

SOCCER

Run over by the Fourth Estate

"I was told when I joined this club about Celtic's paranoia, now I know it's true", said Liam Brady shortly after he took the reins at Parkhead in 1991. More forthrightly he added: "We are hard done by, religiously and politically. There are people against us ... I meet people who hate me just because I am the manager of Celtic."

When the writer first read these words attributed to Celtic's new manager in 1991 it was heartening. Brady had always demonstrated a quick mind on the field of play. In the business world, where he amassed a personal fortune, he demonstrated that his intellect didn't desert him off the field of play. His statement about Celtic's place in the scheme of things was, for many concerned Celtic fans further proof that he knew exactly what and who he had taken on when he walked through Celtic's front door in the East End of Glasgow.

By the time Brady spoke on camera after narrowly beating the workmanlike Young Boys of Berne in the UEFA cup by an own goal in extra time his face was worth a thousand words. Quite frankly he looked ill. It only took another bad result, at the hands of St. Johnstone at Perth for him to decide that it was time to go.

Failure

This newspaper has already concisely catalogued the extent of Liam Brady's failure as a manager. He was the first manager ever to preside over a Celtic

PHIL MacGIOLLABHÁIN looks back at the vitriolic trial by media suffered by former Celtic manager Liam Brady.

side that never reached a final and never won a trophy. Under his stewardship the man who graced Serie A took Celtic into the UEFA Cup, played three at the back away from home and suffered Celtic's biggest ever defeat in Europe, a 5-1 drubbing by Neuchatel Xamax.

Throughout this, Celtic's pathologically loyal following trudged home from defeat after defeat, including two cup semi-final defeats at the hands of Rangers teams that were reduced to 10 men.

Much was made of the money that Celtic's beleaguered board had made available to him. Five and six million were the sums regularly proffered as the amount Brady had been given to build his team. In fact, in his time as manager he showed a deficit of just £335,000: it was all the board could afford to give him. His other deals involved selling to buy and straight swaps, such as the off-loading of Brady's signing Tony Casciaro for full-back Tom Boyd.

What hasn't been looked at is the way in which Brady himself was singled out for a campaign of subtle vilification in the Scottish media. There were honourable exceptions but, by and large, his treatment at the hands of the tabloids had a sinister, racist tone throughout his

time at Parkhead. The grantees of Scottish soccer journalism questioned the motives of the Parkhead board in 1991 for bringing in an Irishman.

It was postulated that the Celtic board were "pandering" to "backward" elements among their supporters. Clearly Brady's nationality, not his skill as a footballer or potential as a manager were the issue for the Scottish media. This was especially sad, given the man had demonstrated on the continent that he could accept a new country and a new culture if it accepted him.

Breath test

Brady has always stated that he loved Italy and he loved the lifestyle, but he did miss going out for a couple of pints with the team after the game to celebrate the ending of the pre-match purdah. Shortly after Brady arrived in Glasgow to take up his new post he was stopped by traffic police, breath tested and was found to be over the legal limit for driving.

No one, not even the most blinkered Celtic supporter, would wish to excuse him for drinking and driving. What was largely missed by the press was the vignette that after their "collar" the two policeman, on arriving back at their sta-

THANKS FOR
COCKING IT UP
LIAM

THE BREAKING OF BRADY
DISASTER

He was guilty
of ignorance,
arrogance
and naivety

tion, were given a standing ovation and a heroes' welcome for their night's work.

Brady represented something deeply threatening in the psyche of many in the West of Scotland. He breezed into Parkhead, successful, self-confident, rich, Catholic and Irish. In the Belfast shipyards mentality of one half of Glasgow, such things aren't meant to be. One Rangers fanzine calls Celtic fans "Beggars" and "DSS spongers". Clearly the social status of the community that built and supports Celtic is important for

the sociologically-minded in the City of Culture.

The week that saw Brady depart from Parkhead and from Scotland, his nationality seemed an indispensable piece of information when mentioning anything, from his dealings in the transfer market to the way he tried to get his players to play the game. Paranoia it might be called, but Brady's nationality was juxtaposed with failure in every sentence.

In the week that sees Brady's successor Lou Macari come back to Parkhead the tabloids have already written about the nationality of Celtic's new manager in a very different way. A major Scottish tabloid ran an piece on the success and style of "Italian-Scotts" and the dynamism of "Scottish Italians".

Religious problem

Liam Brady and his family loved the lifestyle of Italy, speaking the language, furnishing their Turin flat with Italian furniture. Hardly the actions of xenophobes or "little Irishers". It is an irony that Celtic's new manager, born and bred Scot Enigi "Lou" Macari is glaring evidence that Scotland's "religious problem" in football has more to do with culture than Catholicism.

The Italians may be Catholics, but they're not Irish Catholics... and that, in the West of Scotland, is a crucial difference to those who appalled Liam Brady with their spleen for him, the club and the community that supports it.

Brady's resignation was an act of uncommon altruism in a business that every season takes another step closer to the level of the corporate gutter with agents, personal terms and media deals making more headlines than what happens on the field of play. In stepping away from a two-year contract he denied himself guaranteed earnings of at least £250,000. Chairman Kevin Kelly spoke of Brady always acting with dignity and doing the honourable thing.

However, little was honourable about the treatment Brady received by much of the Fourth Estate during his time as a resident of this part of Britain. The Brady chapter in Celtic's history is now closed, but the scriptwriters who hurried on his obituary are still alive and well and lining up their next victim.

Big screening for a big game

British-based followers of the Republic of Ireland will be delighted to learn that the show-down with Northern Ireland on November 17 will be screened live by Setanta Sport, the London-based satellite company which has broadcast the Republic's previous World Cup qualifiers in the absence of television coverage.

DUBLINER Leonard Ryan, a director of the company, successfully negotiated a deal with the Irish Football Association (IFA) last week, but not before a few scares. "It's costing us twice as much to carry the game as we paid for the Latvia and Lithuania games earlier in the summer", he said. "We were very close to not getting it, but we knew we'd have been lynched if we didn't!"

ON THE BALL

should they decide the risk is too great and refuse to release their players (an £18 million insurance policy on the 22-man squad notwithstanding) it will be interesting to see how FIFA react. Anyone for Wembley?

On target

Or not, as the case may be. Weekend matches seem to be off limits for the Republic's goalscorers these days, they seem to prefer midweek action. Only Barnsley's Brendan O'Connell could find the net on Saturday, and even then his side threw away a two-goal lead to lose 5-4 at Stoke City.

Two young Dubliners who caught the eye in televised games were under-21 winger Paul Byrne

hair, a low I.Q., a mottled, red complexion and incomprehensible speech.

Elsewhere in the issue there is a letter from a well balanced correspondent who concludes by describing Celtic fans as "a bunch of soap dodging, IRA supporting w*****s who should be choked at birth with their rosary beads." Another regular column speaks of "going to Liverpool and laughing at all the jobless and homeless Mickes".

Now any fanzine can hide behind the usual disclaimer (articles and letters are the views of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors), but printing such racist diatribe does not come under the "freedom of speech" umbrella. If they said the same thing about Blacks or Asians should be allowed

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- have great grandparents who would have liked to go to Ireland for their holidays if they had the money
- have a love for potatoes
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- have red hair
- have a mottled, red complexion
- have massive hands
- have a low IQ
- have a revulsion of condoms
- have incomprehensible speech

Applications in writing to:
Mr J. O'Charlton c/o
Lansdowne Road, Dublin.

TASTELESS STUFF: See On the Ball's 'Boycott'.

BOARD GAINS NATIONAL LEAGUE ROUND UP