In conversation with
John Anderson

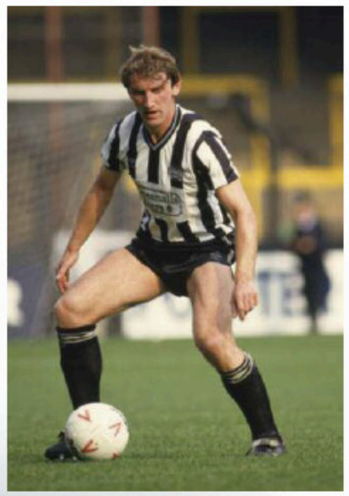
The former Newcastle Utd and Republic of Ireland defender… and now BBC Radio Newcastle commentator…takes us through his motoring memories. Some good; many bad.

John Anderson cut his footballing teeth at the Stella Maris club in Dublin. He started as a defender and ended up as a defender. As fans of his clubs in England and of his time with the Republic of Ireland international side will know, John had a tough-tackling, no nonsense style of play. He became an invaluable part of any defence.

In 1976 he joined West Bromwich Albion and then three years moved to Preston North End. He went on to represent the club on over 50 occasions.

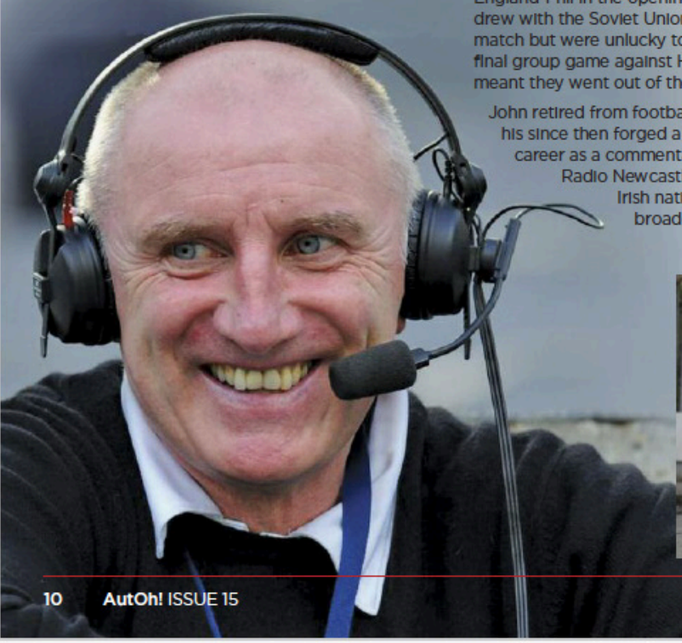
1982 was to be the year when John signed for Newcastle Utd and it wasn't long before he became a firm fans favourite. He would go on to rack-up over 300 appearances for the club in a career spanning ten years. He also scored 14 goals, one of which was a 25 yard free kick against Watford at Vicarage Road.

John was a member of the team which many fans remember fondly, playing alongside Kevin Keegan, Terry McDermott, Paul Gascoigne, Peter Beardsley and Chris Waddle. The sort of football they produced was only rivalled ten years later when Kevin Keegan returned as manager to begin what became known as the 'entertainers' era.



John represented the Republic of Ireland at schoolboy, youth, Under 21 and senior level. He won 16 caps for the senior team and scored against the USA. His proudest moment was being part of the Ireland squad which performed so brilliantly at the 1988 European championships with Jack Charlton as manager. Ireland beat England 1-nil in the opening group game, drew with the Soviet Union in the second match but were unlucky to lose in the final group game against Holland which meant they went out of the tournament.

John retired from football in 1992 and his since then forged a successful career as a commentator with BBC Radio Newcastle and with the Irish national broadcaster RTE.



So, here's John Anderson's life in cars.....

What is the first car you can remember?

Triumph Herald. It was my father's car. We used it for holidays and, when I was at the Stella Maris club in Dublin, he used to ferry me all over the place. It wasn't the most reliable bit of machinery but I can never remember the car letting us down in a big way.

What was the first car you owned?

Ford Escort. It was when I was at Preston that I took the plunge and bought a car. Like most of the youth team players we were in digs at the time and just needed something to get from A to B and, in the summer, something to get me back to Dublin. It was a glorified wreck when I bought it and even more of a wreck when, unbelievably, a teammate bought it off me when I moved to Newcastle Utd.

What did you drive during your years at Newcastle?

I was a big fan of Ford cars because they were cheap and plentiful. I had three in a row...Ford Capri, Ford Orion and a white Ford XR2. The XR2 was great. Towards the end of my career at Newcastle, I splashed out and got a Volkswagen Golf GTI. It was a flying machine.

Did you ever get a sponsored car?

Yes... a Mazda. I think it was a Mazda 323. It was probably the first car I had where I thought I could actually get to my destination without it breaking down. When I was playing for Newcastle, players still had to do a lot of travelling themselves. The only time we got taken anywhere was on a Friday if we were travelling a reasonable distance for an away game. On those occasions we had a coach.

Tidy car or a mobile skip?

Tidy car. I do a lot of miles every season and wouldn't want to be driving around with the smell of old takeaways or fish and chips.

Any motoring embarrassments?

Thankfully, they were few and far between although I have to confess that on several occasions I've relied too heavily on fuel gauges to be accurate. I've suffered the embarrassment of running out of petrol on the way home from games when, even though the gauge said the tank was empty, I always thought I could get home. Taxi for Anderson please.

Any funny memories?

I remember after a training session at the old Benwell ground, the weather was glorious, and I distinctly remember leaving the windows down on my car to keep it cool. I proudly announced to the lads that I was so accurate with a football that I could fire the ball through the open car window. I gave it the full works. The ball slammed into the window and it shattered. It wasn't open. I turned around to see the lads in a heap. Most of them had collapsed because they were laughing so much. Oops.

What's your favourite road trip?

Touring Ireland. It is the most beautiful country. If you head to the West coast you end up with remote scenery and dramatic coastlines. Wonderful. The coastal routes are truly stunning.

Steady Eddy or a bit of a speedster?

Steady Eddy. I value my licence and without it I wouldn't be able to do my job with the BBC or RTE.

What have been your favourite cars over the years?

The first car I had which actually looked remotely sporty was a Ford Capri. Even though it was a Ford, it looked great and I still think it has classic lines. I'm a big Formula One fan but I have to say that the car which really stands out for me is the black and gold John Player Special. I love the Mercedes brand. I'll never be able to afford it but, when the lottery win drops...it's only a matter of time....I'll be straight out to but a Mercedes AMG GT. Wow.

Worst car either you had or team mates had?

Kenny Wharton's Vauxhall Cavalier was a death trap. I'd describe the colour as being rust over red. I think it was the muck that was holding it together. On one occasion Kenny offered me a lift home. I quickly made up an excuse and got a taxi instead. I'd rather have got the bus.

What are you currently driving?

Audi Q5. I love it. It does everything that I need. There's plenty of room and, for long away journeys, it's comfortable. Matthew Raisbeck and I often have to drive home late at night in some filthy weather, so the security of 4-wheel drive is reassuring.

And finally....your dream car?

Mercedes GLE. It's really one step up from the Audi Q5...but only a bit bigger and a bit more luxurious. I need to get some good betting tips from Mick Martin and find a few winners.