

## The Full Motty: musings from behind the MOTD microphone

By [Dan Hyde](#) and [Adam Shergold](#)

Tuesday 10 March 2009



It isn't everyday you have the opportunity to interview a national institution. For our generation, and the generation of our parents, John Motson remains the authoritative voice of football; his words are eternally bound with those childhood rites of passage such as the excitement of FA Cup final day, being allowed to stay up and watch Match of the Day for the first time and innumerable English World Cup failures. Institution? "Some say I should be put in one," Motty will modestly reply.

In two years time, at 65, Motson could put down his microphone once and for all, but the BBC's main commentator at six World Cups and 34 cup finals is going stronger than ever, combining work on the corporation's flagship Match of the Day, where he has been a staple since 1971, with Radio Five Live coverage. Who better to ask on changes in the game over the last three decades? "It has become more commercial, more corporate and more money orientated. The standard of fitness is much better today, but whether the standard of entertainment has improved is debatable."

Thousands of players have passed before Motty's gaze, but some retain the capacity to impress: "This season in the Premiership; Ashley Young [of Aston Villa], Dimitar Berbatov [Manchester United], Wilson Palacios [Tottenham Hotspur]. In fact, add any Everton player." The mention of Young is interesting as Villa become the first team to genuinely challenge the top four in at least five years, but will their English core, also featuring James Milner, Gabriel Agbonlahor and Gareth Barry, constitute the England team in the foreseeable future? "Not necessarily," believes Motson. "It depends how these players perform and, even then, on how other clubs develop their English players."

When the issue of the next generation of Wayne Rooneys and Rio Ferdinands is raised, it is clear it pulls at Motson's heart strings. "The set-up we have at grass-roots level is far too competitive and pressured for young players. They should be prioritising their skills in small-sided games, rather than being forced into win-at-all-costs eleven-aside matches that don't encourage clever play."

Motson believes the future of the England national team is at stake and is keen to see the issues

addressed: "There should be more emphasis on touch and technique in the coaching of young players, aged eight to thirteen. I think the youngsters still enjoy the game, but don't benefit as much they could, and the problems don't stop there. By the time those youth players reach university age, most of the bad habits are ingrained: it's unfortunate." Motoson's love for the national game is more than apparent and he fondly remembers his first England press conference in Malta in 1971 and, unlike the national team, has been an ever-present at every World Cup since.

But the modern trend of players pulling out of international friendlies with mysterious injuries and managers demanding limited playing time from their Steven Gerrards and Frank Lampards has Motson riled. "The national game should definitely be regarded with greater importance but, in practice, the clubs' interests prevail across the board and that's not how it should be," he says but, diplomatically, he doesn't name names.

Nouse just can't resist one final question, one the sartorially conscious are all dying to know: how hard is it to find a good sheepskin coat, Motty's trademark, these days? "Well its easy where I go, my tailor on Saville Row!"



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## 6 comments

KG 15 Mar '09 at 9:28 pm

"Villa become the first team to genuinely challenge the top four in at least five years". Does this mean that Everton didn't gain a top four place, as they may well yet do so this season?

The 'English core' which the reporter seeks might also be found at Goodison Park with Jagielka and Lescott the best English pair of centre backs in the PL, with Hibbert and Baines a good call for a pair of full backs in an all English back four. Certainly the best all-English back four. Loads of clean sheets between them. And watch out for Rodwell and Gosling – great futures already begun.

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Brian L 16 Mar '09 at 9:09 am

Everton did challenge and broke the top four in 2005.

What is it with people and their obsession with Villa breaking the top four? We've already done it and could do it again this season.

We've also finished 5th and 6th so have been the most consistent of the challengers.

Have people conveniently forgotten?

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Anthony 16 Mar '09 at 2:34 pm

"Villa become the first team to genuinely challenge the top four in at least five years" !!!!!

As has already been pointed out, Everton have broken into the top 4 in the 04-05 season.

At the end of the season (when the position counts)

03-04 Everton placed 17th (this still stresses me out), Villa placed 6th

04-05 Everton placed 4th, Villa placed 10th

05-06 Everton placed 11th, Villa placed 16th

06-07 Everton placed 6th, Villa placed 11th

07-08 Everton placed 5th, Villa placed 6th

08-09 season so far

Everton 6th, Villa 5th

Form for last 6 PL games

Everton L W D W D W (11pts)

Villa D W L D L L (5pts)

Games since the new year in all competitions

Everton W=8, L=1(ManU at old Trafford to a CR Pen) D=5 F=20 A=6

Villa W=6, L=5, D=4, F=17, A=17

I think talking up Villa and forgetting about Everton is always going to annoy a blue. But to a non-blue the facts above clearly show that people are making Villa out to be something that they are not... they may do it (get into top 4) by the end of the season, but I think with Arsenal's resurgence the likelihood is small... in fact I would say that they may end up below Everton by the end of the season if current form is anything to go by.

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Tom Johnston

17 Mar '09 at 9:57 am

I agree with the above. im a blue so my opinion is probably biased, but its hard to ignore the hard work that david moyes has accomplished with us considering the amount of money available to him. Also all our young english players (excluding dan gosling) have made their way up through our youth system. Aston Villas English have been brought to the club with millions of randy lerners cash. Im not saying that villa dont deserve praise, i just think that theyve been lucky to have a manager like martin oneill who knows were to put his chairmans money. We seem to go unnoticed most of the season, which seems to suit us. As for the all english back four pairing of baines lescott jags and hibbo, not a bad shout at all to say they all deserve call ups. . .the future is Blue!

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17 Mar '09 at 10:35 am

The future is not blue, nor has it ever been.

David Moyes is a fantastic manager, but Everton are at best a top six club, and will never permanently challenge the top four. Fact.

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Dan Hyde

19 Mar '09 at 12:55 pm

Good point. Everton in 04-05 did break the top four monopoly, momentarily. But their utter failure the next year in the Champions League showed that they really weren't ready to challenge that monopoly on a permanent basis. They are definately devoloping what looks to be a strong squad now - maybe still short on quality in numbers in certain areas - and have been extremely successful under the radar this season. The difference with Villa is that they their football has, at times, been up there with the best. I don't remember Everton stunning people with dominant performances the Villa way. Moyes seems more results driven than performance focussed.

Either way, these two provide the most likely challenge, and the improvement of Villa this season really

has stood out. In Barry, Young and Agbonlahor etc. they have the sort of level of player Everton have struggled to put out, perhaps aside from Cahill and Arteta, in recent years. Let's hope both clubs can cause a few upsets in the top 4. The league needs it I reckon.

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