



# THE SECRET OF STANLEY MATTHEWS

**HE LIKES THE TOUCHLINE AND  
THAT GIVES ME MY CHANCE**

by **TOMMY BANKS**

**Bolton Wanderers**

**F**ROM time to time there is criticism of English methods of training. There are suggestions that Continental clubs are fitter. But I believe that our ways are excellent.

I revel in training, especially in the sort of things we do at Bolton. In addition to lapping, we have conditioning games, Rugby and other skills which bring real pleasure.

In the 1956-7 season, I, in fact, had to be checked. They said I was doing too much—which is a great tribute to the programme we follow.

The 'take it easy' warning followed a spell in which I had some leg trouble. One day I was on the practice pitch when I heard a click. I did not bother about it.

But it did not clear up, so our trainer, Bert Sproston, called me off. Day by day I hoped the trouble would right itself, but eventually I had to have a special type of 'stretch' operation.

I felt as fit as could be afterwards, and flung myself into the daily routine, looking forward to our forthcoming Cup-tie with Blackpool.

Then, one morning, when training was more or less finished, I decided to put on my spikes.

*I had a few sprints and my leg still seemed fine. "One more for luck," I decided. Then there was another 'click'. The trouble had returned.*

There was another long lay-off and often I wondered if the trouble would really clear up. But the rest did me good and by the end of the season I was all right again.

But I was very sorry to miss the tie with Blackpool because I usually have a good game against Stan Matthews.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not boasting. *His style suits me. He likes to keep to the touchline, if possible, and so I am always able to tackle with my good foot.*

It's different with Tom Finney. He is always a worry because he rarely does the expected. He can pass a full back either side.

You expect him to move down the wing and shape for a tackle, but with a sudden body movement he changes direction and is away on your inside. As he is also a natural left-footer, this move gives him a much better shooting angle.

I say, without hesitation, that Finney is by far the most dangerous winger I've met.

Talking of Finney and Matthews and injuries, reminds me of the 1953 Cup Final between Bolton and Blackpool.

Bolton qualified to meet Everton in the semi-final and a couple of weeks before that game I was promoted.

I had a couple of games and then, against Cardiff, I pulled a muscle. That meant a lay-off and no place in the semi-final team.

We won, and the Banks family was still represented in the Final because my elder brother Ralph played. It was a blow to us all when Blackpool snatched a last-minute winner.

Most footballers can more easily recall Cup games than league matches. Probably that is because of the extra excitement caused by a good run, and dreams of Wembley.

The season after we had lost to Blackpool, we again moved well on the Cup road. In the sixth round we were due at Sheffield Wednesday.

It was a fantastic game. Our hopes faded when skipper Willie Moir missed a penalty kick. But in the dying seconds he got an equaliser — with a half-hit shot which the goalkeeper completely misjudged.

Yet, on our own ground, in the replay, we made a hash of things, and although we had all the play, Wednesday won 2-0.

But we made no mistake last season, against Preston. A third round draw at Deepdale was enough to worry any club, but we were then playing with such spirit that I felt we might shake our Lancashire rivals.

And shake them we did. I'm sure that game will rank

among Bolton's finest performances. Everyone was on top form and we had a smashing 3-0 win.

We faced another tough task against Wolves in the sixth round. Before that game I had butterflies in my stomach for the first time in my career.

Usually I am not nervous, but so much hinged on the match that until I got on the field and kicked the ball, I could not settle down.

Ten minutes from time we were leading 2-1, but then Ray Parry was injured and we had to defend desperately with ten men.

I think the excitement of the Cup was really illustrated in this match. It certainly seemed to affect Wolves, who became so anxious that they crowded themselves out of the game by over-eagerness.

Then came a 2-1 victory over Blackburn . . . and it was Wembley again. This time we made no mistake against Manchester United. It was the greatest day of my life.

In my early days I might have gone to Wolves instead of Bolton. Wolves made me an offer, but I decided not to leave home and joined Bolton.



**"I hope you change your mind and come back soon. I will need one of those cases for my football things!"**