTF” would have been the trending hashtag if Twitter would have been invented back in 2004. Woodgate was a promising youngster in the young Leeds side that reached the latter stages of the Champions League, although even at an early age he was very injury prone. A protracted court case where he was found guilty of affray didn't help his cause although he did move to Newcastle United in 2003. His stay on Tyneside was brief before Real Madrid came in and paid a jaw-dropping £13.4 million. The Bernabau faithful had to wait over a year before they got to see Woodgate due to injury before he made his debut in September 2005 against Athletic Bilbao. He marked the game in style, scoring an own-goal before being sent off. His Real career lasted 8 more games in two more years before he was sold to Spurs for £8m in 2008. The newspaper Marca held a poll in 2007 that saw Woodgate voted the worst ever signing of the 21st century with over 37% of the vote.