

Times Sport Hit Parade: top 40 from Borg to Billie Jean (not Michael Jackon's lover)

Rick Broadbent has produced the definitive guide to sporting references in music. Click on the links to hear the songs or watch the sportspeople in action



No 50: The Pernice Brothers see a tragic side to Bjorn Borg

[Why music and sport will survive any crisis](#)

40) The Ballad of Bjorn Borg - The Pernice Brothers

The [Pernice Brothers](#) indie bandleader Joe Pernice wrote about [Borg](#) as he felt he was a tragic figure. Think bankrupt underpants company rather than five Wimbledon titles.

39) The Saturday Boy - Billy Bragg

"I never made the first team, I just made the first team laugh," Dagenham's finest [sings](#) in another tale of unrequited love.

38) Who Killed Davey Moore? - Bob Dylan

[Davey Moore](#) was the world featherweight champion who died after a bout with Sugar Ramos in 1963. Dylan is a legend despite never knowingly singing in tune.

37) George Best - The Wedding Present (album)

[Angsty group](#) of moderately ugly men [sing songs](#) about girlfriend trouble because they are an angsty group of moderately ugly men wishing they were the fifth Beatle.

36) Teenage Armchair Honved Fan - Half Man Half Biscuit

[Honved](#) were the Hungarian football team that spawned Ferenc Puskas. [HMHB](#) have just released CSI:Ambleside.

35) Salvador Sanchez - Sun Kil Moon

Like Dylan without the misfiring chainsaw pipes, this is a [folk song](#) about another [featherweight champion](#) killed in a car crash in 1982.

34) Conchita Martinez - Saint Etienne

[Dance band](#) named after a football team best known for losing to Liverpool sing a song about a tennis player best known for [beating Martina Navratilova](#).

33) We Didn't Start The Fire - Billy Joel

Pint-sized piano man [bangs on](#) about Sugar Ray Robinson, Mickey Mantle and Brooklyn Dodgers, as well as Thalidomide and monkeys in space.

32) Frankly Mr Shankly - The Smiths

[Legendary gaffer](#) gets [title-billing](#) but alas it is a shameless rhyme and said hero is damned as a "flatulent pain the arse."

31) Fun Fun Fun - The Beach Boys

Before Brian Wilson put his piano in a sandbox and went to bed for three years, he was perfectly happy to sing about the [Indy 500](#).

30) You Broke My Heart - The Saw Doctors

A song about football and love and people who don't pass. Hailed themselves as "cynical optimists" and then the keyboard player won the Lottery. There is a moral there.

29) Philadelphia Freedom - Elton John

The wiggly shoe collector loves his tennis and penned this ditty as a [homage](#) to Billie Jean King of the Philadelphia Freedoms.

28) The Stars Of Track & Field - Belle & Sebastian

From the brilliant "If You're Feeling Sinister" (credit: J Barton), [Tufty Club toughies](#) manage to rhyme "throwing discus" with "Liverpool and Widnes".

27) Fireworks - The Tragically Hip

"I never heard someone say that before...you were loosening my grip on [Bobby Orr](#)." It's about ice hockey.

26) Empty Baseball Park - Whiskeytown

Strange how Americans see the [romance](#) of sport, whereas we generally deem them worthy of hirsute knees-ups with Ossie Ardiles.

25) Prologue To History - Manic Street Preachers

Few can rival the [Manics](#) for a leftfield sporting nod. Hence: "Today a poet who can't play guitar, tomorrow Steve Overtt has injured his calf." Also mentions Phil Bennett at outside half.

24) To Be Someone - The Jam

"To be someone must be a wonderful thing, [a famous footballer](#), a rock singer." A train driver or a vet would not have worked.

23) All Kinds Of Time - Fountains Of Wayne

Unlike most songs here, this is [bereft of deep](#) meaning or metaphor, and describes one play in an American football game.

22) Born Slippy - Underworld

The track was [made famous](#) in the cult film "Trainspotting" and was inspired by Born Slippy, a greyhound that the band won money on.

21) Hit Somebody (the hockey song) - Warren Zevon

"He saw himself scoring for the Wings or Canucks, but he [wasn't that good](#) with a puck."

20) Magic Johnson - Red Hot Chili Peppers

The [LA Laker](#) and Aids activist gets his own [tribute song](#) courtesy of the funk metalheads with the naked bass player.

19) England 2 Colombia 0 - Kirsty MacColl

The acerbic songsmith says her other half can go to hell, she's off to Brazil. England went to Saint Etienne (the place, not band) [after this](#) and lost to Argentina.

18) No 29 - Steve Earle and the Dukes

Another paean to the noble art of wearing tight pants, crash helmets and dodgy eyeliner in the name of sport. ("We were playing Smithville, big boys, farm boys, second down and four to go")

17) Greetings From The New Brunette - Billy Bragg

"How can you lie there and think of England when you don't even know who's in the team." [A line](#) to brag about.

16) The Fix - Elbow

Horse-racing has largely passed the music world by, but the [Mercury prize-winners](#) give it a go with dodgy deeds down Epsom way.

15) Leeds United - Amanda Palmer

The Dresden Doll is an [acquired taste](#) who has struggled to make ends meet and can get quite rowdy. Much like Leeds.

14) The Hitter - Bruce Springsteen

Taking a rare break from writing about cars, rivers and women named Mary, [The Boss](#) gives us his take on tragic boxers.

13) Too Long In Exile - Van Morrison

Knee-high to a hobbit, the [po-face pintpot](#) lightens up when thinking of home. "Just like George Best, baby, too long in exile, just like Alex Higgins, baby."

12) Tour de France - Kraftwerk

The godfathers of techno music love [their bikes](#). It is all down to their perennial interest in [man](#), [machine](#) and movement, Nothing at all to do with drugs.

11) When An Old Cricketer Leaves The Crease - Roy Harper

Little known but long-serving [folk hero](#) realises that you can even find pathos in among the cucumber sarnies.

10) Bob Wilson Anchorman - Half Man Half Biscuit

Prior to coupling Senegal with Jim Rosenthal, [HMHB sing](#): "I've asked everybody in Kazakhstan but I still don't understand Bob Wilson, anchorman."

9) Boxing - Ben Folds Five

An ageing [Muhammad Ali](#) suggests boxing has been good to him over contradictory [piano-tinkling](#) .

8) Wayne Rooney - Johnny Flynn

[Man Utd fans beware](#), new folk troubadour and Jerome Flynn's step-brother merely wrote this song on the back of a Rooney photo. Bestie gets a mention, though.

7) You're In My Heart - Rod Stewart

The man with the [bleached Yukka bouffant](#) pinpoints the meaning of trite. "You're Celtic, United, but baby I've decided, you're the best team I've ever seen." Great song, though.

6) Do You Believe In Me - Catatonia

Long-forgotten [band](#) sing about long-forgotten striker. "I'm [Andy Cole's](#) tortured soul lost out again in front of goal."

5) Venus and Serena - Super Furry Animals

Top tune uses [tennis analogy](#) to talk about a child who can't communicate with his elders but likes tortoises.

4) I Don't Want To Play Football - Belle & Sebastian

Second entry from [gentle giants](#) shows that, as well as beautiful and vital, football can be ugly, violent and all a bit silly really.

3) The Convalescent - Manic Street Preachers

Few people have managed to [shout about](#) Haile Gebrselassie and Alberto Juantprena with quite such aplomb.

2) A Lover Sings - Billy Bragg

"There is no real substitute for a [ball struck](#) squarely and firmly." One for Joe Cole.

1) Hurricane - Bob Dylan

Controversial [protest song](#) about Rubin 'Hurricane' [Carter](#), a world title contender wrongly imprisoned for three murders and freed almost 20 years later.

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