

Border Terrier

BRODIE PLOTS ROUTE FROM SCOTLAND VIA IRELAND TO CHAMPIONSHIP SAFETY



EXCLUSIVE by JUSTIN ALLEN

WHATEVER gets thrown at Brodie Spencer during his career, this season will take some beating.

The versatile 19-year-old Huddersfield full-back has had one hell of a breakthrough campaign – first on loan at Motherwell and since January, in West Yorkshire again.

He has taken on the two Old Firm giants on their own turf, become an established Northern Ireland international and tested himself against Manchester City in the FA Cup.

But he also played for **FOUR** different managers – and Huddersfield are in serious peril of dropping into the third tier for the first time in 12 years.

Spencer (*below*) is billing today's crunch home clash with Birmingham as a "relegation play-off".

The Terriers sit second from bottom on 44 points – three adrift of safety – while their visitors are one place and two points above them.

And he told SunSport: "It's the biggest game of the season and everyone knows there must be no other outcome than three points. It's a relegation play-off."

"We can't go into the game too eager. Over 90 minutes we've got to pick the right times and don't let the occasion get to us.

"Then after this game we'll have to fight again at Ipswich. We've got to keep our foot on the gas until the full-time whistle at Portman Road."

Spencer began the season by starting Huddersfield's Carabao Cup tie with Middlesbrough under Neil Warnock, played for Stuart Kettlewell at Motherwell (*right*) before returning to the John Smith's Stadium to work with Darren Moore and then Andre Breitenreiter.

The defender said: "They've all been great to work with and their doors have always been open for me, which as a youngster is important."

"I've played a lot of games, which at my age has been a great

achievement. I enjoyed my time in Scotland. It was my first proper taste of being in a first-team environment.

"You learn to adapt to playing against much smarter and experienced players and feeling the pressure in front of crowds."

"I grew up a Rangers fan, so to play in front of a packed-out Ibrox was unbelievable."

"I loved playing against someone of the calibre of James Tavernier, who has bossed the

SPL for years.

"Even to go to Parkhead and take a point off Celtic was great, though it was an intimidating place to play."

Spencer was thrown in

the deep end returning from Scotland – playing 90 minutes against Pep Guardiola's superstars at the Etihad in the FA Cup. Inevitably, City won 5-0 – and enjoyed a staggering **EIGHTY-FOUR** per cent possession.

He added: "Even though you figure you're a good player and near the top, there's still so much more you must do to reach the next level."

"Playing against City keeps you on your toes and makes you want to learn more and get better."

"It's just the way they pass. The weight of it, how patient they are and how they can just go from a slow-paced pass to picking up speed – and the next thing you know they're in your box. Jeremy Doku

was so explosive, he could go inside and outside. But Phil Foden was unbelievable."

Last month, Spencer enjoyed the high of beating Scotland 1-0 at Hampden Park for Northern Ireland.

He said: "To produce that perfor-



mance against a team that have qualified for the Euros was satisfying and shows what we're capable of."

Spencer is surprised Huddersfield are in this predicament but admitted: "We've been in winning positions but have given away soft goals. We have had a soft belly."

"The Championship is an unforgiving league. You don't get away with making mistakes and switching off for five minutes. You get punished."





BRO-MANCE . . .
Spencer battles City's "explosive" Jeremy Doku and (below) applauds the fans after playing for Northern Ireland

BIG DAY

HOW IT STANDS

	P	Pts	GD
19 Blackburn	44	49	-16
20 Plymouth	44	48	-11
21 Sheff Wed	44	47	-29

	P	Pts	GD
22 Birmingham	44	46	-16
23 Huddersfield	44	44	-27
24 Rotherham	44	24	-53

PERMUTATIONS

ROTHERHAM are already down and **HUDDERSFIELD** will join them if they lose to **BIRMINGHAM** or if they draw, **SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY** beat **West Brom** and **PLYMOUTH** avoid defeat to **Millwall**. **Birmingham** will be relegated if they lose, **Wednesday** and **Plymouth** both win and **BLACKBURN** avoid defeat.

ROCK-BOTTOM Rotherham could end their away campaign without a win. They would be the 128th team to do so in league history and the first since 2016-17 — which was also the **Millers** in the **Championship**.

