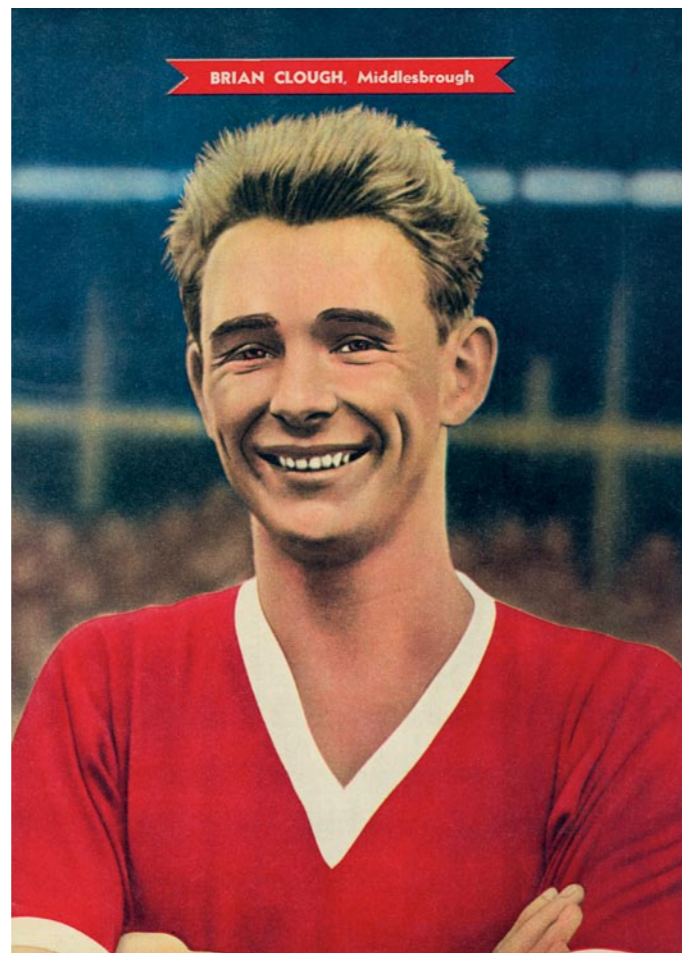




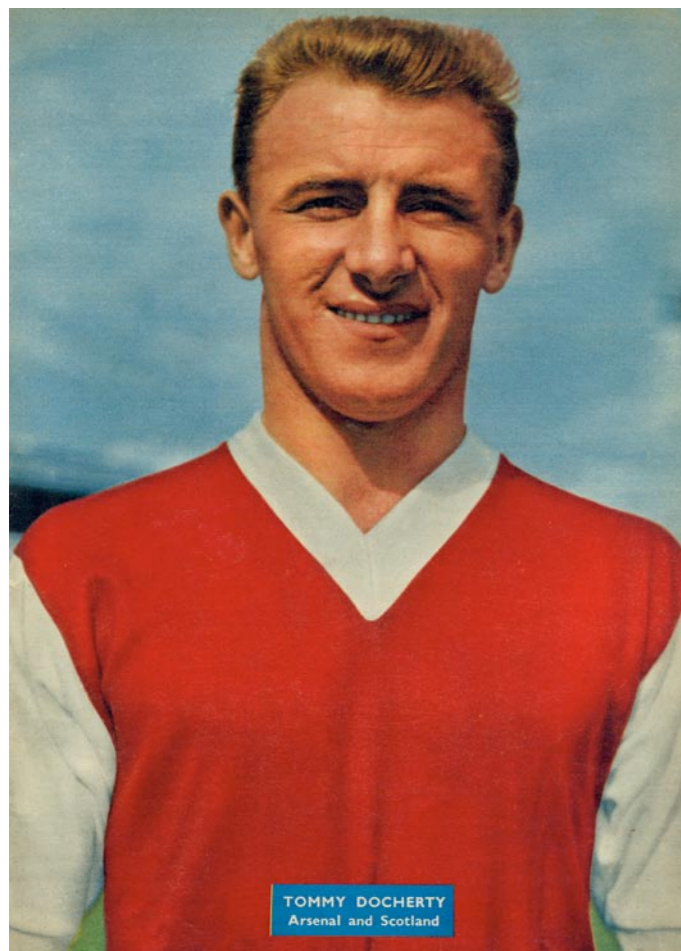
PETER TAYLOR  
Middlesbrough

▲ December 1957



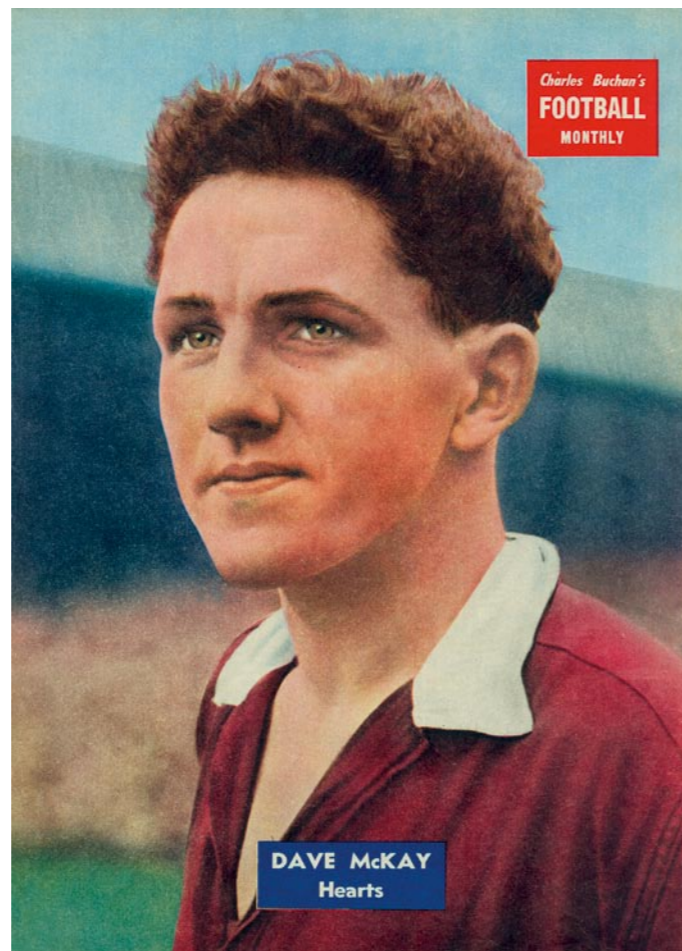
BRIAN CLOUGH, Middlesbrough

▲ October 1957



TOMMY DOCHERTY  
Arsenal and Scotland

▲ February 1959



Charles Buchan's  
FOOTBALL  
MONTHLY

DAVE MCKAY  
Hearts

▲ March 1957

Britain's leading sports writer

# PEP-TALKS— PHOOEY!

YOU have heard some of these dramatic stories, and, I dare say, read some of them: the kind of stories that tell of how Manager This or Director That went into the dressing-room of a losing team at half-time and delivered a Pep Talk.

These Pep Talks come in several colours, but the most popular one is simply this: "Boys . . . I know the ball isn't running for you. I know you're better than this. I'm asking you to go out there in the second half and get a hatful of goals—for me!"

The upshot of this is that the boys go out in the second half and win 4-3.

Now, if you believe that, you will believe anything. Anybody who was gauche enough to go into a Soccer dressing-room and talk to a licked side like that would be met, at the very best, with a deep, pained silence. At worst, there would be a hollow, ironic groan, or maybe a muttered invitation to the speaker to go take a running jump at himself.

I have been in many dressing-rooms in many varying circumstances, but I have never heard one of these so-called Pep Talks, and I hope I never shall. If these things exist outside American sporting films, I shall be very much surprised. So it was with a start of considerable surprise that I read not so long ago of a club director who had shocked his players by doing it.

He is reported to have formed the habit of going in with his little exhortations, win, lose or draw, and his players, rightly, were reported to have become very embarrassed indeed by the whole thing.

Certainly, there is a type of elder statesman—mercifully, his numbers get fewer and fewer—who feels impelled occasionally to lecture the practising footballers in this way, and it is certain that it is only the innate sympathy of the boys for approaching senility that protects the "pepper-uppers."

The fact is that you don't have to tell a team of pros that they are having a poor day. The players know better than anybody in the directors' box or along the touchline that this is not their day.

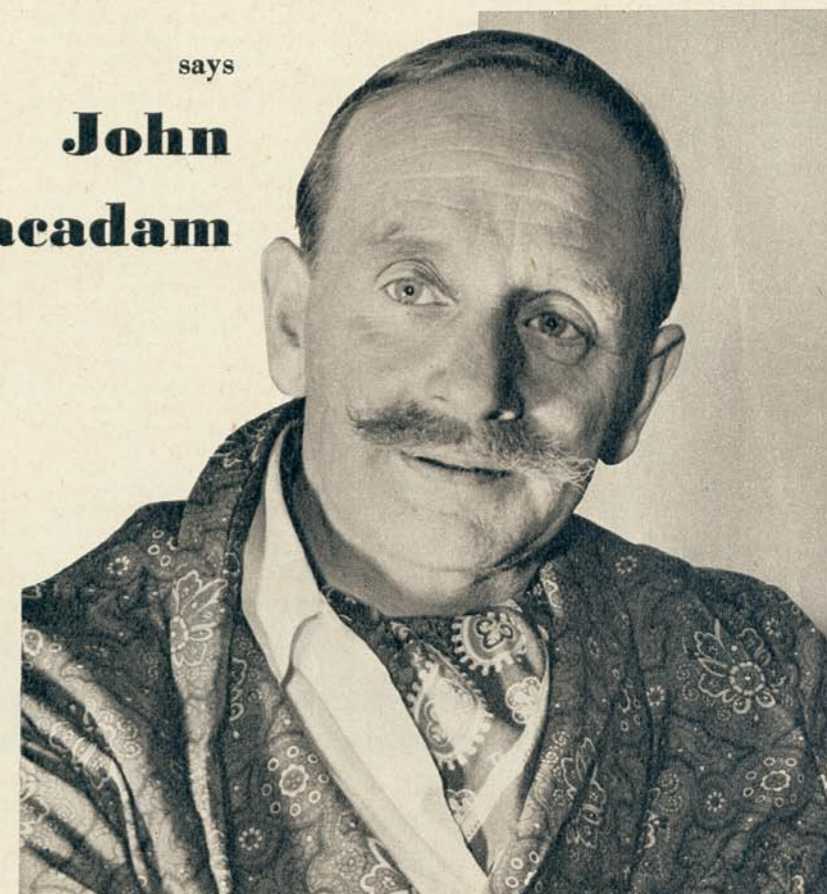
It takes, then, a very tried and trusted friend to claim the right to say anything to them at all. Officialdom of any sort, and most particularly the pompous kind, is simply like a red rag to a bull to them.

As for the idea that you can talk a player who is having a poor day into having a good one—phooey! There are times when, with everything else in order—physical condition, mental well-being, weather—the ball will simply not run for a man and the harder he tries the less well will it run.

He knows that, and all he wants when he gets into the dressing-room at half-time is to be left alone. If all of them are in the same boat, they either want to be quiet or, at best, blow off steam with a lot of ribbing.

says

John  
Macadam



What they do not want and will not tolerate is a load of pompous nonsense from a potentate who maybe has never kicked a ball in earnest, or if he has, did it so many years ago that it was probably square. I have been told often of one of these dear old gentlemen who probably epitomises the lot of them.

There was some talk around the board-room table about a very promising player with a team in a certain part of the country; before anybody else, including the manager who brought the name up in the first place, could do anything, our Mr. Director, claiming an intimate knowledge of that part of the country in which the player lived, had undertaken the signing.

He got to the village and, knocking on the door of a small house in a humble street of cottages, was invited to enter. A young man was seated at a table, reading, and Mr. Director wasted no time on preliminaries, but produced a form right away.

"I know you'd like to play for so-and-so," he said, "and here are the papers. All you have to do is sign and I'll do the rest."

"But—" said the young man, getting up slowly.

"Never mind the buts, my boy," said Mr. Director. "Just you sign, and leave the rest to me."

So the boy signed and drew his signing-on fee, and then showed the visitor to the door. He did so with some difficulty because he had a club foot. It was his brother that Mr. Director had come for.

None of this, of course, is to denigrate the tremendous part that the great managers play in pressing their sides on to success. The Messrs. Busby, Cullis, Smith and Walker are an integral part of their teams' successes.

But it is done with the quiet (or occasionally cutting) word. It is never done with the Pep Talk.

▲ October 1957