



Villa For England 1882-2011

Trevor Fisher

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Aston Villa is one of the great clubs of world soccer. From its founding in 1874 Villa rapidly became a major force. It was the Villa secretary William McGregor who set in motion the Football League in 1888. Football was never the same again.

Even before the League, Villa began to supply internationals. Two players were capped for England in 1882, Howard Vaughton and Arthur Brown. Vaughton became the first player to score five goals in an international match. He was the first of a legendary line of Villa England strikers, going through Harry Hampton, Billy Walker and Gerry Hitchens to Gabby Agbonlahor and Darren Bent today.

Villa have supplied England with top players in every position, with goalkeepers like Sam Hardy and Nigel Spink, defenders like Howard Spencer, Gareth Southgate and Stephen Warnock, attacking players like Charlie Athersmith, Eric Houghton, Gordon Cowans, David Platt, Brian Little, Steve Hodge, Darius Vassell, Ashley Young and Stewart Downing showing that Villa have always encouraged attacking flair.

Seventy-one players have been picked for England while wearing the claret-and-blue shirt with the Lion badge - the highest total for any club. Their stories are told in this book with an entry for every single player. The great names are picked out for detailed treatment in a Pantheon section. And the individual stories are set against the overall history of this famous club.

Villa's history has been a roller coaster ride. The massive success before World War One led to high expectations which were not matched by performance in the middle years of the 20th century. Since returning to the top level, Villa players have been chosen for England sides and World Cup squads. England managers have found Villa Park a rich source of talent, with Fabio Capello following this tradition. Villa for England tells the story of Villa's contribution to the national side.

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