

*Issue*, up Sir Matt Busby Way, then round the corner at the shops, taking in the smell of salty chips and vinegar from the Legends Takeaway and stale beer and cigarettes from outside the bookies. That mix of aromas always made Mike think of his father, and the very first game he came to as a boy. Back then, before what he called ‘the big P45’, Gregory Wilson acted like anything exciting could happen, any time. And believed it probably would.

In among that crowd of fans full of the talk of another new season, Mike hummed some of his favourite United tunes and thought about his father, these people he knew, these streets of the Republik of Mancunia where he lived, and imagined a future where anything could happen. The season was waking up. After all those long, dead summer days, finally existence had a shape again. No matter today’s score – as he reminded himself, you had to think big. Like the Gaffer did. You had to remember that life was not just about what happened on any one afternoon. Life was about the long game. And, as he’d proved over the years, that was a game Mike Wilson was pretty good at playing.



It’s been said before, I know that. But here’s the filthy little secret: sometimes things are repeated coz they’re TRUE. Still, don’t believe me, sunshine, check the history books! Go online! Phone a friend! Nearly every lazy, halfwit, armchair pundit in the Western world agrees. It was the most exciting time in the club’s history for young talent – in ANY club’s history – and, suddenly, I was in the middle of it. That’s like getting odds of a hundred thousand to one and watching your horse romp home, the rest of the field little dots in the distance. It’s like getting odds of a million to one. More. I felt pretty fuckin lucky, I can tell you that, but I was burning up too, you know? Coz United could have, and should have, won the league in my first year on the books. And while the Class of 92 were being born, lifting the FA Youth Cup to the heavens in celebration with yours truly making a tasty cameo, the big boys let it slip.

Leeds weren’t even better than us. They were an average team of clunkers and thumpers in the dirty Yorkshire tradition. Most of that team have now been forgotten, except for one ex-United player on the slide (little Gordon Strachan) and one French *artiste* (big Eric Cantona), who was on the way to sweet redemption. He signed for them part way through the season and scored a handful of goals while we crumbled, losing three games in a row at the death. They called it the league title nobody appeared to want, which just goes to show how fuckin stupid the boys in the box really are. No clue about the real world, these fellers. Too comfy in their fuckin seats, warming themselves in TV studios and thinking about snapping the next cheque from above into their greedy beaks. Too busy filling airtime with guesswork to see the light right in front of their eyes. The point is: United wanted it more than ANYTHING. United wanted it TOO much. In 1991 and 1992 all the future legends were breaking through, knowing the club was close to