

TOP BROADCASTER RELIVES EURO 96

Dutch of class from our lads

WE'VE got another big one tonight. Another nail-biter.

ITV4's Euro 96 Relived will bring us the whole of England versus the mighty Dutch.

But to hell with the pre-match nerves, I'm going 4-1 England. Two for Shearer, two for Sheringham. It's just a hunch.

"I remember one thing in particular about that game," recalls ITV football host Mark Pougatch, whose latest tie-in podcast looks back on that extraordinary Wembley night, 24 long summers ago.

"Only twice when I've watched England - once that night as a punter and once when I



THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW
MARK POUGATCH
TV FOOTBALL PRESENTER

was working in Munich in 2001, on the night we beat Germany 5-1 - have I tapped myself on the head and gone: 'Look at the scoreboard!'

"For the Holland match I was there with mates, and I said that to them as well. I pointed to the score and went, 'Just remember that...'"

ITV Sport's decision to show us Euro 96 in full again - all 31 fixtures on the ITV Hub, with England's games and the final also on ITV4 - has proved inspired.

All right, it can't quell our appetite for live, here-and-now football, but it's certainly helping reduce the hunger pangs.

Plus it's fascinating in other ways. For example, we see the old Wembley Stadium again. "It was brilliant - and appalling," Mark chuckles. "By the end it was falling down. The loos were a disgrace."

Pundits

Also, we're getting all the old punditry. Mark admits this intrigues him not just as a fan but as a broadcaster.

"You go, 'Oh, look at that camera angle,' or 'Don't those graphics look dated? And why's Bob Wilson taken his jacket off?' It's all part of the fun.

"Mind you, if you watch the ITV panel from the 1974 World Cup, they're actually smoking!"

"Never mind the kipper ties and sideburns, there are ashtrays on the set!"

Mark's podcasts, each released to coincide with an England game on ITV4, feature nostalgic chats with some of Euro 96's top stars.

Today's features Holland's Jordi Cruyff and Teddy Sheringham.

"They all say the tournament is among their favourite memories as a footballer. They're so happy to talk about it.

"And not just the England players. Ally McCoist is really proud of the part he played for Scotland."

Obviously, Mark has his own memories, too. Working at the time for BBC Radio's sports department (but not on the Euros), he bought tickets for every England match, but made it to just two. Work scuppered the rest. That, and a wedding.

"It was on the day of the Spain match and I was best man. The groom was actually a massive football fan. So I hit him over the head with a cricket bat, and said, 'What on earth are you doing?'"

Mark did at least make the



FOND MEMORIES: ITV's footie host Mark Pougatch; and Alan Shearer scores from the spot for England against Netherlands, below



semi-final against Germany. Even now, he says he's never experienced a better atmosphere.

"It was so joyous, buoyant and optimistic," he recalls. "And such a lovely evening. It was, you know, Football's Coming Home."

"Even after we'd lost, I honestly

didn't feel distraught. It was just such a shame, that's all.

"England had played so well. They deserved better."

EURO 96 Relived is on ITV Hub and ITV4. The Euro 96 Relived podcast is available from iTunes and Spotify.

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