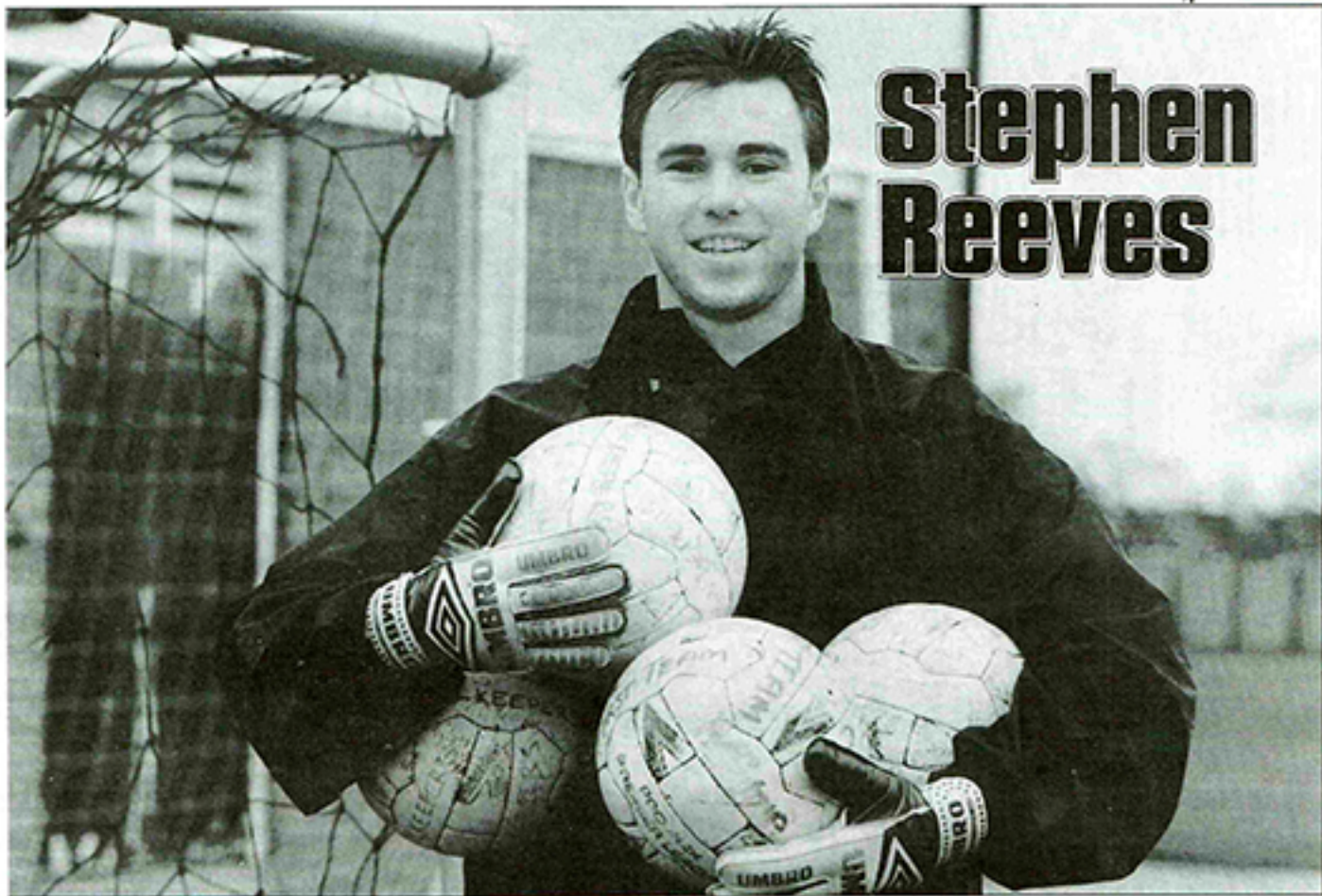


Waiting in the wings – young keeper with high hopes

Stephen Reeves



Having a ball ... Stephen Reeves is looking forward to a long career

SOUTHERNER Stephen Reeves had to leave the club he always supported to carry on his goal-keeping education at Goodison.

Dagenham-born Stephen, just 20, was attracted to Everton at the thought of working with one of his early heroes — Neville Southall.

But that meant he had to hand in the gloves at Upton Park, where he had already been offered pro forms by West Ham.

"It was a good opportunity for me to come here," said Stephen. "The prospects weren't too good at West Ham and I didn't fancy staying there, even though they offered me a contract."

"I needed to get away from home and concentrate on football."

That meant moving north and finding digs in Liverpool as a 16-year-old who needed to grow up fast.

"I did find it a struggle when I first came away from home, living on my own," he said.

"But it's definitely been worthwhile. And the main attraction for me was coming to work with Neville, who's always been one of the best in the world. It was also a bigger club and I really wanted to learn from Neville."

Stephen joined the east London club when he was just eight while his older brother Robert had already been a reserve goalkeeper for the Hammers.

He has been Everton's number three almost since the day he arrived.

I jumped at the chance to work with Nev

But recently he's had the chance of a more extended run in the reserves — and more first team trips — because of Jason Kearton's loan move to Notts County.

"I have played in lengthy spells for the reserves when Jason has been out on loan," said the six-foot goalie, "but then there have also been patches when I have hardly played at all for the second team. It can be frustrating, too, because I have been in the A team since I arrived here."

"But you have to be patient if you are a goalkeeper waiting for a chance."

"I have been travelling with the first team for a while now, rooming with Tony

Grant when he's been in the squad."

"And in goalkeepers' training, Neville has been absolutely brilliant with me."

"He knows most things about goalkeeping and he's always willing to help. If you have got time for him, he has got time for you."

Now Stephen aims to follow in Neville's footsteps.

"If the possibility ever arose, I would love to play in the Premier League for Everton," he said.

"But at the moment I just want regular reserve games. And it is hard for keepers — after all, there's only one in the team."

"But I've got time and I'm looking forward to a long career between the posts."



How you can play like Everton stars



by Dave Fogg, Everton Youth Team Coach

PASSING is the most important part of the game. To practice, organise small passing exercises in threes.

Get in a line with the first man side-footing the ball to the middle player. He knocks the ball back to the first man for him to strike it, first time, to the third man. Keep passing the ball between the three of you, and take turns to go in the middle.

This exercise gives you everything to improve your passing skills. You get a touch on the inside of your foot, when you pass it with your instep.

You get in line with the ball as it comes towards you and you get practice using the right parts of the body when controlling the ball. You can kick the ball with your foot, your knee, chest or head.

When you are passing, keep your eye on the ball and your head over the ball.

If you are chipping the ball, lean back to lift it in the air and pass with the inside of the foot.