



LJMU Research Online

Owen, K and Owen, PB

Sole_Zine 10 Grand Slam

<https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/26893/>

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

Owen, K ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2517-4739> and Owen, PB (2025) Sole_Zine 10 Grand Slam. Sole_Zine 10 Grand Slam, 10. ISSN 2634-7598

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

TRAINERS
SNEAKERS
KICKS+WEBS
STRIDES+SOLES
CREPS+BEATERS
TRABS+TRAINEES

Whatever you call your footwear, there is a particular tribe who are obsessive about theirs.

volume 10 / Grand Slam
Summer 2025



How the 1980s golden era of Football and Tennis changed the face of high street Fashion and inspired Casual Culture.

Trainers and especially adidas trainers have been a staple of Terrace Casual culture since the late 1970's. The look, originating on the football terraces of Merseyside, is a result of lads travelling around the continent, following the success of Liverpool Football Club during the European Cup. They would bring back all manner of sportswear and little-known designer labels, including Fila and Sergio Tacchini tracksuits to match with their adidas Trimm Trab's and SL's. These young football fans were no longer wearing their team colours but instead re-appropriated these branded sports items which started a new fashion style. The Casual scene was born - becoming a phenomena in menswear fashion - a legacy that is still visible today.

Dave Hewitson, author, owner of 80s Casuals, and an authority on the start of Casual Culture. He takes time out to talk to us in his own words, and takes us back to 1981 and his hunt for the adidas Grand Slam.

1981

The Summer riots including those in Liverpool's Toxteth, fuelled by police tensions plus societal and economic issues led to the proposed abandoning and 'managed decline' of Liverpool by the Tory government. Although the advice of 'decline' never materialised as such, times were going to be tough on Merseyside. The recession and the constant closure of industry sectors led to unemployment figures hitting more than 2.5 million in Britain, with approximately 6000 people joining the dole queue daily. These figures increased year on year until hitting a peak of over 3 million by 1986.

Remembering this period as a time when 9 O'Levels were usually needed to gain a place in University, the only alternative for school leavers on Merseyside was the uncertainty in the jobs market and a period of claiming dole or attending a YOP [Youth Opportunities Programme] scheme. The Dole or Supplementary Benefit for school leavers was £12.95 per week. On reaching 18 that would go up to £16.35. Not even enough for a decent pair of training shoes or 'trainees' as we called them. Samba and Stan Smith being £20 in the few sports shops that sold trainers for sport. Remember the early 80s were when sports shops actually sold sporting goods for playing sport in. No one was supposed to wear trainees on the streets or terraces of Anfield or Goodison.



adidas SAMBA



adidas MAMBA



adidas BAMBA



adidas KICK

By 1981 I was settled into my second year of a four year apprenticeship at a local printers. My wages had risen in February from £29 to £35, so I had been fortunate enough to have been able to afford a season ticket at Anfield and keep up with the latest trends, namely adidas trainers and the forever changing jeans, that would be 'in' then 'out' a month later. There was a lot going on in the World but there was a form of escapism and refuge in the way of Football, Music and Fashion.

Football

Liverpool's average league attendances throughout the 1980s were always mid 30,000s, even though the capacity was 45,000, which actually made it possible to stroll up to Anfield on the day of a game and pay cash to get in. So fans would pick and choose games if and when they could afford it.

Music

A second coming of Liverpool sounds began to hit the charts by the late 70s, early 80s, as a post-punk scene centred around Eric's club in Liverpool had artists emerging such as Echo and The Bunnymen, The Teardrop Explodes, The Mighty Wah! OMD and Deaf School to name a few. It was always possible to see some great acts in the numerous venues showcasing the local talent.

Fashion

Liverpool teenagers had become obsessed with fashion by the end of the 70s. No one wanted to dress like their parents or elder brothers in their flared jeans and fly-away collared shirts. A burgeoning new style had worked its way into the wardrobe of the local youth and the terraces of Anfield and Goodison became the catwalk of these young models.

By the 80s adidas training shoes had become the essential part of any match day uniform. The UK sports shops had limited stock of the cheaper adidas with prices not exceeding £20. Mamba and Samba were stocked for the five-a-side football enthusiast and then Stan Smith was the main choice for any tennis players. Besides a few other styles for tennis and badminton it was thought the UK customer would be unwilling to pay over £20 for a pair of trainers.

No one was supposed to wear Trainees on the Streets or Terraces of Anfield or Goodison.

Little did we realise that other countries in Europe had tons of adidas styles to choose from with prices up to £35 a pair. As 1980 drew to a close, adidas Comfort had been spotted. With its stand out velcro straps and blue stripes, a pair of 'Strapovers' became the must have Christmas showpiece. Although probably purchased on a trip abroad, the local sports stores had been inundated with requests for the shoe and were soon able to stock their shelves.

If any year characterised the start of a national sub-culture, it would be 1981. The wearing of adidas trainers became integral to the new fashion being showcased around the country by the travelling scousers. They stood out as much as the latest wedge hairstyle. As there was limited adidas availability in the UK, a pair of trainers from abroad would have added cache in the one up-manship stakes. The Trimm-Trab trainer

Instagram:
@80scasualsld

Size:
9

First Pair:
adidas Samba

Latest Pair:
adidas SL72 [2025]

Holy Grail:
Too old now to have
a Holy Grail!

INTERVIEW: Dave Hewitson with Paul and Kayla Owen

PO: What was it about the Grand Slam that made you covet them so badly back in '81?

DH: In that period of trainer culture, it was all about the scarcity of the trainer. The limited availability in the UK, basically because of the significant price hike of importing a £20 adidas Samba or a £30 Trimm-Trab meant the colourful, more expensive trainers had to be sought from abroad. 1981 and '82 was a time when the Trimm-Trab became ubiquitous on Merseyside as kids brought them back from Europe. I was looking for something a little different that stood out. So the Grand Slam, with its coloured pegs and silver stripes, became my Holy Grail.

PO: In 2022 we saw the Grand Slam on display at the exhibition Art of the Terraces, in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, what other shoes in your opinion were pivotal and significant to that time?

DH: If you think about the start of the culture in the late 70s, we had to showcase some of the major pieces as they became iconic and would trigger good memories for visitors to the exhibition. So the adidas Samba, Stan Smith, Forest Hills and the Trimm-Trab all had to be displayed as each played a significant part in the development of the culture.

KO: What are your top three trainers which you would define as iconic?

DH: If I'm defining iconic trainers they would have to be three that played a significant part in the development of a burgeoning subculture. They are all adidas, so there is Samba with it being the first trainer to be worn on the streets in huge numbers. This trainer basically kick-started a revolution on the streets of the UK. It was rapidly followed by the Stan Smith, which has sold over 100 million worldwide since 1971 and has become a fashion staple. And then probably the most iconic and recognised by everyone is the Trimm-Trab. One of the first to be brought back from Europe by Liverpool fans in 1981 and Wade Smith's biggest selling trainer in '82-83. He took over £110,000 in his first year with over 90% being from Trimm-Trab sales.

PO: We know that adidas incorporated NASA technology in the production of the Forest Hills, used velcro straps for the Comfort and of course the Grand Slam pegs. Is technology a driving factor of one-upmanship in the subculture?

DH: I don't think technology played a factor in some young scally wanting a pair of Forest Hills or Grand Slam. Most people probably only found out about the Forest Hills NASA involvement 20 years after they were released. Plus I bought the Grand Slam because of their aesthetic appeal. It was only on opening the box and finding the peg technology leaflet that I realised what the pegs were for.

PO: In terms of technology that you saw in trainers during the 1980s, would you rate adidas as innovators or savvy marketeers?

DH: The 80s were all about innovation for the global sports brands. Their aim was to produce the best training shoes for the athletes that would wear them. I wouldn't have thought streetwear and producing training shoes for comfort and to walk the streets was on their minds. Advertising at the time was aimed at the athletic customer as all training shoes were made for a variety of sports. I don't think they would try to market a trainer using the latest technology unless they knew it would work. It was only in the late 80s that they realised trainers were being worn on every street across the globe that 'casual' trainers made basically for streetwear became their manufacturing goal.

KO: What was the first pair of trainers you bought and what is the background story attached to that first purchase?

DH: In 1977 the fashion landscape was evolving. Punk had an influence and flared wide leg jeans had been replaced with drainpipe denim plus a big collared shirt would be discarded for small collared Ben Shermans. Doctor Marten boots had slid into the wardrobe in 1976 but by the Summer of '77 adidas



If the velcro straps on the adidas Comfort had been an amazing invention, these were revolutionary.

Image: adidas Grand Slam (the original 1980s vintage pair as used at The Art of Terraces exhibition, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 2022) with special thanks to Liverpool Tennis Centre.

Samba had started being worn on the streets of Liverpool. I was 14, and was making some cash from an early morning milk round and a Sunday paper round, but you didn't spend your pocket money on your own clothes. You begged and pleaded with your mother to get you what you wanted, usually from her Littlewoods or Grafton catalogue. A couple of mates had appeared in adidas Samba on the corner where we'd congregate each night. I begged my mother for a pair. One day she presents me with a box in a bag. To my horror they were a pair of Mitre Memphis. I could have cried. I could hear the abuse I'd get from my mates on the corner. She had bought them because they were black, like the Samba, but cheaper. Little did she realise what a difference those three stripes would make in the echelons of style. I wouldn't wear them and she sent them back to the catalogue. I told her I'd pay the extra from my own hard earned savings, which was my match going money, but it had to be done. A week or so later I was in with the in-crowd and could proudly walk the streets in my pristine adidas Samba. Those catalogues became a godsend for a kid with limited resources. I got the iconic adidas ST2 cagoule from one in late 1977. Within days my mates were asking could my mother order one for them. She did but it was a pain in the arse trying to get a pound off each of them on a weekly basis for 20 weeks.

KO: It is obvious you have been inspired and surrounded by Football, Fashion and Music. Today, do you think the young sneakerheads are still driven by the same influences?

DH: When it comes to fashion nowadays everyone has their own perspective on fashion and music. Probably because of the internet, there doesn't seem to be a particular culture where everyone wears the same styles inspired by football, fashion or music. At present in Liverpool the kids/trend setters have their own take on style whether that be wearing Nike 110's or Monfiteux. I suppose the rest of the country is similar. Obviously small fashion fads may sneak into wardrobes that may be inspired by what a footballer or musician wears such as the wearing of vintage or new trendy kits, Venezia springs to mind. But if we are talking Sneakerheads, then I'm sure you wouldn't see two next to each other in similar attire.

PO: The re-release of the Grand Slam in 2015 saw an adidas Originals x SPEZIAL collaboration by Gary Aspden drop a limited edition OG G.S SPZL, which is said to have paid homage to the 1984 adidas Grand Slam. Does this shoe differ from the 1981 version you hunted for?

DH: They look pretty similar in style if I'm being honest. There's the slight difference in the extra colour added to the outer of the three stripes and the obvious selection of full grain leather rather than kangaroo leather being used. This may be due to the phasing out of kangaroo leather due to calls for the animals protection and conservation. In fact adidas announced in May of 2025 that it will no longer be sourcing the skins and it will now be increasing its use of recycled synthetic materials and exploring bio-based alternatives.

PO: Later in 2022 we saw adidas reissue their Grand Slam as a 'GS' but now in a new white and green colourway. Again marketing suggested 1984 as the original and heritage model. Presumably the name was abbreviated as a consequence to licencing laws and the timeline is inaccurate?

DH: Surprisingly 1984 has been mentioned a few times on sporting websites as the debut year of the LA Trainer which was the first to incorporate the peg system along with the Grand Slam, but after some research and knowing I'd got my Grand Slam in 1981, we discovered 1981 adidas catalogues with both within. Plus a write up in the 'From Past to Present', a Timeline of the Three Stripes' book suggests the LA Trainer was released in 1980. Any re-issues of the adidas Grand Slam have had G.S. replacing Grand Slam on the shoe after Grand Slam Tennis Properties Ltd, trademarked the name in 2005. The company registered the name to cover the four major Tennis Tournaments, plus sporting and cultural activities which I suppose is where adidas training shoes falls.

has become iconic and has legendary status among Casuals. In April of '81 at least 2000 16-25 year olds travelled via the subsidised travel company, Transalpino, to Munich in Germany to see Liverpool take on the German champions but many would also be scouring the Bavarian capital for sports shops selling the symbol of Casual Culture. The Trimm-Trab would become Wade Smith's biggest seller when opening in 1982 with football fans travelling from all over the country to get their hands on a pair.



So April 1981 had seen the Trimm-Trab venture their way back to Merseyside with the travelling fans but another trip was now in the planning stage for the European Cup Final in Paris, I had made up my mind that the adidas Grand Slam would be on my shopping list having seen a couple of pairs on the streets around Anfield. There was something appealing about the peg system in the heel. It was something that had never been seen

these were revolutionary...

before. If the velcro straps on the adidas Comfort had been an amazing invention, these were revolutionary. As I was to find out with the leaflet that was included with the trainers, each coloured peg varied in weight and density. The tennis player or scally could change the peg colours for comfort and cushioning depending on their own weight. The technology apparently worked during tests before production but the actual removal of the pegs was too awkward for anyone to be that bothered once you'd seen how cool the red, white and blue looked anyway. German tennis legend Steffi Graf wore the trainers in her early career, winning gold at the 1984 LA Olympics in a pair and even she can be seen playing in the shoes with three different coloured pegs. The Grand Slam had a March 1981 release and so would be quite scarce on the terraces of Blighty, whereas the Trimm-Trab

was first released in Germany in 1975 and were already becoming quite ubiquitous locally. Our journey for the illustrious trainees began at Lime Street, Liverpool and would take in the Parisian delights of the Champs-Élysées looking for sports stores before heading down to Basle, Switzerland to cross the border into Germany. Liverpool met Real Madrid in Paris to become Champions of Europe. Being 18 years old I was pretty confident in the Reds ability to get to this Final and together with a mate had booked a cheap 'getaway' with a travel agent in February.

'Find a pair of adidas Grand Slam' day.

Monday to Friday in 'Gay Paree' as the song said. We hit the French capital by Monday afternoon, setting up stall in the Pigalle area. Tuesday was designated 'find a pair of adidas Grand Slam' day. We awoke, hungover and headed out into the Spring sunshine. Although the sun was shining the day would be a 'wash-out' as far as purchasing said trainers. I don't remember seeing many sports shops although we did find a Kickers store and duly bought a pair I'd not seen before or since for that matter.

Peter Hooton of The Farm had a similar idea and recalled scouring the city for 'The adidas Centre', he'd been told about, only to realise years later it probably didn't exist. The confused looks on French faces when asking directions may have been a giveaway.

As we couldn't find any decent sports shops we therefore made the brave decision to travel down, on the Thursday, to Basle in Switzerland as England were playing a World Cup Qualifier against their Swiss hosts on the Friday. We could take in the game and pop across the border to Germany, the home of adidas, to purchase the Grand Slam. The brave part of the trip would be taking in the England game. Not many scousers followed England and as this was a time of violent inter-club rivalry, standing amongst hundreds of cockneys was a daunting thought.

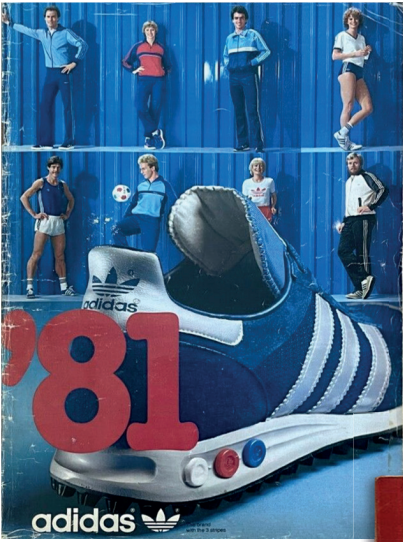
Liverpool duly won the Cup and after a night of revelry we set off on our five hour trip to the land of Toblerone.

We came away from the England game un-scathed, having bunked into the stands where we were accompanied by the well behaved England Supporters Club, which can't be said for those on the terraces who spent a good hour fighting amongst themselves after Switzerland had taken the lead. The Swiss eventually won

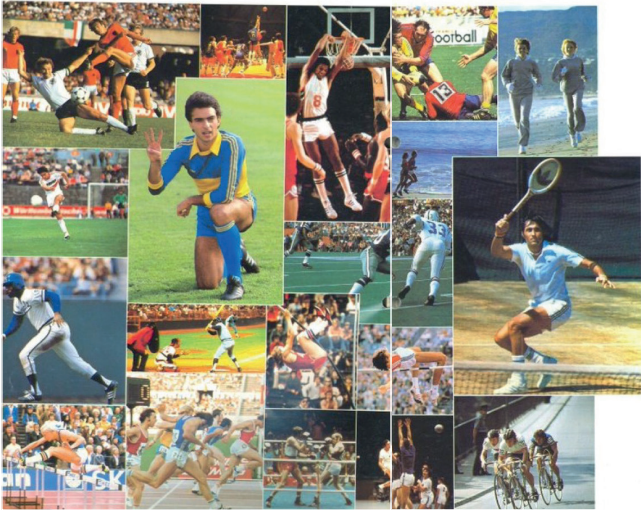
2-1 and I thought, what do we have to go through just to get a pair of adidas? After the game hundreds of bikes got wrecked as the England fans rampaged their way back into town. Before heading home on the Friday we had time to cross the border into Weil am Rhein. The closest German city. The first sports shop had just what I needed. The Grand Slam were excitedly purchased whilst the mate got some Grand Prix. He struck lucky when paying as the shopkeeper thought he was paying in French Francs but he paid in Swiss Francs therefore getting his pair for a third of the price. Around £10. My Grand Slam cost £35 which was a weeks wages for me at the time but we thought nothing of spending whatever we needed for some quality and kudos. The trainers themselves were made of kangaroo leather. Something the Diadora Borg Elite were famous for. The vamp, which is the upper front was perforated for ventilation along with the 'air shaft' tongue. Each peg was of a different density for shock absorption, which could be changed depending on the sports persons weight.

If any year characterised the start of a national sub-culture, it would be 1981.

The Casual Culture in the early 1980s would be dominated by adidas trainers and sportswear which would also be brought back from trips abroad. It would spread across the UK and have a major impact on the high street and fashion in general. Independent sports shops would open in every city as retailers fed the ever growing demand. In the 70s there would be three or four sports shops in most cities, but as the 80s unfolded more and more were opening up as the Culture spread. By the mid 80s most adults would have a pair of training shoes in their wardrobe even though they didn't play sport. Casuals introduced sportswear onto the high street. By the end of the 80s, designer brands such as Prada and Hugo Boss had 'cottoned on' to this new fashion and would also start producing training shoes and sportswear for every day wear. Streetwear and Athleisure had been invented by some young scallies who wanted a new pair of adidas before anyone else. Along with the Trimm-Trab, the adidas Grand Slam had a major influence in the direction the Culture was heading. They were scarce and expensive but ultimately cool and desirable.



ADIDAS: THE MARK OF A WINNER



INDEX

サッカー 試合形式 9-10	
BASEBALL 試合形式 17-15 野球 17-15	
BASKETBALL 試合形式 22-28	
JOGGING ジョギング 29-34	
TRAINING トレーニング 35-44	
TRACK & FIELD 陸上 45-52	
TENNIS テニス 53-59 テニス 53-59	
GOLF ゴルフ 60-64	
RUGBY ラグビー 65-68 ラグビー 6	