

## PAUL BRACEWELL

Of all the players I have seen at Sunderland over the years, none were neater and tidier than Paul Bracewell. Three managers signed him and two of the three utilised him as their midfielder of choice – a go to man, who would win the ball, retain it and then look to use it with a simple but effective pass.



His first incarnation at Roker was in 1983 when Alan Durban persuaded him to move to Wearside from Stoke City. Durban had managed to get the notoriously tight fisted Tom Cowie to loosen the purse strings and sign a player that he had worked with at the Victoria Ground and he slotted into a midfield that also contained Ian Atkins and the late Mick Buckley – grafters all.

However, Bracewell came at a price. In order to sign him, Ally McCoist was moved on to Rangers after a not very productive first season- imagine Bracewell feeding the right balls to McCoist instead of Lee Chapman!!

Durban left in March with Bracewell leaving two months later. He went to Everton where he joined a midfield of Peter Reid, Trevor Steven and Kevin Richardson who fed the ball to the excellent Andy Gray and Graeme Sharp. They won the league and the European Cup Winners Cup with Bracewell playing the vast majority of games.

He donned the red and white stripes again in 1989 when Dennis Smith brought him back and he played a huge part in getting us back into Division One. The game at Sheffield United where we won 3-1 is one that I will always remember for the quality of the passes that allowed Marco to romp through the Blades defence and for the rare goal that he scored himself.



Two years later he blotted his copybook when he took off to Newcastle United and kissed the badge when he scored but back he came in 1995 when Peter Reid signed him and gave him an important role in midfield.



In that heart-breaking Premier League season of 1996-97, he produced a master class at Goodison where we won 3-1 (Russell, Bridges [2]) and Pete Horan and I shared a pint with him in The Natterjack at Birkdale. As always, his appearance was as immaculate as his football, which is more than can be said of ours that night.

After playing for and managing Fulham and a job as a Premier League coach, he came back for the fourth time as a member of the coaching staff, becoming assistant manager to Messrs Advocaat, Allardyce and Moyes. He left us, probably for the last time, in June 2017 and is currently working for Tottenham Hotspur in their youth set up.

