



It's not the winning...

OF ALL the places where couples have found their passion for each other so intense that, regardless of their surroundings they have just got stuck in – a football match is not a place where this to my knowledge, is documented to have happened.

It is true that it is only in the last five years or so that it has become commonplace to see women at football matches (and as George Prince of Wales in *Blackadder* would say: "Hurrah for that") so with this in mind, it must surely only be a matter of time before some uninhibited couple take the bit between their teeth and live up a desperately dull game by going for a knee trembler in row Q. Or not.

Because according to a new book, *Sex On The Brain* by Deborah Blum, men's testosterone levels raise significantly when their football teams are winning, and fall correspondingly when results on the pitch are not so good. This has been a commonly held view for some years. I remember watching the TV comedy *Love Thy Neighbour* some 25 years ago, where Jack Smethurst's wife remarked to her friend that sex was only on offer from her husband on a Saturday night, and even then it depended on if Manchester United had won. (Cue hoots of hysterical canned audience laughter).

I have to say that all this is totally at odds with my own feelings, I sometimes wish that it were different, but it's just the way it is. Picture the scene. It's a night match in snowy sub-zero temperatures and you are sitting in an open topped stand, we're 0-1 down, it's a desper-

ately boring game anyway, we're down to 10 men and we've missed a penalty... Call me old fashioned, but that's the time that I would feel in the mood for *lurve*. Well, just anyway. It seems to me an ideal time to shiver-your-timbers, if only to warm yourself up to make it to the tea-bar at half time without any stiffness. (Poor choice of word I know, but I've just been watching Benny Hill).

Ms Blum's research is all very well, but it fails to take into account the fact that if our team has won, we are likely to drink more alcohol, thus rendering most of us males too tired or simply incapable of achieving anything beyond a bleary eyed run through of the videotaped *Match Of The Day* whilst cuddling and caressing nothing more than half a can of warm Guinness.

Whether the Boro win or lose, I don't necessarily go out and get legless, but once I'm in the rhythm of a good night out, all thoughts of a romantic conclusion to the evening (or *Mattress Tango*, to use the technical vernacular) go out the window.

I know I'm not alone either, so cut out the catcalls. It seems to me that while testosterone levels may rise when our team have won, this does not necessarily mean that the action taken to return it to normal will involve treating our loved ones to a £2 bunch of flowers from the bloke in the lay-by, a couple of port and lemons, a large doner kebab and a pitifully pathetic attempt at semi-drunken copulation.

My mate, a clinical psychologist, says that the reason that I feel in the mood for love when Boro are not doing so well is because my relationship with my wife gives me the security that Boro have patently failed to give me since I first picked their addictive fruit in 1968.

I guess it's akin to keeping an old girlfriend in tow because you're convinced that one day she's going to be the woman you always wanted her to be. At least it goes some way to explaining why I got married last season. Boro were half way through a run of 17 league matches without winning at the time; and yes, they even lost on my wedding day.

NEWCASTLE BROWNE OFF

OK, so N*** eventually knocked Stevenage 'Burra' out of the cup, but what an effect the first game had on my local area. Keen readers of this column (hi Mum) will know that I watch Stevenage occasionally, (it's only 15 miles away) as much to catch up on old Boro players who are now in the Conference as anything else, but roaring them on against the Geordies in the first match was a great afternoon's entertainment.**

Amongst about 50 of us screaming for Stevenage from the comfort of our club was one solitary born-and-bred Geordie (cunningly nicknamed 'Geordie', though I call him 'fish head') who deserves credit for taking an enormous amount of stick. Even if he had not worn his Newcastle shirt he would have got plenty of stick because we all know him, but replica kits make the wearer stick out in a crowd and you realise how few of the people you meet are actually 'local'.

So many people live their lives away from the area they call 'home' it's not unusual to see football shirts from all over the country, even the world.

This is all very well, but problems arise when you

start a family. Unless you indoctrinate kids from a very early age (which involves great expense) they are no way going to be interested in a team that never wins anything and play 200 miles away.

One of my business clients is a Boro lad living in Market Harborough, and much to his dismay, his two boys are Leicester City through and through, because in that area, to be anything else is very uncool. Like everywhere else in the country, there are Man Utd and Liverpool fans in their school, but supporting Boro at a school anywhere outside Middlesbrough takes tremendous belief and character.

Anybody who went to school with me at Edgware, Mill Hill and Stevenage will surely doff their cap to me on that one. If being away from Boro makes you homesick, and you've lived away so long that you wonder where home really is, I suggest you refer to the *Daily Mail* handy guide to postcodes published recently. For instance, if your family live at TS1, then it's time they moved on anyway, because this is an area of: 'Families with pre-school children in first-time buyer areas'.

Whereas TS2 is probably

where your ex-wife lives because it's full of: 'Single parents moved to outskirts of larger towns by councils. Poor discipline among children... pervaded by despair, high debt and high crime'. I've got a (married) sister in Hemlington, by the way. Haven't seen her for 15 years. I can see clear through the write up for TS3 though, because this just happens to be the post code for the Cellnet Riverside Stadium: 'Passive lifestyle of low expectations and limited ambitions'.

Huh. It's almost comforting in a perverse kind of way to know that some things never change. Or was this guide written when the docks were still open? Feeling mischievous, I get out my list of addresses for the **mss** editorial committee, to find out who's who. Well, get you Julie Yates, for you reside in an area categorised as 'Suburban Mock Tudor', whereas Andy Walker is unmasked as a 'Bijou Homemaker'. I always suspected it so.

The social climbing 'Chatting Classes' are Andy Smith, John McLay and Clare Bradley, but the most popular category with 4, is the 'Bohemian Melting Pot'. Step forward Mssrs. O'Connor, Pringle, Readman, and Steve Smith!

Charlton pathetic

BORO CONNECTIONS turn up in the most unlikely places, as we all learn on a virtually weekly basis. The February edition of *Record Collector* magazine fell onto the doormat last week, and inside is a light hearted dig at Jack Charlton.

Apparently, Charlton issued an awful pop single in 1972 called *Simple Little Things* which had: "A nursery rhyme-style chorus; Jackie's spoken verses have an eerie, hymn-like quality, complete with Stars On Sunday organ, church bells and brass band".

The B-side is called *Geordie Sunday*, featuring "incredibly banal lyrics". It would make a good quiz question I suppose.

Has anybody ever compiled all of the official and unofficial Boro releases in the style of Harry Glasper? There you are Andy: a meaningful project for some poor unsuspecting member of the committee to take **mss** through to the millennium!