

What's the story? 3rd Round glory!

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Ah, 'the magic of the cup', but what is it?

The FA Cup is undoubtedly the greatest and most famous knock out competition in the world. It began in 1871 and is beautifully and brutally simple. Put all the name of the competing teams in a hat, draw them out with the first team having home advantage and play one match, the winner progressing to the next round. It is no respecter of a club's status, heritage, tradition, fame, money, power, or appeal. A team may have a very easy run in the competition and draw a succession of weaker teams and progress through several rounds, or it may have to play a top Premier League team followed by another and another (if it keeps on winning) for losing, no matter how unluckily or undeservedly, means that you are out and must wait for another year. That is why it is so hard to win. A professional player's career is, on average, only seven years, so to win the cup is a great achievement which most players do not get to realise.

Because so many teams enter the competition, it begins in August for lower ranked non-league teams with an extra preliminary round. This is followed by four preliminary rounds until the first major payday for non-league clubs; the first round when League Two and League One teams join. After that, the next big day for small clubs is the 3rd round for this is when the Premier League and Championship teams enter. So, for most non-league clubs their FA Cup 'final' is Round 1 and a draw against an EFL club, and for League One and League Two clubs, Round 3 and a draw against a Premier League club. Ever year this happens, and a minnow has its spot in the sunlight. This year was no different and three clubs made the headlines for differ-



ent reasons.

The first is Chorley. The club play in National League North, the division below the National League which if you win you enter League Two. The club defeated Championship side Derby County managed by Wayne Rooney. It is managed by Jamie Vermiglio, a primary school headteacher. The money the club makes from the cup run is an invaluable lifeline. He explained: "We've made around £250,000 before today, goodness knows what it will be now. It will certainly be £300,000 or £400,000. We could possibly get to £500,000 now and for a club like us, not only does it save us, but it also enables us to grow."

Chorley play in the sixth tier of English football, four tiers below Derby. Vermiglio lived in Ireland during the 90s and was educated at St Oliver's Primary School and St Brendan's College Killarney before moving to Warrington. He played with a local club in Warrington before joining Chorley where he was appointed captain of the side after a few years. When he stopped playing, he was offered the post of assistant manager and then he became manager two years ago. He took them from the Vanarama League to the Vanarama Conference. He was appointed headteacher of Locking Stumps Community Primary School

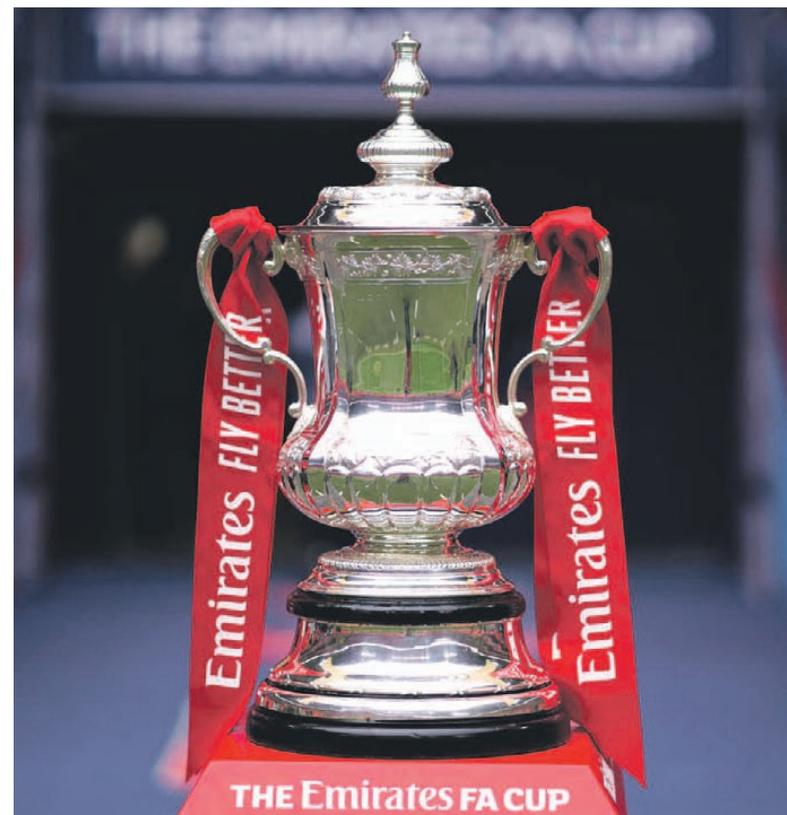
in Warrington in 2017 having previously been deputy headteacher for four years and before that was the assistant headteacher at another Warrington School.

The second club is Marine A.F.C. founded in 1894 and who play in the eighth tier of the football pyramid. They played eight FA Cup ties to make it to the 3rd Round where they pulled the plum tie of a home match against Tottenham Hotspur. It is the greatest gap between two sides in the history of the FA Cup. Marine, led by their captain and star striker, PE teacher Niall Cummins, of the Manchester Health Academy, Wythenshawe, lost 5-0, but the money made from the cup run will have secured the financial future of the club for many years to come.



Finally, is the story of Crawley Town, a League Two side drawn at home against the flamboyant, exciting, and free scoring Premiership side, Leeds United. After a nervy start, Crawley Town were probably happy to go in at half time at 0-0. However, they were a team transformed in the second half and scored three times to win the tie.

The team's first goal was scored by Nicholas Andrew Tsaroulla. He grew up in Winchmore Hill in north London and was educated at Southgate



Crawley's giantkilling hero Nick Tsaroulla is interviewed by the BBC after scoring to help knock Leeds United out of the FA Cup.

School in Enfield. Like most non-league players, he was an academy player at a league club in his case Tottenham Hotspur who signed him after watching him play junior football for Whetstone Wanderers aged 12. He had a very successful youth career with the U18 team (winning the 2014 South Korea Cup and the 2016 IMG Cup) and progressed into the Development Squad and was on the edge of the first team squad.

However, he was badly injured in a car crash in 2017 and was released by the club in 2018 and spent a year in rehabilitation. In May 2019, he joined Brentford FC and played for its 'B' team making 31 appearances, but his one-year contract was not renewed and in October 2020 he signed for Crawley Town. Interviewed by the BBC after the match he was overcome with emotion and broke down in tears as he recalled his efforts to get back into football and have a career in the game.

What can we take from these

three stories? In the case of Chorley, it is that organisation goes a long way. Chorley F.C. showed loyalty to Vermiglio and he has to the club. He has had the time to build a good side. With the money from the cup run there is every chance for more investment in players and progression up the pyramid. For Marine, this is a once in a football club lifetime bonanza. The club, if prudent, should be able to invest in facilities to enable it to become financially secure, and for Crawley Town, the wonderful story of a player's resilience, recovery, and redemption.

Next year there will be other stories, other clubs, and other heroes. Who will the clubs be? I have no idea. Who will the 'heroes' be? I have no idea, but I promise you one thing they will be there because as we all know it is a competition which allows players to dream, clubs to get financial lifelines, and communities to come together. That, dear reader, is 'the magic of the cup'.

