

ADDRESSING THE GOODISON FAITHFUL

By Mike Royden

Match-goers today take for granted the public address systems blaring out the selection of pre-match music, interspersed with announcements. But a century ago this facility did not exist.

Music at Goodison was regularly provided by local brass bands, such as the Aigburth Silver Prize Band, delivering a selection of stirring marches to get the crowd buoyed up for the action to come. The names of the tunes were listed in the match programme, as was a list of property lost at the previous match, including the occasional set of false teeth, no doubt launched during over-exuberant goal celebrations!

As kick-off approached, a whistle was blown, and a blackboard was paraded around the pitch, upon which was chalked the team changes from those shown in the programme.

Throughout the 1920s, the Marconi company manufactured a high volume of public address systems to meet the growing demands of this emerging market. Such was their popularity, a Marconi PA was used by King George V to address 90,000 people during the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1925, bringing to the public's attention the possibilities of such technology. By 1927, they had developed the first loud, powerful amplifier and speaker systems for theatres and stadiums that could be plugged into a regular wall socket.



■ Installing amplifiers at Goodison Park in January 1932

In the autumn of 1931, the Everton Board, keen to see if the latest designs could work at Goodison, invited representatives from Marconi to demonstrate the equipment. The response was positive, and Messrs Pulford Brothers won the contract to have the new system installed at a cost of £695, promising to have it operational in time for the home derby against Liverpool on 30 January 1932. They charged a further £19 to build a control room next to the Boardroom in the Main Stand to house the amplifiers and music equipment. Gramophone records would be borrowed from James Smith & Son of Lord Street.

Perched on top of the Gwladys Street stand, with the appearance of a large searchlight – the kind that would soon be common around Merseyside as war approached in 1939 – instead of powerful light rays, it had the power to project music up to two miles away.

The local press heralded the new installation, encouraging fans to get there early to experience the joys of the new 'musical box – the Everton FC speakeasy', and 10,000 fans duly obliged, eager to hear the latest hits piped across Goodison, instead of the usual fare. It was a resounding success, as was the performance, the table-topping (and eventual champions) Blues running out 2-1 winners, with goals from Tommy White and Ted Critchley.

Writing in the *Football Echo* later that evening, their correspondent 'Bee' poetically declared, 'We shall remember this as the Radio and Radiant match, a fine day, saying it with mechanical music'.

