



TON!

**100 Photographs by
Max Reeves**

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100 Photographs of the inaugural year of Clapton Community Football Club
2018/2019 Season

By Max Reeves

Introduction by Nick Davidson

There's a call-and-response chant that occasionally echoed around the corrugated metal construction at Clapton CFC's temporary home, The Stray Dog, Walthamstow, during the club's inaugural 2018/19 season, it went like this:

"Who built a stand?"

"We built a stand!"

It's true, but the 'temporary' scaffold stand is only a snapshot of a much bigger picture. Sure, it is a visible and tangible construction, but it is symbolic of something much bigger and much more permanent. Over the course of a season, it wasn't just a stand that was built – it was a team, a club, a whole community. The chant could well have been:

The story of how we got to this point, is the story of modern football. Albeit without the glamour, glitz and astronomical wages of the professional game. It is the story of a club, Clapton FC, established in 1877. A club who played their football at London's oldest senior football ground, The Old Spotted Dog in Forest Gate. A club that had a schism running right through it: an irreparable conflict between the club's owner and its fans. It was a dispute that had been simmering for years; it reached boiling point during the 2017/18 season when Clapton fans organised a boycott of home matches. And, then for the start of the 2018/19 campaign it crystalized in the formation of a new, breakaway organization: Clapton Community Football Club.

This wasn't an act of defiance, more an act of desperation – a desperation at seeing a football club becoming isolated from its local community at the whim of the owner. Clapton Community Football club was established as a supporter-owned, member-led club to be run democratically on the principle of 'one member, one vote'. It is no coincidence that the word 'Community' is an integral part of the club's name. Returning the club to its local community is the reason for its very existence. Building bridges, creating a welcoming, safe environment for everyone to enjoy football is the club's raison d'être. Yes, there is a political edge to the club's ethos and supporters. Not a party-political edge, but one of tolerance and acceptance – a club whose cornerstone is built on the rejection of racism, sexism and homophobia.

Over the course of the 2018/19 season the community continued to grow, as did attendances at matches. 232 people turned up for Clapton CFC's first game at The Stray Dog in August – a friendly against Wanderers FC. An incredible 1266 fans were packed into the ground for the final, decisive, game of the league campaign.

The club also achieved international notoriety by the inspired decision to base their away shirt on the colours of the Spanish Republic, this brought widespread media attention and incredible shirt sales. But, whilst, the revenue from the shirts eased the financial pressure for the debut season, it was never about the merchandise, never about the money.

CCFC aspired to be much more than a Football Team we are a community of like minded people with a decidedly anti-capitalist, anti-fascist and inclusive attitude. This is reflected in our outreach work, money raising events and solidarity actions.

People from all over East London and beyond, gradually became hooked on attending Clapton games. Many weren't just along for the ride, but offered their services and their time helping out on match days; joining innumerable committees and sub-committees; investing in running a football club. Many of those people go unacknowledged behind-the-scenes but their dedication was just as important to the success of the club as anything that happened on the pitch.

But what a season, it turned out to be! A tentative start, was followed by a campaign that built-and-built, before reaching an emotional and unforgettable climax on the final day. The Tons reached two cup finals, winning the Jim Rogers President's Cup in a dramatic late-night, penalty shoot-out in Uxbridge; before losing heavily to an impressive Catholic United – a team two steps higher in the pyramid – in the final of the Anagram Records Trophy.

Then, there was the dramatic final day win over FC Roast that secured the Middlesex County Football League Division 1 Central & East in front of over a thousand fans. There are really no words to describe the happiness and the collective joy that win gave the Clapton community.

Documenting this remarkable journey – right from the beginning – was photographer and Tons’ fan, Max Reeves. He was there at the first pre-season friendlies, home and away, right through to that emotional day in May. This book is a collection of his 100 favourite photographs from the 2018/19 season. These stunning photographs capture – more than any words ever could – the emotion, drama and love that following a football club evokes.

To my mind, it captures modern day grassroots football perfectly. The fact that these days those ‘grassroots’ have frequently been replaced by the black rubber crumbs of an artificial 4G playing surface, where the football markings compete with those of hockey, netball and who knows what other sports, shows that even the language of football sometimes needs updating? There’s a couple of photos in this book that include another, minor, scourge of the modern game: goal-posts on wheels! Reassuringly, CCFC’s debut season also included its fair share of windswept municipal pitches with nothing more than the touchline separating the players from the Tons’ faithful and the occasional dog-walker.

As the season builds, so does emotion. Max’s photographs capture all these incredible moments in Clapton CFC’s nascent history – from penalty shoot-out victories to fans and players celebrating league and cup triumphs as one.

It’s that warmth and emotion that shines through in the photographs included in this book. An unforgettable journey, that saw ordinary people like you and me, not only build a stand, but a football club, a community.

‘Who built a Club?’
‘We built a Club!’

Nick Davidson, October 2019



“One day all of a sudden!
I fell in love with you.
Come on you Red and Whites!
We are singing for you.
And when you score a goal.
The Stray Dog’s gonna blow.
‘Cos we all love the Clapton.
Come on you Tons, come on!

Alè Alè Alè...”

“We’re singing at home and we’re singing away.
We’re singing all night and we’re singing all day.
Vince tried to stop us - and look what we’ve done!!
The thing I like most is being a Ton.

Being a Ton.
Being a Ton.
The thing I like most is
Being a Ton.”



Epping Town 18th June 2018



South Kilburn Reserves 29th September 2018



South Kilburn Reserves 29th September 2018



FC Roast 6th October 2018



FC Roast 6th October 2018



FC Roast 6th October 2018



FC Roast 6th October 2018