

THE DIAL-A-CAB DRIVER, THE REAL MADRID FOOTBALLER AND ARSENAL

It was a warm, summers day in July and Dial-a-Cab driver Ian Cameron (R12) had put onto the Berkeley Hotel rank in Wilton Place for a brief rest. Several minutes later, two men came out of the hotel and approached Ian's cab. Ian couldn't quite remember where from, but he knew that one of the twosome was a famous footballer.

The passengers asked for Halcyon Days in Brook Street and settled back for the trip. Ian - being a football and Arsenal fanatic - desperately wanted to ask the one he recognised who he was, but realised that not only would it have been intrusive, but it would also have been rude!

Then the passenger solved Ian's problem: "Do you like football?" he asked.

Ian said yes straightaway and admitted his Arsenal loyalties...

"You play a bit as well, don't you" said Ian trying to act as nonchalant as he could without having to admit that he couldn't think of the player's name!

"Yes" came the reply in halting English, "I play for Croatia and Real Madrid."

Like any self-respecting footballaholic, that was all Ian needed to know. He then remembered the passenger's name. It was Davor Suker who was believed to be in London to sign for West Ham United. Ian jumped in smartly. This was no ordinary player, Davor Suker was a world superstar on the football scene.

"You're not really going to sign for West Ham, are you?" asked Ian, "they're rubbish, Arsenal leave them standing! Why don't

you join them instead?"

Davor laughed. "You are an Arsenal supporter?" he enquired casually through the smile.

Ian admitted his loyalty but added that he considered Davor to be making a mistake in joining West Ham instead of Arsenal.

"The truth" said Davor, "is that I am too old to play for Arsenal, I am 31 years of age and maybe their game is too quick for me."

Ian instantly disagreed saying that 31 in the modern game was no longer old provided you had a big heart.

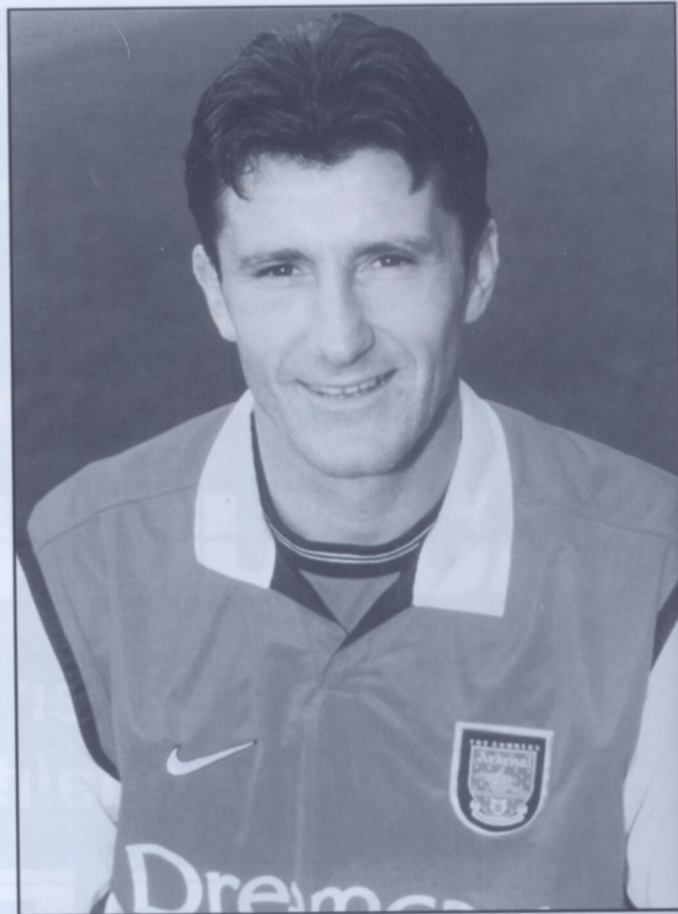
Davor smiled again. "Okay" he said, "I will be at Arsenal next season - but it will be playing for West Ham and I shall score a goal against your famous defence!"

Eventually they arrived at the Mayfair shop after Ian had driven as slow as he could because he just didn't want the conversation to end. He asked Davor for an autograph for his young son Duncan and the Real Madrid striker happily signed together with his famous shirt number (9).

"What's that" asked Ian of the scrawly signature, "it could say anything!" So Davor printed his name underneath together with the message: Arsenal 0 West Ham 3 ...!

They all shook hands and Ian wished Davor luck and made a final desperate, humorous attempt to get the Croatian to join Arsenal.

Within hours, Ian had told all his friends about his famous passenger and joked as to how he had tried to get him to change his



Davor Suker: Was DaC behind his transfer to Arsenal?

mind and sign for the Gunners instead of the Hammers.

Several days later, Davor shocked the footballing world by signing a contract with Arsenal. Needless to say, Ian Cameron's phone was red hot with friends thanking him for getting a great talent like Davor Suker to change his mind and sign for Arsenal. Would Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger be sending him a 'brown envelope' they enquired en masse!

Time passed and the Arsenal AGM arrived. At the meeting, the club's Chairman David Dein told the gathered shareholders that it had taken much longer to find a striker than they had envisaged. One shareholder, who was also a friend of Ian, told Mr Dein that they should have asked Dial-a-Cab's Ian Cameron to sort out the Suker transfer and showed him the scrawled autograph that he had given Ian.

"Unfortunately" said Mr Dein with a smile "our manager is on a long-term contract otherwise we may have considered you Mr Cameron!"

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