

# The Loneliness Of The Lone Distant Striker



Sometimes, when you write stuff for blogs or fanzines or whatever, you get an idea and it “makes you feel so excited you throw your hands in the air” (Ian Brown, *Dolphins Were Monkeys*). Middle of the night is a good time for this: unexpected, arresting and impulsive. Up, up and type; better not wait for the morrow. Will-o-the-wisp and fleeting the idea may prove to be, slipping out the window to float neath the electric buzz of street-lamps into the mix of midnight still and the cool night air, lost for time.

No matter the time nor the forfending gloom of the next working day’s schedule, it’s a pressing matter of type! Type! Type! Usually this is accompanied by some driving 1990s electronic-house pulse – Underworld’s Cowgirl/Rez or Luetin, the Ballistic Brothers’ Tuning UP! Phœnix or Fresh by Daft Punk or Way Out West’s Ajare and Domination on a loop– somehow effervescing the words to the surface, thoughts clambering one over the top of the other in a rush to tumble on to the page, scattering brevity and coherence as they agitate.

More often than not, however, it’s all far more mundane than all that.

Someone suggests something decent in the pub, post-match and there follows a stumble, all fingers and no thumbs, to record this in some written form on a variety of media (phone, pager, mobile radio telephone [*see right*]).

Someone points you in the direction of an amusing or off-the-wall snippet of news and this foments the hub of an idea.



Some germ of an idea hits you on the head like a hammer, making you think *how could I not have seen this before?*

Sometimes, though, you write about an idea that everyone is discussing. Something that is all the rage in the pub, on the forums, on the social sites.

Such as: *is it time now to drop captain Sam Baldock?*

An apposite moment with Milton Keynes this weekend's visitors, his footballing alma mater.

For the prosecution: a man badly out-of-form; missing sitters that no-one on a football field should be missing; we're playing with ten men most games; and we possess no physical threat with him at all leading to our sieve-like defence being under the kosh more than is safe for me ticker.

For the defence: our most natural goal-scorer at the club by a mile; a captain in professionalism and attitude; hampered by a system that suits him not a jot (one up front) and subsequently a lack of service; and in a terrible run of team form he has still scored 22 goals in less than a season and a half.

Let's get it straight, I'm a fan. Not least because in this day and age of hissy-fit footballers he sets a great example of not being the main man, he isn't affected by not being the focus of the (admittedly few and far between) good times, he keeps plugging away in a horrible unsuitable system around him.

The loneliness of the lone distant striker.: stricken, set apart, in need of binoculars to see his team-mates at times, the young man could be forgiven for going mad given his solitary plight. The lonely furrow he ploughs it's a wonder a search party isn't sent out for him after half an hour.

How would you feel in your job if your most valuable assets, the sharpest tools in your tool-box were in danger of rusting away from dis-use? You are being employed – of sorts – but perhaps more *deployed*. Positioned almost as if, well we have to have an eleventh player don't we, so it might as well be a striker.

I'm also a massive fan of JET. I can see how we *have* to use him – in my opinion we do because, yet again, once he's gone we'll be crying out for someone of his ilk to get us up out of our stupor – and I can also see how we can't use both JET and Sammy B. Well, maybe if we went gung-ho and played 3 up-front with JET, Baldrick and new-boy Tyrone Barnett. That might shake things up a little. Big bloke, little bloke and the magician. Hmmm, if only we weren't in such dire trouble.

But that ain't gonna happen.

It seems three managers in a row are placing their trust in this well-spoken, model professional who has endured a tough rollercoaster ride from the obscurity of MK Dons to the hype of the Premier League with West Ham back down to the Championship with us where he ignited immediately in August 2012 before fizzling to the current state of looking forlorn each time he takes to the field between two strapping tree-trunks from Tranmere. Or wherever.

Can we afford to drop him? I mean really afford to drop him, given how much he cost? And the fact that he has still scored 12 goals this season and could arguably finish up with 20 goals (8 goals in 22 games isn't beyond him in any vein of form).

Can the team risk playing without someone being potentially on the end of a ball into the box? Barnett is an unknown quantity – or at least we know he isn't a like-for-like substitute for Sandra Bullock's latent ability in the six-yard-box – and we know JET won't be goal-hanging like in the school playground.

But if Sammy Bullock (sic) does continue to forge a relatively hitherto futile path up-top, will he rediscover how to put the ball in the back of the bleeding onion bag?

It's not original to say that the City Abacus states he has missed more 1 v 1s than he's scored goals.

I keep the faith with him, personally. I think he's a real asset, but one we must resolve to use more fruitfully. Which means, Lonely Distant Striker, Man Up and show us what yer made of cos you're Captain for a reason and God love you, we need you (and also, less scenes like this...)



**MISS!** v Bradford



**MISS!** v Cov



**ANOTHER MISS!** v Cov



**MORE MISSUS!** v COV (Greg helpfully spared his blushes and showed him how to do it)



**SHOVED OFF THE BALL!** v puny Shrewsbury



**MISS!** v Shrews



about to **MISS!** one v Crewe



**MISS!** v Brentford



**FINALLY!** A first goal in E-I-G-H-T long games



**SHOVED OUT!** v a sh!t Sheff U



**TANGLE!** getting in a tangle v the imperial County defence



... **THIS IS WHAT WE WANNA SEE MORE OF SAMMY...**

**C'MON CAPTAIN SAMMY!  
COME ON YOU REDS!!**