

Ask Hadley

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Don't take fashion tips from Alan Shearer

The BBC football pundits look like bouncers. Why would you emulate their look?



Hadley Freeman

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📷 Alan Shearer, dressed in black. Photograph: Rex Features

I have recently noticed a lot of men wearing black button-down shirts on TV. Are they having a fashionable moment?

Mike, Liverpool

Mike, I'm going to lay myself on the line and hazard a guess that you have been watching the World Cup on the British Broadcasting Corporation's channel, yes? So when you say you have "noticed a lot of men wearing black button-down shirts", you mean you have been watching a lot of [Alan Shearer](#) and Alan Hansen, and the fact that you, adorably, have deduced that their respective wardrobes are in anyway connected to the land of the stylish suggests, my dear boy, that it is time to leave your man-cave and emerge, blinking and stretching, into the real world again.

It is a funny old thing, the correlation between the presence of football commentators on TV and the presence of black button-down shirts. Fortunately, I am an expert and shall explain the connection. Black button-down shirts are basically the upper-body equivalent of black jeans, which were discussed on this page a few weeks ago. Just as some misguided men think the black gives the jeans a smack of formality while the denim gives the black a hint of youthful cool (both beliefs = wrongness), so too Hansen and Shearer seem to think the black gives their shirts some suave sleekness, while the buttons retain the formality. Again, wrong and wrong. Instead, they look like a pair of bouncers from Jack Tweed's favourite nightclub, Faces of Essex. Worse, when they are flanking Harry Redknapp, it looks like poor old 'arry 'as 'ired some bodyguards to make himself look important, quite possibly from 1-800-GUARD4U.

None of this represents a positive turn of events. Instead, I would like the Alans to take note of their MC, Gary Lineker, who has been sporting a quality selection of pink button-down shirts, which not only proves he is a man who doesn't feel the need to look like a Guy Ritchie extra to prove his masculinity, but also is far more flattering on the complexion. 'Tis not for nothing that this man gets paid to eat crisps with Cat Deeley, you know.

And with regards to you, Mike, stop taking fashion tips from football pundits, for that is what you have done. Read that sentence again and weep in shame.

Why do all dresses from the high street have such obscenely low V-necks, or, if they are wrap dresses, flap open at similarly unwearably low levels at the chest? Am I the only woman in this country with breasts?

Maggie, London

No, Maggie, I can safely say that you are not. But you are quite right on your point about dresses with v-necks so low that even Jennifer Lopez might balk at the

wearing thereof. Indeed, in my humble cupboard, rare is the dress that doesn't have at least one safety pin somewhere on it, giving my wardrobe more of an Elizabeth Hurley-esque feel than I ever could have expected.

The general argument about why high-street dresses do go so low - and yes, this problem is common enough to have a general argument explaining it - is that they tend to be aimed at teenagers. Now, clearly, only someone who has eaten a big bowl of stupid for breakfast can seriously take this stance. First of all, it suggests that all adults shop at Armani or Prada and the few who don't are merely being perverse and quirky as opposed to being, I don't know, unable to spend £2,000 on a single top. Second, it also suggests that not only do teenagers not have breasts (an arguable contention, to say the least) but that, whether they do or not, they have no need to cover their chests, an idea that is not so much "arguable" as plain moronic.

The answer to your question, really, is that it is because the high street tends to cut its dresses on mannequins who have very different proportions from me and, from the sounds of it, you, Maggie. This means that, as well as their legs being much longer, their torsos are, too. All this explains the perennial problem of high-street dresses being too short as well as too low-cut, meaning that usually only one's knickers are left covered, and even that is not always guaranteed, which brings us back to Elizabeth Hurley and, frankly, life is depressing enough on a Monday so let's just leave it at that.

Post your questions to Hadley Freeman, Ask Hadley, The Guardian, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU. Email ask.hadley@guardian.co.uk

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