



How did you view your own style?

I'm sure that the vast majority of Spurs fans would disagree with me, but I never considered myself to be the midfield dynamo type. My brothers, who only wanted the best for my career, had told me to go to West Ham. They believed that I would then not have to compromise my style for the good of the team. Both were only looking out for me so that I could play my natural game and enjoy myself.

When I broke into the first team Spurs were struggling. I'd only played six reserve games, but suddenly felt the huge influence that permeated from the crowd. The more I ran and broke up play, the more they got behind me. It wasn't really my style to play that way, but that crowd reaction meant that, if I compromised I'd please them more. I'd always thought of myself as more of a controller and a passer; a footballer in the true sense. Unfortunately, as far as I was concerned, they never really saw the real me.

Do you remember much about your debut?

You could say it was a triumph of nerves over naivety. It was a home game against Sunderland, on a very hot and sunny afternoon. My very first pass went astray and very nearly gave a goal away. Spurs had already lost a couple of home games, which was almost unheard of in those days. You could say the fans were unhappy with the team at the time.

Gordon Harris, the Sunderland midfielder, showed me a lot of the ball so I nipped in and intercepted him, and the crowd immediately reacted to my decisiveness. I remember being shattered at the end of that game. The heat drained me of every last drop of energy.

Sunderland beat us in both fixtures that year and then went on to be relegated. It was a strange time for me appearing with guys that I didn't really know, but to play alongside Jennings, England, Knowles, and Greaves was truly unbelievable.

What was your initial contact with the first team?

That was at the old Baseball Ground, Derby. It was Dave Mackay's first game against us and everything went wrong. John Pratt got injured, we got beat five-nil. Even Willie Carlin scored from a header - and he was about five foot nothing!

Bill said it was between Dennis Bond and me for a place in the next home game the following week. Dennis had been a regular in the reserves, Bill felt that changes needed to be made, but he didn't know how many. Bill arrived at one-thirty on the Saturday and immediately pulled me aside to tell me I was playing. If the enormity of what he had said had sunk in there and then I'm sure I'd have wet myself. At seventeen, I was a boy in a man's world and thank God I was.