



The Gerry Hitchens Story

Simon Goodyear

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This book follows the life of a young miner who was plucked from the mineshaft to find himself playing football in the Italian League several years later. It is surely something that dreams were made of, a real 'rags-to-riches' story; however, this is exactly what happened to one such talented, working-class lad from a small Shropshire mining village, in the late 1950s.

Gerry Hitchens was an uncomplicated footballer with obvious natural ability and virtues. It is fair to say there have been more skilful players than Hitchens, but footballers do not only require skill and flair to succeed at the very top, but sometimes hard work and determination are equally important qualities, along with the will to learn and improve.

Gerry also had a bit extra to offer – the instinct to sniff out half chances and score goals in abundance at any level.

I am very grateful to the legendary players Gerry was lucky enough to play with, who have kindly contributed to this book, including Jimmy Greaves, Sir Bobby Charlton, Jimmy Armfield OBE, Gigi Riva, Luis Suarez, Mario Corso and Giancarlo Cella. I would also like to thank the world-renowned football writer and journalist Brian Glanville for sharing his memories of Gerry.

As a life-long Aston Villa fan, my late father had watched with interest from the terraces, a raw but strong and powerful footballing talent who soon became an idol to thousands of English and Italian fans during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

With the passing of my father in 2008, I felt inspired to fulfil his idea of writing a biography of Gerry Hitchens, a quiet man and a great footballer. I have put together, not only a biographical account of the story of Gerald Archibald Hitchens – player, husband and father – but a brief historical insight into football in Britain and Italy during the 1950s and 1960s.

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