Quick Off The Mark

by Gavin Buckland

There is the sense of the unreal when a goal is scored in the opening seconds. With no prior ebb and flow to the game, the crowd and players never appear fully prepared for the impact of the ball hitting the back of the net.

Goodison Park has experienced that feeling numerous times in first-team matches, not least following the goal scored by today's visitors in a League Cup tie in September 1985. In only their second visit to the ground, Bournemouth (then managed by Harry Redknapp) shocked the league champions by scoring straight from the start. From the kick-off, the ball was played to former Liverpool reserve Colin Russell, who dribbled past Kevin Ratcliffe on the bye-line before pulling it back for former Tranmere Rovers' striker Colin Clarke to volley in from an acute angle. There were just 11 seconds on the clock! Russell added a second on 11 minutes before the Toffees recovered to win 3-2.

But the strike was relatively late in proceedings compared to the fastest goal in any game here, scored by young striker David Johnson in an FA Youth Cup tie against Manchester United on the penultimate day of 1969. Mike Lyons and Alan Wilson took the kick-off, moving the ball to Bryn Jones, whose first touch sent the ball directly up the centre of the pitch where, from a position just outside of the box, Johnson fired a fierce shot past United keeper Billy Carrick. After just four touches and SIX seconds the ball had found its way into the United net. The goal 'left United, and most of the 4,451 spectators, staggered,' according to the Liverpool Daily Post.

Just three months later came the quickest goal by an Everton player in a senior game on the ground, in a crucial fixture against Chelsea. With the home side within touching distance of the title, Sandy Brown played the ball into the box and after the Chelsea defence cleared it, up stepped Howard Kendall to fire home after just 14 seconds. Everton eventually won 5-2 before lifting the championship trophy four days later.

Fast-forward 32 years for the fastest goal by an Everton player at the stadium in the Premier League era, and one of the most famous goals at Goodison. The David Moyes era was just 32 seconds old when David Unsworth latched on to Tomasz Radzinski's flick to send a left-footed rocket past Edwin van der Sar.

There has not been a faster goal by an Everton player since at Goodison, but you never know when the next one will be, so make sure you are in your seat in time to see the kick-off today!

(Above)David Unsworth got David Moyes' Everton tenure off the perfect start in March 2002 - after only 32 seconds; (inset) Colin Clarke took just 11 seconds to open the scoring for Bournemouth at Goodison