

Absolute Lad

Lee was a legend within a three-mile radius. In his hometown, where the suburbs blurred into the countryside, he was known to all, feared by some and respected by a few. He'd grown up in Snepston and knew every inch of it. Every street, every house, every alleyway and every little patch of green that you could kick a ball about on. As he trudged along the cracked, uneven pavement towards the nineteen-eighty-something community centre where his football team played all its home games, his head pounding after last night's heavy drinking session, he started to get excited about kick-off.

Lee was a stocky lad, he always had been. In his youth, he developed early and he used his brutish natural strength and freakish height to his advantage as he bulldozed his way through life, both on and off the pitch. Now, in his late thirties, he no longer towered over his peers but his broad chest, bulky arms and hefty thighs still made him an imposing figure. His hands were like two thick cuts of tough, gristly meat that swung slowly on either side of him as he strode forwards in his scuffed, slip-on trainers, an untrusting, surly scowl etched permanently on his wide, grizzly face.

Lee's burly frame belied his lifestyle. He never went to the gym or exercised, ate junk food and punctuated his days with gluttonous intakes of alcohol and nicotine. Although his raw skill with a ball at his feet still made him useful for ninety minutes on a Saturday afternoon, his self-neglect had given him a solid gut which had curtailed his ability to maraud round the pitch like he used to.

He had no idea who Snepston FC were playing, he never did and he never cared. This was his stomping ground and he wasn't going to let whoever was turning up get the better of him.