Manchester United FC

1920 to 1945.

**For Ben.**

Tutor: Do you want to talk about Man U again?

*Student: OK. Let’s do that.*

We left off at the end of the First World War.

*Yes. We did.*

We said that it was the start of a bad patch for Man U.

*We did. I remember.*

No silverware.

*No silverware at all.*

These were the years between the wars.

*The first and second world wars.*

Yes.

*And it was the start of a bad patch.*

The football league got going again in 1919.

*For the 1919 – 1920 season.*

Yes.

*Their old manager had gone to Man City.*

Yes.

*And Man City had moved to a new ground.*

Maine Road.

*Yes*.

And Billy Meredith left Man U.

*A big star.*

Yes.

*He was bought by Man City, in fact.*

He was.

*And Man U began a bad patch.*

Quite a long bad patch.

*Many years of it.*

Yes.

*Depressing!*

Must have been, for the fans.

*Maybe they should have kept Billy Meredith?*

Maybe!

*The first match after the war was against Derby County.*

Only two players from before the war were still playing for Man U.

*Yes.*

Their famous striker had been killed in the war.

*Sandy Turnbull.*

So they’d lost Sandy Turnbull and Billy Meredith.

*And it showed.*

At the end of the season Man U finished 12th in the division.

*They were still in the first division.*

Yes. But only for a while.

*True.*

They were relegated at the end of that season.

*For the 1923 – 1924 season.*

But back up again the season after.

*The 1924 – 1925 season.*

Yes. And finished 9th.

*Which is OK.*

Sort of.

*Well…*

At least they were playing first division football again.

*Yes.*

The new manager was a bloke called John Chapman.

*He was quite good.*

Or so it seemed.

*Well, yes.*

Man U had a good run in the FA cup.

*They reached the semi-finals, anyway.*

Against Man city, as it happens.

*3 – 0 to City.*

Who went on to lose the final, against Bolton.

*Bolton?*

It was a while ago!

*Mmmm…*

Then the FA suspended John Chapman.

*Yes*.

They never gave any reasons.

*No.*

We still don’t know why he was suspended.

*No, not even now.*

All very hush-hush.

*Yes. Top secret.*

I wonder what he’d done!

*He must have been a naughty boy!*

Anyway, he was replaced by a bloke called Herbert Bamlett.

*But he didn’t have much luck.*

No. Man U spent the next few years in the bottom half of the first division.

*First division football, still.*

But no silverware.

*They didn’t bring home any silverware at all.*

Nothing at all.

*In the 1930 – 1931 season it got even worse.*

Man U lost 27 out of 42 league games.

*Conceded 115 goals.*

And were relegated to the second division.

*Only 3,000 fans turned up to the first game of the next season.*

Well, the football must have been rubbish.

*I suppose.*

People won’t pay to watch rubbish.

*No.*

And it got worse.

*The club was losing money fast.*

There was not enough money coming in.

*Not with gates around 3,000.*

Nowhere near enough.

*No.*

In December there was no money to pay the players!

*And they weren’t paid much in those days.*

Bankruptcy.

*Yes. Bankruptcy.*

The end of Man U.

*Looked like it.*

But there’s usually some rich bloke keen to buy a big club.

*Yes.*

Thank goodness.

*There’s usually someone willing to give it a go.*

There’s always the romance of a big club.

*And Man U was still a big club.*

Although it wasn’t doing well.

*But it was still a big club.*

Yes.

*So someone will be interested.*

And this bloke, James Gibson, turned up.

*With lots of money.*

Yes. He put up the money to keep Man U going.

*And he found a new manager.*

A bloke called Scott Duncan.

*But Man U did even worse under him.*

They almost got relegated again.

*Into the third division, this time.*

The third division!

*Man U was almost in the third division!*

Not quite, but it was a close thing.

*It was only decided by the very last game.*

When Man U beat Millwall 2-0.

*Either Man U or Millwall would be relegated.*

That last match decided it.

*And Millwall went down instead.*

So we might have seen Man U in the third division!

*Hard to imagine now.*

Yes.

*But it was a close thing back then.*

One interesting thing…

*Yes?*

Man City had a new player.

*Man City? Who was that?*

A bloke called Matt Busby.

*Matt Busby?*

He will be a big Man U name.

*One of the biggest!*

One day.

*Yes. One day.*

Bringing the glory days again.

*When he becomes manager.*

One day soon.

*Yes.*

Fairly soon, anyway.

*Right after the Second World War, in fact.*

When the glory days came back for Man U.

*The Busby years.*

When Matt Busby was in charge.

*Glory years for Man U.*

Glory and tragedy, actually.

*Well, yes.*

Glory on the pitch, but then the Munich air disaster.

*Yes. Glory and tragedy.*

But that’s for next time, maybe.

*Yes.*

Let’s leave the Busby years to another time.

*OK.*

Meanwhile, at the bottom of the second division, things were getting slightly better.

*Slightly better.*

Man U won some silverware.

*The first in many years.*

Since before the first world war, in fact.

*I suppose so.*

Long time back.

*It was only the second division championship.*

3-2 against Bury.

*So they were second division champions.*

Better than nothing, though!

*I suppose so.*

Well, it’s a cup.

*And promotion.*

Yes. And promotion.

*Up into the first division again.*

But Man U looks like a yo-yo in this period.

*Because the very next season, they’re relegated again.*

Back in the second division!

*Up and down like a yo-yo.*

Promotion one season and relegation the next.

*This is the 1936 – 1937 season, now.*

A time of worry in Britain.

*A time of worry everywhere, really.*

Europe especially.

*Yes.*

People are beginning to talk about war again.

*Hitler has been in power for a few years.*

Leader of the Nazi party in Germany.

*Yes.*

People are beginning to flee Germany.

*Jews especially.*

They’re getting out of Germany if they can.

*Einstein, for example.*

But Man U were promoted back into the first division.

*For the 1937 – 1938 season.*

And Johnny Carey was signed.

*People say he was one of the greatest full backs in history.*

Defenders, you mean.

*They were called full backs then.*

Well, yes. They were.

*He was captain for many years after the war.*

And he helped to make sure Man U was still in the first division in 1939.

*When war broke out.*

Yes.

*And the football league was stopped.*

But there were local leagues. Regional leagues.

*Yes. There were regional leagues.*

Much smaller than the national league.

*But there was still football for people to watch.*

I suppose.

*And Johnny Carey played for Man U in 112 games.*

Scoring 17 goals.

*Not bad, for a defender.*

No.

*He played in regional leagues up until 1943.*

But then went to Italy and the Middle East.

*With the army*

Well, there was a war on!

*Yes.*

In 1941 a bomb fell on Old Trafford.

*Did quite a bit of damage.*

Quite a bit.

*It hit the main stand and dressing rooms.*

Not so good.

*No.*

Expensive, I expect.

*Yes. Must have been.*

Well, there was a war on!

*Good job nobody was in the stadium.*

Good job it wasn’t a match day.

*Yes.*

We’ll have to wait and see what happens after the war.

When the Busby years begin.

*The wonderful Busby years..*

We can discuss the Busby years next time.

*OK*.