DAVID SEAMAN ON HIS BIG FEAR & LINKING UP WITH HIS OLD 3 LIONS PALS AGAIN

Where are they now!

THEY are football icons who have gone from superfit to flabby since hanging up their boots. Now, in a new ITV show, Harry Redknapp, 72, and his assistant John Barnes, 55, are on a mission to get a squad of former England stars to shape up for a final battle with bitter rivals Germany. **JAMES MOORE** reveals how the team got on trying to squeeze into their Three Lions shirts....

NEIL "RAZOR" RUDDOCK, 50
Who: 24st hardman was a defender for Liverpool and West Ham.
Form: Warned by experts that he might drop dead at any minute. Lost 4st in run-up to filming.

PAUL MERSON, 50
Who: Ex-Arsenal midfielder who has battled drink, drug and gambling addictions.
Form: Has admitted struggling to control his gambling, but lost a whopping 15lbs while on the show.

MATT LE TISSIER, 50
Who: Ex-Southampton and England midfielder, now Sky Sports pundit.
Form: "I've always struggled with my weight since I retired. My body fat levels were dangerous." Lost 10 kilos.

DAVID SEAMAN, 55
Who: Ex-England and Arsenal goalie.
Form: Weighed 17st but skates and goes cycling.

ROBBIE FOWLER, 43
Who: Liverpool goal legend. Now runs a property empire and is said to be worth £28million.
Form: "I was disappointed by my weight."

CHRIS WADDLE, 58
Who: Midfielder for Newcastle United and Spurs. Now a BBC Radio 5 Live pundit.
Form: At 15 stone says: "I thought it would be really good to be back in shape again."

RAY PARLOUR, 46
Who: Starred as a midfielder for Arsenal. The 14st star worked as a pundit for BBC Radio 5 Live and talkSPORT.
Form: "I was probably in better shape than some of the others." Swapped beer for gin and tonics.

LEE SHARPE, 47
Who: Winger for Manchester United and Leeds United.
Form: At 14st says: "I wanted to be serious and get into shape... and the show gave me the motivation."

ROB LEE, 53
Who: Newcastle United midfielder. Now a pundit and commentator.
Form: Weighed in at 15st.

MARK CHAMBERLAIN, 57
Who: Played for Sheffield Wednesday, Portsmouth and Brighton. His son Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain has gone on to play for Liverpool and England.
Form: Weighed 15st: "At my age I'm struggling to bend down and put my socks on."

MARK WRIGHT, 55
Who: A defender for Southampton and Liverpool. He's since become a pundit and businessman.
Form: Weighing in at 16st he says: "It's an eye-opener."

Pictures: TIM MERRY

'The only thing I miss is the banter'

DAVID Seaman, ex-Arsenal and England goalkeeper, tells me he has a recurring nightmare. I don't doubt it.

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW — DAVID SEAMAN

I'm assuming it's his fatal fluff in the 2002 World Cup, letting Brazil's Ronaldinho scoop a free kick over him from 30-odd yards, sealing England's exit.

That, or being lobbed from half that distance again in the dying moments of 1995's European Cup Winners' Cup Final – by Zaragoza's Nayim, ex of fierce rivals Spurs.

But no, I assume wrong. "In my dream," he reveals, "I'm about to play in a match when I suddenly realise I haven't got my kit. I often have that one. It's really weird.

"Mind you, I did once turn up at an England training session with two left-handed gloves. That was for real."

So I take it, deep down, he's missing that old matchday buzz?

Apparently not. "Honestly, Mike, I haven't missed football since the day I retired," insists David, who quit in 2004, aged 40.

What he has missed is the banter. Hence he was thrilled to be approached for a new ITV series kicking off tonight, Harry's Heroes: The Full English, where ex-England pros reunite for one last clash with old enemy Germany. Overseen by Harry Redknapp and assistant John Barnes, the likes of Paul Merson, Matt Le Tissier, Ray Parlour, Neil "Razor" Ruddock and David himself are challenged to regain at least a smattering of match fitness to face a team of German veterans.

"Yes, it was great to see all the lads," he admits. "It was like being a footballer again."

Some of these ex-pros, as you'll see, are in better shape than others, but they're all rather chunkier than in their playing days. Ruddock, the most extreme example, is now the size of a tank. Harry fears they're "a heart attack waiting to happen".

But David is the least of his worries. "I haven't let myself go," he assures me. He and his wife, left, pro skater Frankie Poultney (they met on Dancing On Ice in 2014), still regularly take to the rink. "It's a great workout. We do lifts, spins, all sorts. And I love my bike. I'll often blast off 25 miles."

And do other road-users recognise the ex-England keeper, peddling like a loon down the A4 near his Berkshire home?

"No chance! I'm wearing my hat, glasses, everything. Plus I've got no 'tache or ponytail now!"

Ah, yes, the legendary Seaman ponytail. Does he miss that?

"No, I don't!" he laughs. "I only had it for four or five years, you know. The 'tache, now that was different. I was born with that!"

> I was never one to shout and bawl on pitch

I sense that David's easy-going nature ("I was never one for shouting and bawling on the pitch") have played a key role in keeping him sane in retirement.

Even before that, as other players wrestled with addictions (for team-mate Paul Merson, for instance, it was booze, gambling and coke), David was getting hooked on fishing. It's still a huge passion.

"I'd been playing golf to relax, but sometimes I'd walk off the course more frustrated than when I walked on. I was like: 'Hang on, this isn't working'."

He still watches plenty of football, largely for his talkSPORT breakfast show role with Alan Brazil. And there's plenty in today's game that impresses him. "I saw a stat that said it was 30 to 40% faster than in my day. That's amazing."

As for the crazy wages, not a problem. "It's just market forces. It's not that different from film stars."

Retiring at 40 was David's own choice. He's sure this helped him adjust. "When players have to quit early through injury, that must be a whole different mental thing. I don't know how I'd have coped."

It helps, of course, that he enjoyed a hugely successful career. Even those rare howlers never fazed him for long. "That Ronaldinho thing was obviously on a massive stage, but those moments can make you stronger."

And Nayim's trophy-winning lob? "Yes, Spurs fans are forever reminding me of that," he chuckles. "But I'm lucky. I've got nine winners' medals. That's what I point out if they get fairy!"

Harry's Heroes: The Full English is tonight and tomorrow on ITV at 9pm. David supports the British Heart Foundation's charity cycle rides. Details at bhf.org.uk/bike-rides.

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