



# Only a Game?: The Diary of a Professional Footballer

*Eamon Dunphy*

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**Only a Game?: The Diary of a Professional Footballer** Eamon Dunphy

**The 40th anniversary edition of the classic inside account of a season at a professional football club**

"The best book about football I have read by someone who has actually played the game...everyone who has ever dreamt of a sporting career should read it" - Nick Hornby

The season began so well for the Republic of Ireland international midfielder Eamon Dunphy at Millwall - and ended in disillusionment and being on the transfer list. In this classic memoir, he charts the progress of the team during a season that begins with such high hopes and is filled throughout with high drama. Populated with extraordinary characters - and with access to the dressing room that would be impossible today - *Only a Game?* is both a riveting read and an exceptional insight into professional sport.

"It remains both greatly admired and unmatched." - Richard Williams, *The Guardian*

"The best and most authentic memoir by a professional footballer" - Brian Glanville

"Exceptional. It became the standard by which similar books were judged, and was exceeded in acclaim only with the publication of *Fever Pitch* by Nick Hornby more than a decade later." - *The Times*

## Only a Game?: The Diary of a Professional Footballer Details

Date : Published August 1st 1987 by Penguin (first published 1976)

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Author : Eamon Dunphy

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## From Reader Review Only a Game?: The Diary of a Professional Footballer for online ebook

### The Master says

Fantastic "diary of a season" in the style of Jim Bouton's *Ball Four*. Way more honest and far less clichéd than most autobiographical tripe that athletes have ghosted for them these days.

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### Lloyd says

Didn't get on with this so well, which came as a surprise.

It's barely half a story; what I'd assumed was a season-long account actually concludes around November-time when Dunphy is sold to Charlton.

What follows is an anomalous match report of a Millwall Vs Sheffield Wednesday game by the book's 'editor', Peter Ball, and a brief epilogue covering what happened to a cast of characters that I couldn't have given a monkey about since the main story is so underdeveloped.

And all for £8.99. I feel ripped off.

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### David Eriksson says

BOOK IS VERY BAD!

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### Ronan says

Not the brilliant book it is said to be, it's a small bit repetitive, and full of the usual football clichés. You'd expect it to be more honest, more controversial, as it's Dunphy. It's still an interesting read though.

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### Jon Chater says

An excellent book read years ago written by a proper writer. It is honest and succinct. A great read for any proper football fan.

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### Peter Callan says

A really enjoyable book about professional sport. Ahead of its time but doesn't stand out as much now.

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## Rod says

Can't explain what took me so long before I read this exceptional account of the life of a Professional Footballer in a non glamorous division and on a non glamorous but tight knit at least at the beginning division two team, Millwall.

Well worth a read even if professional football has moved on to much more lucrative career for the players whose power in the team has since this book been transformed out of all recognition. The basis of the assessments of players attitude still seems probably relevant.

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## Alex Margolies says

Really interesting viewpoint on professional football from a professional footballer who has something to say and can actually say it!

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## Luke says

Like many who read this, I have enjoyed watching Eamon Dunphy on TV, criticising modern players for a lack of drive and heart, and I was also impressed by his ghost writing of Roy Keane's first autobiography. In this book he certainly delivers in terms of pulling no punches, regaling us with anecdotes about players of that era and how gritty life as a footballer was back in the day.

My main issue with the book stems from the fact it is deeply steeped in a time that is so drastically removed from the modern game and that Dunphy does not take the opportunity to make many comparisons between the days of the old Football League and the current Premier League, a cornerstone of his punditry.

It admittedly seems unfair to demand reference to the modern game in a book about his own career back in the 70s. He's more than entitled to write about that solely, and for those who want a chronological insight into some of his time at Millwall, this will not disappoint.

I doubt however, that I am the only one who saw his name on the spine of this book and expected that this diary would go further and feature said comparisons between then and now, given that many will have enjoyed his now notorious lambasting of current players and the state of the modern game in general. Whilst this diary does deliver what it promises, at times it is the rigid diary format itself that makes it a monotonous read.

Finally the cast of characters will only really appeal to die-hard fans of the club or that specific era, as Dunphy talks at length about the likes of Gordon Bolland and Gordon Hill, and at most accessible: Liam Brady, names which will go over the heads of most fans under the age of forty.

I reiterate that my expectations of the book itself were misplaced, given that it clearly states it is a **diary**, but when on the cover itself you have Nick Hornby singing it's praises as a must-read, you expect more bite, more accessibility and more food for thought.

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## John Weller says

Couldn't give a toss about him or Millwall,

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## Selim says

okudu?um en iyi spor kitaplar?ndan. sporla ilgili bir?ok kitaba oldu?u gibi, bunun i?in de g?r?nce "allah allah, nerden esti de ?evirip yay?mlad?lar" dedim. eme?i ge?enlerin eline sa?l?k. futbol d?nyas?na "i?erden bak??" anlam?nda ?ok ?nemli kitap. bizde zaten yok da, d??arda bile ?rne?i azd?r san?r?m, b?yle "futbolcu g?nl??" tad?nda bir kitab?n.

bir ek: kitapta west ham-millwall rekabeti hakk?nda neredeyse bir c?mle bile ge?miyor. ?ok ?a??rt?c?.

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## Tj says

Simply put, the best football book ever. Why? Because of its honesty, its unorthodox structure, and the interpretation of a sport that can only come from somebody who played and loved it

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## Eugene says

Picked this classic up in a charity shop - Dunphy is now a sports journalist, but back in the day, the 1970s, he was a professional footballer. (for any Americans reading - I do mean soccer). This book follows a season with Second Division Millwall, for whom he was as much a cultured midfielder as those heavy muddy pitches would allow. The contrast with the ghost-written nonsense from overpaid blingtastic mindless footballers who haven't won anything very much or even learnt to shave yet that gluts up the publishing industry these days is, well, let's just say, evident.

There is actually a story to be told here and it is told well. The team is struggling. Players confront the manager. A lot. There is not much in the way of job security or money. Bad games take a long time to get over. People shout at each other. It's always raining. The manager looks stern and withdrawn. And without giving away the ending, it does not end well. And of course it starts like all pre-seasons for all teams with the belief that this year is the year it will all happen. For Millwall, for Dunphy, this will be the year they break into the First Division.

Yes, indeed, it is the hope we just can't cope with...a cracking piece of journalism.

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## Rob Kitchin says

The real strengths of Only a Game? are the level of reflexivity and that Dunphy doesn't pull any punches.

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The narrative does more than describe a season, but tries to explain and to provide a real insight into the mind and life of a player and a club. Moreover, Dunphy tells it exactly how he sees it and he doesn't spare the blushes of players or coaches. He is scathing about the professionalism of the coaching routines, the facilities, the manager's decisions, how the game was being run by chairmen and directors, players who he felt were not being 'true' pros, and forensically picks apart the strengths and weaknesses of opposition teams. He's equally open about his own performances and shortcomings, including his emotional turmoil at being dropped and his frank exchanges with his manager. There are some silences - he never really discusses the role of his family and friends, barely discusses journalists and the role of the media, or the fans. Instead the book very much focuses on the players and coaching staff. Having now read the book, it is easy to see how he sided with Roy Keane in the Saipan affair - Only a Game? details the same frustrations Dunphy had whilst at Millwall as Keane had for the Irish international set-up; and like Keane, Dunphy was obsessed with professionalism. Overall, an interesting book that gives real insight into the beautiful game.

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