

Dedication

To my wife Yvonne and my daughters Alison,
Suzanne and Fiona for their love, patience,
understanding and support through many
many years.



Jim Smith

The Autobiography

IT'S ONLY A GAME

Jim Smith with Bob Cass

Mike
A 'gem' for your local
Studies collection... what ever
happened to Des Kelly ???
Regards
Cloran.



André Deutsch

injured and things got worse when Jimmy Calderwood slipped in the toilet before the game and I had to give a young player called Mark Dennis his first-team debut. I went into Bondy's office after the match and he had the champagne out. He was naturally happy and very hospitable. 'Unlucky, Jim, but you had a few problems,' he said as we shook hands. The next day the papers attributed some comments to Bond, that called us a disgrace and accused us of being unprofessional. I remember looking for the date of the return match at St Andrews and thinking, 'Right pal, wait until we get you at our place.' Revenge was indeed sweet when we hammered them by a similar score. Later after he moved to Burnley I bought Billy Hamilton from him for Oxford United for £80,000. He told me, 'Look he can't play - but he'll get you twenty goals a season.' I thought if he got me twenty goals I wouldn't be worried whether he could play or not - and he did.

But a lot of water had passed under the bridge between that time and those early days at Colchester. I have great memories of the people I worked with and the characters I met - like the goalkeeper who was half-blind. I found out about him one night when I was watching a reserve-team game and the club doctor Peter Snell turned up to tell me they had slipped over the medical for Des Kelly, a 'keeper we had signed on a free transfer from Norwich City. 'He's blind in one eye,' said the doc. I was more than a little surprised and resolved to sort out the problem as soon as possible. But the situation became more acute when I was forced to put Des in the side. We had a very good young 'keeper at the time called Barry Smith but unfortunately he picked up a serious wrist injury in training on the day before we were due to play at Bradford City and had to go to hospital. I called Des over and told him to get his kit because he would be playing at Bradford if young Smith couldn't make it. Des was overcome with excitement: 'Oh Bejassus, boss - if God's kind we'll be all right,' he said, shaking my hand until it almost came off. Poor

Barry didn't play and in fact he never played again. Des, who I gathered by now was a devout Roman Catholic, doused himself with holy water before the match, went out and had a nightmare. An ex-goalkeeper team-mate of mine called John Kennedy was scouting for Lincoln City at the game and he called me the next day and pleaded: 'Jim, you have to get rid of that 'keeper or you'll be in serious trouble.' That was the first and only time Des played - we signed a lad from Lincoln on John's recommendation called John McNally and he did well for us.

Apart from a spell halfway through the season when we lost six games out of eight before getting the show back on the road, things could not have gone better in that first full season at Colchester. Joe Hooley had joined us as coach but he left after a short while and I brought in Bobby Roberts, who came from Coventry City, to replace him. Bobby did a tremendous job and it's no exaggeration to say that some of the football we played as a team was as good as any club's I have ever been connected with. It might not have been typical of the fare in the Fourth Division but there was no place for kick-and-rush tactics in my promotion plan. Friday evening under the lights at Colchester was certainly a good place to watch football.

The promotion excitement and anticipation grew as we headed towards the final weeks of the season. We went to Lincoln on a Wednesday night towards the end of March and won 1-0 which pleased me no end for obvious reasons. It also pleased Svarc who scored the goal and Ray Harford who had both been team-mates of mine at Sincil Bank. After the game we went straight to Lilleshall to prepare for Saturday's match at Workington. Lilleshall can be a bit of a morgue at times so the next night I decided to take the lads out for a bit of a knees-up at one of the local pubs. I have to say we all ended up very merry and not in the kind of state players should be in two days before a match. But we still stuffed Workington 4-1 to bring that promotion prize ever closer.