

# LEICESTER CITY



# CELTIC



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MONDAY APRIL 8 2002  
KICK-OFF 7.45PM



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# THE MANAGER WRITES **MICKY ADAMS**



**I**t is a tremendous thrill that in my first game as Leicester City manager we should be welcoming one of the club's all-time managerial greats back to Filbert Street.

Martin O'Neill enjoyed truly fantastic times with the club and even during my short time here since moving to the county I have lost count of the number of occasions Martin's name and achievements have been mentioned.

It is only right and proper he should be afforded a prominent place in the club's history not just now but in many, many years to come.

But - and I am sure Martin would be the first to admit this - he can no longer help the club to win football matches.

His achievements should be rightly celebrated and respected but that era is in the past.

Football, by tradition, is a cyclical game. For every high there is invariably the kickback of a low waiting around the corner.

In sharp contrast to Martin's time here, it's been a tough time for the club over the past 12 months - you can count the number of victories on one hand.

A new chapter in the club's history, however, awaits to be written with the move to the new Walkers Bowl this summer.

It is our job to deliver to you a team and performances befitting the new surrounds. Easy to say but a lot of hard work is needed. There is no miracle cure.

I can certainly not fault the application, commitment and endeavour of the players during my first six months here.

But it would not be unreasonable to think that changes will be made during the summer in preparation for the new season. Most relegated sides undergo a period of change and we will be no different. The final four Premiership matches of the season will afford me an opportunity to take stock of the current situation.

I wish to place on record my thanks and appreciation to Dave Bassett because

without him I would not have this opportunity to manage the club.

Dave brought me here from Brighton six months ago as assistant and now becomes the Director of Football at the club.

I know his door will always be open for me and he still has a great deal to offer me and the club. However, I do believe in making my own decisions.

I accept full responsibility for our performances and results on the pitch. The buck will stop with me. That's exactly

how I want it to be.

It goes without saying that I am delighted to have been offered the position and will give it my all.

I'm well aware of the traditions of the club and what it has achieved over the years. It is a great honour for me.

Tonight promises to be an occasion when we can take a break from what has been a long and hard Premiership season that has brought us few rewards.

I am sure the players will enjoy the night and I hope that all our supporters too will make this a game to remember before we return to Premiership action at Everton on Saturday.

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Martin, Martin...start the wave



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This will be an emotional evening for me. I look forward to welcoming Martin O'Neill back to Filbert Street; I look forward to all our fans getting behind Micky Adams in his first match in charge and hopefully becoming his blue-and-white army whilst this will also be the last match that I am responsible for as chairman.

Martin O'Neill gave us the most successful team that we have experienced in recent decades at Filbert Street.

Given the quality of football played in the Premiership nowadays it could easily be said that he was our most successful manager ever.

After joining us in December 1995 he took us up through the play-offs in May 1996 to the Premiership in which under his leadership we experienced four successive seasons in the top-half of the league table finishing 10th, 9th, 10th and 8th.

He took us to three Wembley cup finals, the first being victory in the Coca-Cola Cup Final against Middlesbrough which went to a replay at Hillsborough, the second a defeat by Tottenham Hotspur in the Worthington Cup by the close margin of 1-0, and the third a 2-1 victory over Tranmere Rovers.

Consequently we have experienced two UEFA Cup seasons, albeit losing in the first round on each occasion against the strong opposition of Atletico Madrid in 1997 and Red Star Belgrade in 2000, the latter match taking place of course under the succession managership of Peter Taylor.

We were sorry to lose Martin in June 2000; I fought bitterly on all our behalves to keep him but eventually he decided that he must go to Celtic and what a success he has been there.

He immediately revived the green and whites fortunes and last season won the Scottish championship and Scottish FA Cup and League Cup and this year will hopefully have won the league championship this last Saturday and be awaiting the final of the Scottish FA Cup against Rangers.

Martin put together a team at Leicester that excelled itself and has done so again at Celtic.

Welcome back Martin, we applaud you and we look forward to the match this evening enormously.

The specific reason for this match is that we contractually arranged with Celtic that we would host a match with them as part of the arrangement of our then first-team coach Steve Walford moving up to Celtic to follow Martin.

The arrangement is that we are taking the gate receipts less, of course, the visiting teams expenses.

We welcome Steve Walford back amongst us and also our old friend John Robertson who has been assistant manager to Martin at both Leicester and Celtic.

We will also I'm sure be welcoming Neil Lennon and Steve Guppy, our former players who have been transferred to Celtic. Celtic are at the top of the Scottish tree, we are at the bottom of the Premiership and it may seem to some that it might be an embarrassing moment for Martin and his team to visit us.

I don't look at it that way.

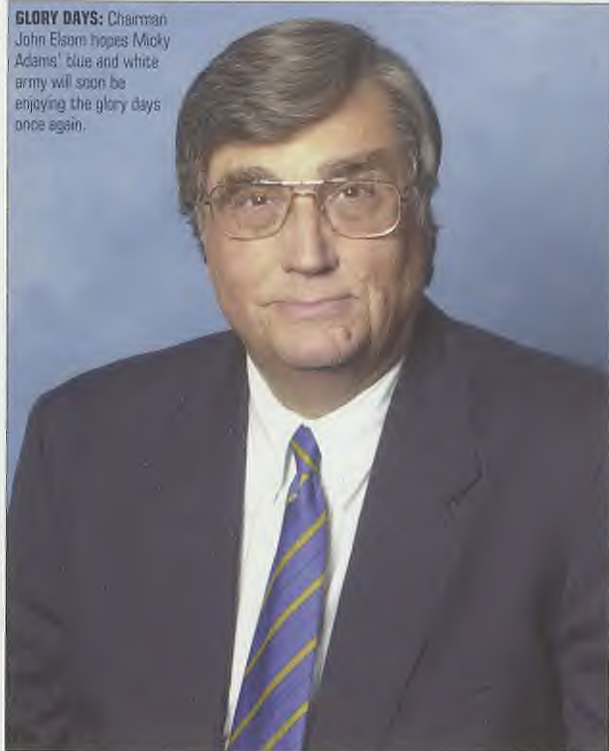
Much as we would wish not to be in the relegation slot tonight the match does see our new manager Micky Adams taking

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

# JOHN ELSOM



**GLORY DAYS:** Chairman John Elsom hopes Micky Adams' blue and white army will soon be enjoying the glory days once again.



charge of our team, tomorrow the football club will have a new chairman and next season we will be in our magnificent new stadium that we can see rising from the Freeman's Wharf site.

I think it is appropriate that we should view this match as a commencement of our farewell to Filbert Street celebrations with a reminder of some of the success that we have experienced in our present Premiership six season run.

At the same time we look forward hopefully to a rejuvenation of the playing side of our club under its new leadership and from the new stadium inspired by the memories that Martin's visit will evoke.

I am sure that all of our players who are fit for selection and played under Martin will want to show their prowess and skill this evening, it should be an exciting match and I particularly welcome all the many Celtic fans from all over England as well as Scotland who will be in the stadium to see their heroes play in front of them.

The match is being refereed this evening by

Peter Jones, Leicestershire's ex-FIFA referee from Quorn, who retires from the Premiership at the end of the season because of the age ruling.

Peter will also be refereeing our Farewell to Filbert Street match on Monday May 13 when so many of our players of the past are coming back for an evening of nostalgia.

This evening will be a new beginning for us all with Micky Adams in charge so please do get behind him and the team and help us all have a night to remember.

It remains for me to conclude by again thanking all the many fans who have shown support to me in the years of my chairmanship.

As I said in my notes on Saturday I have enjoyed the good times and worried through the bad times.

I will always remember having been chairman of Leicester City and will never stop being a fan.

The club is in my blood and always will be. Now let us all continue together and will our team back to the glory days.

One of soccer's supreme ironies was played out in Leicester and Glasgow on Saturday afternoon.

At almost exactly the same minute - shortly before 2pm - Martin O'Neill's Celtic lifted their second successive Scottish Premier League title, Leicester City were being condemned to relegation.

While Celtic's 5-1 defeat of Livingston sparked wild scenes in the Scottish capital, City's six year tenure in the English Premiership came to an end with a 1-0 home defeat by Manchester United.

"It's something we have mentioned and talked about," said Celtic boss O'Neill. "I was aware of Leicester's result within a few minutes of the final whistle.

"A steward told me United had won although not by what scoreline. It is a terrible shame for everyone connected with the club and myself, John Robertson and Steve Walford are all very disappointed.

"Saturday was a great day for all of us at Celtic with a second successive League championship but I know that, even though it may have been expected, it must have been a very sad occasion for everyone connected with Leicester."

O'Neill brings his all-conquering Celtic side to Filbert Street for what promises to be a truly festive occasion tonight.

And he admits that his first return to the ground since his departure almost two years ago will be a poignant occasion.

"When I walk into the dressing room area it will be very strange to turn left and not to



turn right into the coaches room and the home dressing rooms," he explains.

"I don't think in my whole time with the club did I ever once go into the visitors dressing room so that will be new ground for me.

"As this is one of the last-ever games at Filbert Street it promises to be a very poignant affair. It will be an eerie feeling to walk out of the tunnel for one last time.

"I loved coming in to work at Leicester and returning for this game will hopefully give me the opportunity to meet again the people I enjoyed working with.

"From the fans' perspective, aside from the opening few weeks when I couldn't win a game, there is no doubt that I had a great relationship with them and whatever reception I get tonight will live with me for a long, long time."

Despite expressing sadness at the club's relegation, O'Neill believes the development of the new stadium marks the dawn of a potential new era.

Indeed, he himself admits he would have loved the opportunity to manage Leicester in a new stadium like the 32,000 Walkers Bowl.

"Things have gone very well for me at Celtic but I remember at Leicester we were handicapped by only being able to play in front of a maximum 22,000 fans at Filbert Street.

"Everyone with the club at heart was working so hard to make a new stadium possible but there appeared to be no significant progress made. There always seemed to be a lot of politicking going on.

"When we flew into East Midlands Airport on Sunday night a couple of Leicester fans very proudly told me about how impressive the new stadium looked.

"I would have loved to have managed a Leicester City side playing Premiership football in a new stadium like the club is now about to have.

"The irony, of course, is that when the stadium is ready the club will be playing First Division football."

O'Neill, however, is firmly of the opinion that the stadium could be the catalyst which sparks a revitalising of the club's fortunes.

And far from being downbeat, he remains optimistic that the Foxes can make a return to the Premiership at the first time of asking.



"The new stadium is going to be a focal point for the club and its fans. Everyone has to be very positive about next season.

"If you look at the other clubs who may also be relegated, Leicester appear to have as much quality as any of those.

"They should be in a strong position next season and if everyone pulls together there is no reason at all why the club cannot bounce straight back."

O'Neill's name and achievements have constantly been on fans' lips although the Irishman now left almost two years ago.

He feels, however, that relegation may cut links with the past and enable the club to concentrate on writing a new chapter in its history.

"In truth my era finished the day I left the club but I can understand the point that is being made," said O'Neill.

"The story has now gone full circle. I arrived here mid-way through what turned out to be a promotion year after the club had been relegated.

"Some people might say now is the time to make changes and bring in new blood. There is a new manager and a new stadium and there might now be no better time to turn things around."

Not surprisingly, O'Neill has no regrets about his future. A Scottish treble in his first season and a second successive League title are already in the bag.

Plus qualification for the group stages of the Champions League in which the club claimed a famous victory over Juventus.

Even now some Leicester fans ask why Celtic when O'Neill had already turned down overtures from Leeds and Everton.

Explains O'Neill: "Celtic is in my blood. Growing up in Ireland everyone had an English club and mine was Sunderland.

"Where I grew up you were either Celtic or Rangers and I was Celtic.

"I had an opportunity to become Celtic manager and I took it. Things have gone pretty well for me up there and I have been pleased by the way things have gone."

Tonight also promises to be a poignant affair for John Elson who steps down as chairman after the game.

He and O'Neill formed a strong working relationship and the Celtic boss is keen to pay tribute to City's outgoing chairman.

"John was always very supportive of me, especially in the early days," said O'Neill.

"He is entitled to say that he presided over some of the best days that the football club have enjoyed since the War.

"The only thing a manager can ask of a chairman is that he gives you backing in terms of morale and financial support and John certainly did that with his managers."





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saturday  
**9.00am - 8.00pm**

sunday  
**11.00am - 5.00pm**







# IN THE CAMP



**C**ITY midfielder Muzzy Izzet admits that he owes everything to Martin O'Neill for making him the player he is today. O'Neill plucked Izzet from relative obscurity when he made him a deadline day signing from Chelsea in 1996.

Now Izzet, a regular Turkish international, is one of the Premiership's most highly-rated performers and concedes that it's all down to O'Neill.

"I'll never forget what Martin did for me and I'll forever be indebted to him," he said. "I was playing regularly for Chelsea's reserves and didn't really feel my career was going anywhere.

"But he came in, gave me the opportunity and believed in me when a lot of other people didn't.

"Martin was actually after me a long time - about a year - before the deal was done. He was watching me in the Chelsea reserves even when he was the manager at Wycombe.

"Then, he didn't feel I'd be suitable for the Second Division, he didn't think he was my type of league because it was so physical. When he moved to Leicester he thought the First Division would be far more suitable.

"He certainly helped me along the way and made me progress so much as a player. Hopefully I did as well for him as he did for me.

"There are a lot of other players here, like Matt Elliott and Robbie Savage, who feel the same way. Martin brought us all in from nowhere and made us, because of that we've got nothing but respect for him.

"It's funny really because when I came here Martin was under a lot of pressure and the fans were calling for

**REMARKABLE PROGRESS:** Martin O'Neill answered the City fans in the best possible way - by getting results, including winning the Worthington Cup in 2000.

him to be sacked. Shortly after that we went on a run of losing only one of our last 11 games. He answered the fans in the best possible way - by getting results.

"I'm sure the fans will show tonight how much they appreciated what he did."

Izzet declared that O'Neill's success at Celtic, which has seen the Irishman lead the Bhoys to two successive league titles, has not come as a surprise.

"If anyone was going to turn things round at Celtic it was Martin O'Neill," he said. "It was a big challenge for him going up there but it was a team that meant a lot to him.

"It was sad to see him go but the fact that's been so successful softens the blow. I can only see him making Celtic even stronger. He can make them a top European force, I'm sure of that.

"Hopefully tonight we can give them a good game and get a good result."

**FROM OUT OF NOWHERE:** Martin O'Neill brought Muzzy Izzet, Matt Elliott and Robbie Savage to Filbert Street and made them Premiership stars.

