



English football gives thanks to Germany (no, really)

The Bundesliga has spent seven years nurturing England's great white hope for Euro 2004. Can Bayern's Owen Hargreaves now erase 38 years of hurt in Portugal?

Words by Tony Naylor Photography by Tim Richmond

Putty-coloured biker-style jacket, black cotton trousers and black shirt, all by **Dolce & Gabbana**; grey leather trainers by **Puma**



"When I see this boy with the ball my heart opens up."
 Franz Beckenbauer, Chairman, Bayern Munich

Sports journalism cliché dictates that we call it a *Roy Of The Rovers* story, though in all honesty Owen Hargreaves' history is more *Billy The Fish*. A 19-year-old breaking into Bayern Munich's first team is noteworthy. A 19-year-old Canadian breaking into the Bayern Munich first team and, in the following 12 months, helping them to win the Bundesliga and the Champions' League (ruling their semifinal beating of Real Madrid in the process) before making his international debut for England is, frankly, about as believable as a half-man, half-fish keeping goal for Fulchester United. With Mick Hucknall playing upfront.

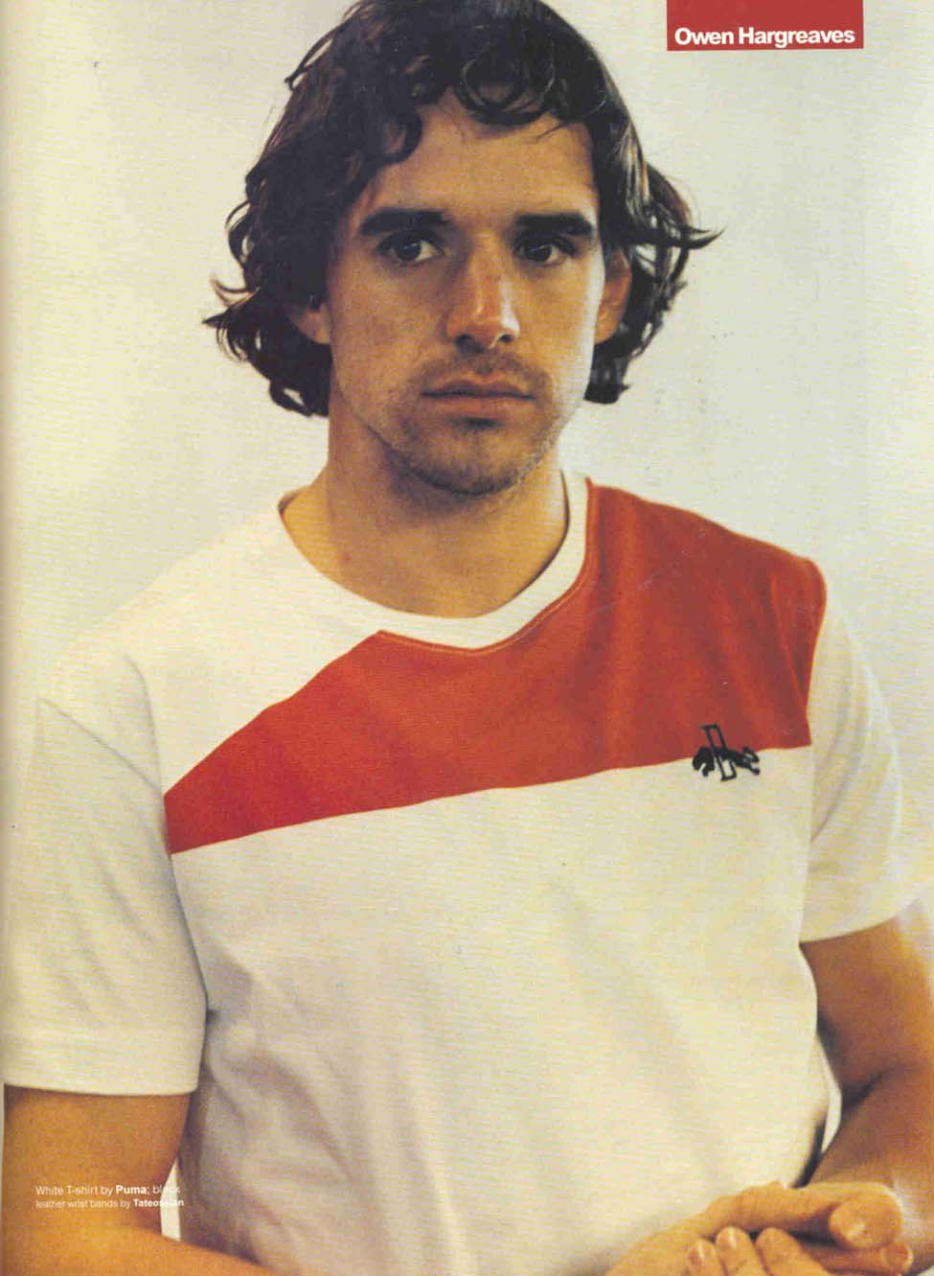
Then again, Owen Lee Hargreaves has always been a bit of a one-off. Playing football in ice-hockey country, moving to Munich aged 16, being the only German-based player in the England squad, the lad, to use footballing parlance, has "done brilliant".

Between August 2000 and August 2001, as the *wunderkind* suddenly went from squad player to star, other teenagers might have panicked, frozen and/or disappeared up their own arse. Not Owen. "I'd lived on the training ground at Bayern Munich for three years. I saw the professionals train every day. Once the opportunity came to play my first professional game I think, in a sense, I was overdue. I just felt that I was ready," he says.

"I threw him in at the deep end and he swam around freely," commented Bayern manager Ottmar Hitzfeld, using a piscine metaphor, after that Real semi three years ago, while Beckenbauer admitted: "I didn't think he would be so cool and self-confident." For Hargreaves, however, there was no question mark hanging over his ability. Seizing the day is his speciality.

While sounding fearless he admits to some moments of self-doubt, without fully understanding the concept of self-doubt as most of us may have it, in a neurotic 20-a-day, life-going-nowhere sort of way. "There's self-doubt in everything," he insists, in his Teutonic-tinged Canadian accent, "but the most important ▶

Owen Hargreaves



White T-shirt by Puma; Black
leather wrist bands by Tateossian

ARUNA

Style for men

July 2004 £3.40

