



Les Briley

Lambeth-born Les enjoyed associate schoolboy spells on the books of both Crystal Palace and Millwall but signed professional forms at Chelsea – where he was immediately sidelined for a year with a back injury. After making a full recovery he spent three years at Stamford Bridge chiefly working under Dario Gradi and for much of that time in the Blues reserves.

In April 1976 the desire for first-team football took Les to Hereford United, where he became a regular in the side that won promotion to Division Two and he remained at Edgar Street despite immediate relegation the following season. But with the Bulls fighting to avoid a double drop into the Fourth Division in 1978, Briley volunteered himself for a spell in the Football League basement anyway by rejoining his mentor Gradi, this time at Wimbledon, although there was late interest from Colchester United.

Money was at a premium at the SW19 club, but Gradi managed to loosen the purse strings of Dons chairman Ron Noades to pay a club-record fee of £16,000 for the midfielder. Les soon made any doubters forget the cost however,

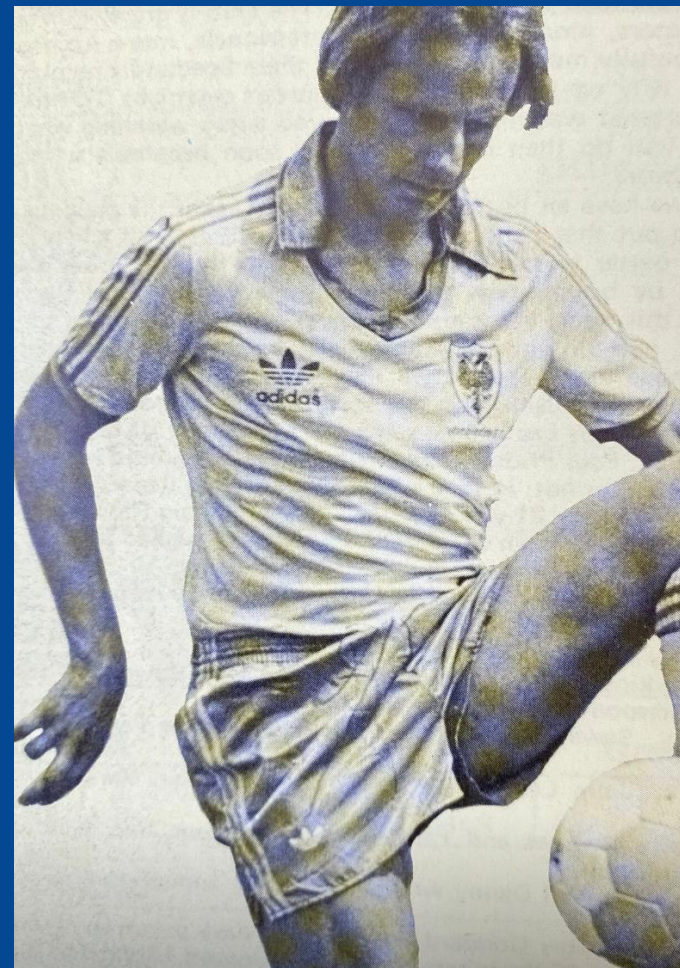
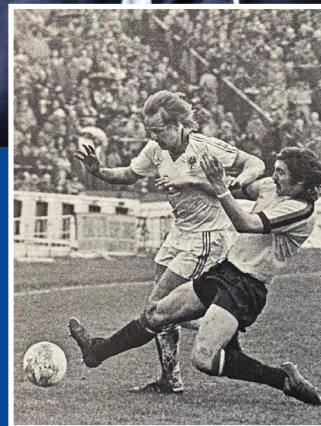


with a series of commanding displays that helped his new club finish their first Football League season in 13th place. Briley was made captain for the start of an eagerly-anticipated 1978/79 campaign, but an early season injury limited his involvement to 26 matches as Wimbledon won promotion, paving the way for the equally combative Steve Galliers to establish himself in the No. 4 shirt and carry off the Player of the Year award. And when Briley did return, it was to an unfamiliar role at right-back.

Sadly, Wimbledon's acute financial position forced his departure from Plough Lane – to Aldershot for £40,000 after 71 appearances and 2 goals – just before the March 1980 transfer deadline, but Les recalled his WFC days with affection. “They

were great times at Wimbledon. I can honestly say that it was one of the most enjoyable clubs I've ever been at. People talk about the spirit that took them to their later success – and when I joined it was exactly the same. All the lads got on well. We had a laugh and a joke, but we'd always work when we needed to. There were no big stars and nobody acted better than the rest. You had characters like 'Harry' Bassett, who virtually lived and breathed Wimbledon and inspired the rest of us.”

Les won the Shots Player of the Year accolade twice in succession and after 157 games, he switched back to his first love – Millwall – under George Graham, where he sensed that the Lions could 'do a Wimbledon'. He was proved correct, skipping Millwall to the Second



Division title in 1987 and forming a fearsome engine room pairing with Terry Hurlock during six years at The Den. He remained actively involved with the club for many years in a variety of roles, managing their U14 side, Assistant Youth Academy Manager and a matchday hospitality host.

Welcome back to Plough Lane Les – and enjoy your evening with us!