



# **Sami Hyypiä: From Voikkaa to the Premiership (Mainstream Sport)**

*Okki Halala, Sami Hyypia*

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When Gerard Houllier took over as manager of Liverpool FC in 1999, his quest was to bring glory back to Anfield. His prime concern lay with strengthening his defence and to this end he made what is arguably one of his finest signings. Houllier targeted Sami Hyypiä, a relatively unknown player who was at the time captain of the Dutch team Willem II.

This candid biography focuses on Hyypiä's eventful journey from the Finnish village of Voikkaa to the heights of the English Premiership, where he has become the inspirational leader of the Liverpool team. It charts his life from childhood and documents his astonishing rise in the game, from youth teams to Finnish senior sides Pallo-Peikot, KUMU and MyPa - as well as his international career - before moving on to his years in Holland and England playing for Willem II and Liverpool respectively.

Hyypia reflects on past games in which he competed against the likes of Batistuta, Rivaldo, Van Nistelrooy and Henry, and recalls the Liverpool derbies in which he's played. He also shares his thoughts on the Reds' 2001 UEFA Cup campaign, in which they defeated the mighty Barcelona in the semi-finals before going on the defeat Deportivo Alavés 5-4 in the final to clinch the coveted trophy. In 2001-02 season, during which the team had to contend with the serious illness of their manager, Hyypiä led them to the quarter-finals of the Champions League and second place in the Premiership. Then, in season 2002-03, Liverpool won the Worthington Cup and narrowly missed out on a Champions League place.

Featuring exclusive contributions from numerous former and current colleagues and teammates, including Gérard Houllier, Jari Litmanen and Michael Owen, Sami Hyypiä digs deep to reveal all about the man, his views on the game, and his hopes and plans for the future.

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