

EXCLUSIVE — A SOBERING TALE OF FOOTBALL AND ALCOHOL

by John Barrett

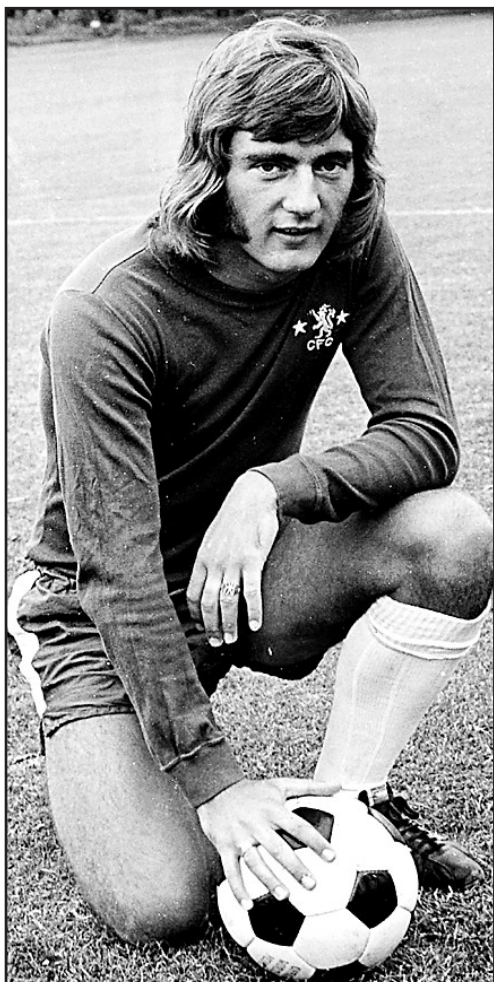
ANTHONY HUDSON spent most of the early part of his life wishing he could follow in his father's footsteps. These days, he tries to make sure he doesn't!

Anthony is a reserve-team coach at Tottenham, having returned from a successful spell in America at the age of 29, looking to build a future career in management.

His dad is Alan Hudson, gifted midfielder with Chelsea, Stoke City and Arsenal back in the 1970s. His meagre two England caps bear no reflection of the wonderful natural talent he possessed.

But for Alan, his love of football had to compete with his desire to have a good time off the park. Brought up in London's King's Road, there were always distractions. And when he couldn't play any more, those distractions took over and his dependence on alcohol became well-known.

Alan was playing in Seattle when Anthony was born in 1981. He wanted to be a player, just like his dad. He earned a place at the West



Dad Alan in his heyday at Chelsea

Anthony winning his battle to beat the Hudson curse

Ham academy when Harry Redknapp was manager at Upton Park, but unfortunately the similarities between father and son weren't just confined to the football field.

youngest professional manager in the game out there at 27, and it was a great experience.

"Working at that level with few resources, you end up wearing every single hat in the club — handling the budget, finding housing for players, doing the visas, sorting the gear out, and obviously coaching the team. Prior to that I'd been first-team coach."

New life

Anthony wasn't offered a contract by the Hammers, and instead signed for Luton Town — just as the club went into administration. He ended up walking out on a two-year contract at FC Nijmegen in Holland, before deciding to make a new life for himself in the USA as a coach.

First, though, he had to get himself off the same addiction that cursed his dad's life and had already cost him his own embryonic playing career.

"It has been well documented about my dad's drinking and I've had a massive problem in my own life," explains Anthony. "I am in recovery, and I haven't had a drink for over four-and-a-half years now, which is a miracle."

"I've been given a fantastic chance by Harry, who was my manager when I was in the same West Ham youth team as Joe Cole and Michael Carrick."

"My aim is to become a top manager in the game. I have the ability to go very far, I have confidence in myself and time is definitely on my side."

"I had a great spell as a manager at Real Maryland in what is US soccer's second tier. I was the

Hudson, who was nominated for the 2009 Coach of the Year Award and also obtained his UEFA 'A' coaching licence at the age of 25, goes on, "Before every close season in America, I'd write to all the Premier League clubs and arrange to spend a few days back here watching them train."

"I've been to practically all of them, trying to pick up useful bits and pieces, and I've also spent time with

clubs in Spain.

Drinking culture

"When I was a young player, I fell into the drinking culture that surrounded my family. I spent too much time in the pub and not enough looking after myself."

"As a kid, all I wanted to do was be like my dad. The trouble was I found it easier to be like him off the field than on it."

"I decided to go to America when I was 24, partly to get myself away from the lifestyle I'd fallen into. But it wasn't as simple as that. I needed to address the problem I had and I went to

FOR YEARS HE WANTED TO BE LIKE HIS DAD — NOW HE'S DESPERATE NOT TO BE!



Anthony Hudson — success as coach and manager in USA

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings alongside my coaching.

"For four years I went around the medium security prisons in North Carolina and Washington DC, taking AA meetings, volunteering and generally trying to be a mentor to the guys in there."

"In America, something like 80 per cent of crime is related to either alcohol or drugs. I'd do three one-hour sessions a week with them."

"I hope it helped them, because it certainly helped me. It's been by far the best thing I have ever done in my life and I'm very grateful for it."

"Now I'm back in England, I've just started a similar arrangement at Wandsworth

South Croydon on a mentoring programme with young people.

"Though I'm home again, I find it difficult to be around my dad's environment."

"It just doesn't interest me any more. It's extremely sad, but I can't afford to be involved."

"Alcoholism is a very toxic existence for everyone involved, including family and friends."

"Now if I have the choice of joining my family in the pub or helping some kids in South Croydon, there's only going to be one decision I'll make."

"I look back at the kid I was and I feel quite sad for him, but I have to say I wouldn't change a day of it. It has been the greatest experience and journey."

PIENAAR WANTS A MILAN RE-RUN

STEVEN PIENAAR was assured of a place in Tottenham Hotspur's record books as soon as he made his debut against Newcastle United last month (*writes Ed Newman*).

The South African midfielder, signed from Everton during the transfer window, became the 600th player to wear Spurs colours since they were admitted into the Football League in 1908. He'll be hoping that's not the only statistic of note during his time at White Hart Lane.

Pienaar will add some Champions League experience to Harry Redknapp's squad when they play AC Milan at the San Siro on Tuesday night. It's an enticing fixture that will see him go up against former Ajax team-mate Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

The Swedish international striker is just one of a host of

world class players Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri has at his disposal. Others include Robinho, Clarence Seedorf, Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso.

Also in the *Rossoneri* squad are former Spurs midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng and ex-Arsenal man Mathieu Flamini. They both have good reasons for wanting to beat the North London team.

Crazy

Spurs, of course, have mixed memories of the last time they played at the San Siro back in October. They went 4-0 down in a crazy first half of football before coming back to 4-3 thanks to a one-man show by Gareth Bale.

Pienaar is relishing the prospect of playing Milan. It's a fixture that will bring back strong memories of previous encounters with the Italian team.

"I have some good history against AC Milan," says Pienaar.

"I scored against them in the Champions League for Ajax and, if I get an opportunity, hopefully I can do the same for Tottenham."

"The run Spurs have had in the Champions League this season has made a lot of people change their minds about the club. It was certainly a big reason for me signing in January."

"Every footballer wants to play in the big games. They don't get much bigger than Milan in the San Siro."

"The style of football was another important factor for me coming to Spurs. I played with Rafa Van der Vaart at Ajax and we played attacking football. I want to be in a team that is exciting for the fans to watch."

"Rafa and I were both young when we played at Ajax. Even then he was a very good player and was also my captain."

"It's good how things have

worked out for him at Tottenham. I was very excited about teaming up with him again."

Pienaar didn't have the best of starts to his Tottenham career. In his second game for the team, Spurs were on the wrong end of a humiliating 4-0 drubbing at Fulham in the FA Cup.

Concussion

Then, to make matters worse, he suffered concussion in a training ground collision that forced him to miss the game at Blackburn.

Pienaar is well aware that he's not guaranteed a place in Harry Redknapp's team. But he's certainly not afraid of the competition.

"You want to play in a good team and challenge yourself," he says. "I think I bring a lot of energy, creativity and hard work to the team."



Steven Pienaar — brings energy