



Fighting for Football: From Woolwich Arsenal to the Western Front

George Myerson

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Long before Rodney Marsh, or Derek Dougan, Tim Coleman invented football's awkward squad. At the beginning of the twentieth century footballers were poorly paid wage slaves to the stern club owners. But Coleman led the first players' strike. He was a joker, a card - perhaps also the first ever media-literate footballer who knew the importance of a sparky quote in the right place - but he would not be taken advantage of. He stood up for himself, and for others. Then, in 1914, playing for Nottingham Forest after successful spells with Arsenal and Everton, he joined up with the Footballers' Battalion, and found himself on the Western Front in the run-up to the Somme. There he won the Military Medal for bravery. But he also participated in some of the most remarkable football matches ever played, when, scratch teams played on improvised pitches and contested the Army Cup - right alongside the trenches and shell holes of the front line. In later life he quietly sank into obscurity, cleaning windows in Kent, his illustrious past unknown to those around him. This is the first biography of one of British football's most remarkable figures: a virtually unknown individual who nevertheless achieved things beyond the experience and the character of most players. This is the story of a forgotten sporting hero to follow up Aurum's successful All-Round Genius. This is the remarkable story of those who played football on the Western Front. It is a contender for the 2009 William Hill. It is about one of Arsenal's earliest heroes.

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