



# Big Mal: The High Life and Hard Times of Malcolm Allison, Football Legend

*David Tossell*

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Malcolm Allison is one of the most controversial figures of the last half-century of English football. Leader of the famed 'West Ham Academy', his playing career was cut short by the loss of a lung to tuberculosis. Disillusioned, he became a professional gambler before acknowledging that football was his calling. After humble beginnings as a coach, he began a celebrated partnership with Joe Mercer, turning Manchester City into one of the most stylish teams English football has produced.

Along with the trophies came the birth of Big Mal, the larger-than-life personality who helped revolutionise televised football. He became instantly recognisable for his cigar and Fedora, and equally notorious for a string of affairs with beautiful women.

As the dark side of Big Mal took over, he was banned for life from the touchlines, became embroiled in a series of boardroom battles and spent time in police cells and rehabilitation clinics fighting the effects of alcoholism. Yet despite the often-destructive effect of his Big Mal persona, Malcolm Allison retains his status as one of the most incisive minds to have graced the game. This book tells both sides of the story, tracing the life and times of one of the most charismatic characters in British sport.



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