

LEGEND'S LUCKY LAD TELLS OF HIS LIFE AS A LINEKER

EXCLUSIVE
BY SHARON FEINSTEIN

THE boyish look is familiar. The cheeky grin too.

And there's no mistaking where George Lineker's charm comes from as he tackles a tricky question with all the composure his old man once showed in front of goal.

What does he think of his dad Gary's second wife – his 35-year-old stepmum Danielle? "Dan? I suppose she's quite hot looking," laughs George, blushing. "There's 18 years between them so I suppose she's closer to my age than his."

"I don't see her like a stepmum in a stepmum way. I have always got on well with her. But it isn't weird or anything. We get on just like mates."

Back of the net, George.

Not many people would, or even could, describe their own stepmother as "hot" and get away with it – but when you're as easy-going as your 54-year-old dad is in front of the Match of the Day cameras, it's a tap-in.

George continues: "If my dad is out and I am there, Dan and I will go for a bit of lunch or the cinema. We just chat about normal stuff. I don't tell anyone my deep thoughts. I just keep myself to myself. I hardly open up – even to my own mum."

And his verdict on Dad's love match? "Dan is a really nice woman. She and Dad seem to be very happy together," he says.

As George talks in what is a rare interview it is clear he too is happy with life. And with good reason given the trauma he survived as a baby – diagnosed with deadly acute myeloid leukaemia at just months old.

Today George is clear of the disease and only has to go back to hospital every few years for a check-up.

Former England and Tottenham Hotspur striker Gary has since credited his son's battle against the odds for giving him "a greater perspective on life". He described George as a "mini miracle" after he beat the disease.

LUCKY

Now his son says he is desperate to put something back in the fight against cancer. He recently signed up for a charity bike ride from Paris to London to raise cash to cure the illness, admitting he still feels incredibly lucky to have beaten the potentially fatal disease.

The only problem is George has not yet bought a bike and has not started any training. But he's not worrying – that's a word that doesn't figure in his vocabulary. He says: "I feel lucky. I escaped leukaemia and I am the luckiest boy around."

"I feel I need to pay back because of the care I received and raise as much money as I can for charity because my life was saved. I will always keep doing that and take up any opportunity when I am asked."

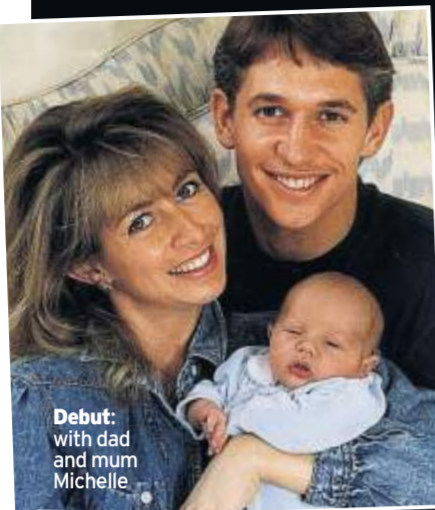
"It is the least I can do. It changed my attitude to life because I know I could have died. I'm grateful I survived. My dad used to talk about what it was like for him, and I can only imagine."

"When I came out of the five-year stage I had tests once a year but now I go every couple of years just to make sure everything is fine."

George's illness proved a devastating challenge for Gary and mother Michelle. The couple split in 2006 but have remained firm friends.

"I think that is good," says George, who has brothers, Harry, Tobias and Angus. "Nothing is ever a pressure in our family. My mum knows Dan and she has met her a few times. They seem to get on."

"Dad didn't sit us down and say he was



Debut: with dad and mum Michelle



Fighter: he beat cancer



Fun: at a match



Close: to proud dad Gary

going to ask Danielle to marry him. He just did it after he had asked her. I remember him telling us he was getting married. There wasn't a family conference. We just said 'well done'. I was happy for him."

Growing up with one of England's sporting greats as a parent proved tough for George who admits he is a hopeless footballer and not in the same league as his dad when it comes to looks.

Despite earning a reputation as a party-loving playboy, George reveals he's never had much luck with the ladies. He

says: "I don't have a girlfriend at the moment. I've never really had one. I don't fall out of clubs any more."

"I would like a relationship if it came along. I'm not a mummy's boy. A girl must just be good looking for me to be interested, not like a certain type."

"I used to get pictured with random girls when I went to clubs, but really I was there with a couple of guys."

"If a girlfriend comes along, she comes along. I am not out there looking for one. My dad hasn't really said anything about girls. I am not lonely and not too fussed

about never having a proper girlfriend. I'm not someone who always needs to be in a relationship."

He knows being a Lineker means he will always be compared to his famous dad, but even that is something he takes easily in his stride.

PRESSURE

"I think I will always feel I am in my father's shadow," says George. "But I have just got to do my own thing."

"That's all that's expected as long as I'm not known for sitting home, doing

nothing and being a bum. If I was just living off him that would not be good. It is a pressure being Gary Lineker's son, but he hasn't put that on us – it's more from inside myself."

"He's so successful, good looking and has that charm but I can only do as well as I can. My brothers probably feel that as well. I am never going to play for England or be the best sports presenter in the country – none of us are. We are just trying to do our own thing."

"As a lad I was desperate to be a footballer, the same as everyone. But

when you realise you're rubbish you have to fade away. Clearly it's not in our genes like the Beckham boys."

"My father is a hard act to follow. He does it so easily. I am never going to do as well as that. But it's not expected. You have just got to do as well as you can."

"He is the best at what he does in the country and when he was playing football, he was obviously the best."

"I don't know if he is the best actor in the adverts though, but in terms of sports presenting he's the best on TV. He is very professional." Now George is

George on his dad

Being his son is a lot to live up to. I'll never play for England or be the country's best sports presenter.

Stepmum Danielle

I don't see her in a stepmum way, we're mates. We go to lunch or the cinema and chat about normal stuff.

Girls and love

I am not too fussed about never having a proper girlfriend but I'd like one... I'm not a mummy's boy.

Beating cancer

I feel lucky. I escaped leukaemia, I'm the luckiest boy around so I have just got to give something back.

Picture: SPLASH NEWS



To help support George's Cure Leukaemia charity bike ride, visit www.justgiving.com/George-Lineker