FAMOUS TARTAN ARMY MAGAZINE

Est 2005

2023_ISSUE 2

DEDICATED TO THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM & SUPPORTERS

Scotland 2 Spain 0
Gordon Strachan Interview
Willie Miller Interview
David Marshall Interview
Craig Brown
Chick Young
Meet the fans
Homeless World Cup
and lots more





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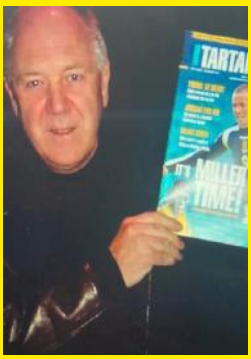


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STEVE CLARKE
In his own words...

Commenting on beating Cyprus in the opening game at Hampden
It's a better start than we've had in the European Championships for a hell of a long time. It is obviously very important against the teams that are seeded less than you are to pick up maximum points, certainly at home. I thought Cyprus were good, they were organised, but we managed to contain them and there wasn't too much threat on our goal. It's a good start, a really good start to the group.

On being top of the group after two games
You don't qualify with six points, so we've got a long way to go. Two good performances over the nine days we've been together. It was important to capitalise on the home games as much as we could, and we've managed to do that with maximum points. All the credit goes to the players, 16 on the pitch versus Spain and not one let us down. Seven players in the stand just every bit as happy as everyone else. We have a good group and we're working hard to get better and better. Against Spain was a chance to put our mark on the group. We want to be competitive against the top teams and that's what we did. It should give the players more belief.

That's the last two top teams, Spain and Norway in World Cup qualifying, have come to Hampden and left with no points so that's a step forward in terms of believing in what we're trying to do. It's very important to stay grounded as there's still a long way to go in the group and, as we know to our cost, one game can cost you dearly.

Looking ahead to he games versus Norway and Georgia Clarke explains
There are a lot of good players in the Norway side that we have to deal with as well as Haaland, who has obviously had an outstanding season. He is a top-quality player. We need to make sure we are organised and make sure we play well and don't make too many mistakes. We respect everybody, we respect our opponents all the time and we will give Norway and Georgia our full attention. When you are playing in a five-team group, eight games to qualify, every game is important. Every point that we can get over the summer is going to help us to the ultimate target, which is to qualify for Germany.

Next games:
Norway vs Scotland. European Championship Qualifying Group A.
Saturday 17th June 2023 Ullevaal Stadium, Oslo
Scotland vs Georgia. European Championship Qualifying Group A.
Tuesday 20th June 2023. Hampden Park, Glasgow


Photo by Colin Robinson Imaging

FAMOUS TARTAN ARMY MAGAZINE

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Welcome to the 2023, issue 2 of Famous Tartan Army Magazine

How good is this?

Scotland are currently sitting pretty at the top of our qualification group after a magnificent start to the campaign. Thankfully there was no banana skin start versus minnows Cyprus, which was then followed up by that magnificent victory over Spain which ensured the old stadium was rocking to its rafters with the sound of the famous Hampden roar.

The up and coming games are equally as important and any result in Norway would be welcome, followed by hopefully a home victory over our previously awkward opponents Georgia would ensure that we are still firmly on track to reach the finals in Germany.

There is a long way to go, but that fantastic start to the campaign has given us a chance, so over to Steve Clarke and the boys to keep this campaign on track...no pressure then!
Good luck to the team and safe travels to those supporters travelling to Norway.

Save the whale.

Iain Emerson Editor




Iain Emerson
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CRAIG BROWN

ON CLUB CAPTAIN SUPREME – MARTIN BUCHAN

Read his column in each issue of 'Famous Tartan Army Magazine'.


Photo: Lawrie Anne Brown

When the Denis Law Legacy Trust was hosting its annual fund-raising dinner last November in the Marcliffe Hotel and Spa in Aberdeen the choice of speakers was significant. Two of the Lawman's favourite players were invited to contribute. It was not a surprise to find that the men selected were favourites of the famous host himself – Willie Henderson then 80, and Martin Buchan, another person for whom Denis has high regard.

The mutual respect that Martin and Denis had for each other was patently apparent principally because both were brought up in Aberdeen, and both played brilliantly for Manchester United. Unlike Denis, Martin signed for his local club, Aberdeen F C, before a sizeable transfer fee at that time, £125,000, took him to Old Trafford.

Sir Alex Ferguson, a man who played with, and managed some of the world's best players always maintained that Denis Law was the best ever Scotland player. Indeed, he reinforces his own feeling by saying that in conversation the late, great, Pele told him that the only British, not just Scottish, player who could have played for Brazil was Denis Law!

Although maybe not quite in the Denis Law category, before examining his illustrious career it's worth highlighting Martin Buchan's 'quizworthy' claim to fame. His name is the answer to the question, "Which player has captained both a Scottish Cup and a FA Cup winning team?" When you think about it that's quite a distinction, especially as Martin Buchan is the youngest captain in Aberdeen's history and the youngest ever captain, aged 21 years and 36 days, to win the Scottish Cup at Hampden Park, the National Stadium.

That final was a really momentous occasion in 1970 as the opponents were Celtic, managed by the late, great Jock Stein.

It was two months after his first game as 20-year-old captain against Clydebank in the Cup on a frozen, ice rink of a pitch. Even though the Dons won 2-1 they were jeered off the field, but the jeers turned to cheers such a short time later with the great Cup Final win.

The Aberdeen manager at the time was the redoubtable Eddie Turnbull who had noticed in the earlier league fixture at Parkhead that Celtic were loading their dressing room with champagne in anticipation of victory. Eddie's furious team talk did the trick as his team won 2-1 in the league fixture and repeated the result in the final after a 'gentle reminder' from the anything but mildly mannered gaffer.

Martin signed for his home town team having first played at Pittodrie Stadium for his local school team, Cummings Park Primary, in the final of the Craigmyle Cup. He trained two nights a week with other promising youngsters receiving £1 a week as a 15-year-old and was later farmed out to the unofficial nursery team, Banks O' Dee. Such was his rapid progress, both at school and in the football field he soon had a critical decision to make. Was he to be a full- time footballer or continue with his studies at the prestigious Gordon's school where he had won a bursary and obtained sufficient 'Highers' for university attestation of fitness? After discussion with his very supportive parents, he made the decision to give football priority and if it didn't work out he'd go to university. Not a choice he regretted as soon he played for Aberdeen in their first ever



Continued:

European tie against Reykjavik in 1967 where the 10- 0 home win made the away leg a formality.

The standard game plan adopted by manager Eddie Turnbull was first of all to nullify the opposition. When Martin made his debut against Dunfermline Athletic he was given a man-for-man marking job. "I was told to mark Alex Edwards. Later that season Pat Quinn, Dave Sneddon and Jim McLean, then of Dundee, came under my close attention. Manager Eddie had identified them as skilful inside forwards who could cause some bother and it was my job to stop them playing. It was a disciplined job, but I did enjoy that side of the game. In fact, I did relish the task. We had broken the Old Firm domination by winning the Scottish Cup, so the next target was to end Celtic's unbroken spell in the league. In 1970/71 we came mighty close due to a 12-game unbeaten run without conceding a single goal. Sadly, we did lose a goal against Hibernian at Easter Road when I remember I was an inch away from getting to the ball."

The Martin Buchan career would be the envy of most footballers. The two major cup wins really augmented a 20-year playing career of over 600 games, mostly with the might of Manchester United. In addition, he had 34 international caps and played in the final stages of two FIFA World Cups.

Not surprisingly Martin had the choice of several big clubs before settling on Manchester United. "I had the opportunity to go to Liverpool as well. They were more successful than United were back then. I knew if I went to Anfield I'd end up with some winners' medals but I would not be a regular in the side. I preferred going to United where I thought I could really make a difference and go on to become a regular in Frank 0'Farrell's team. Looking at Manchester United and Aberdeen back then there would be very little between the sides. It was clear that we were struggling to make an impact but that was soon to change when new manager, Tommy Docherty, came to United. The Doc was a great manager and I always wondered just how far the team would have gone if Tommy had been allowed to stay."

When Martin's playing career was coming to a close in 1983 there was only ever going to be one opposing team for his testimonial fixture. In August 1983 the UEFA Cup Winners, Aberdeen, were invited to parade the trophy at half time at Old Trafford in a good game which ended in a 2-2 draw.

After leaving Manchester United Martin moved to Oldham in a player/coach role. "That did not last too long as I had my own ideas about how to do things

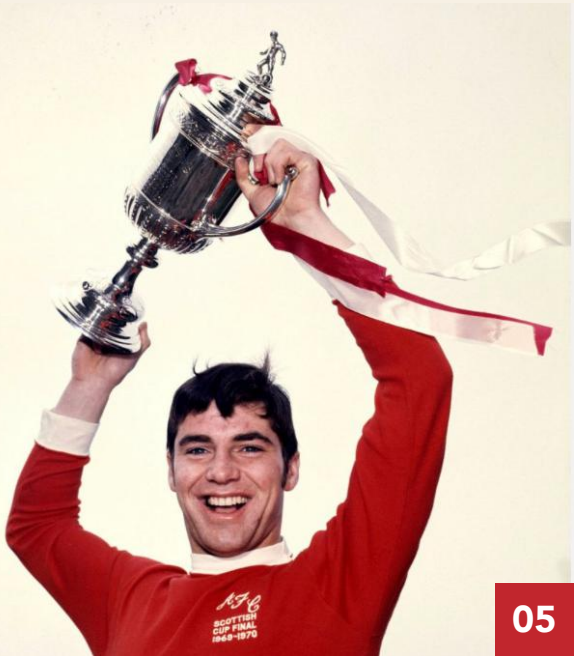


but there was too much interference from others." Never one to be very diplomatic meant that the Buchan experience at Oldham was to be short. Similarly, his time in charge at Burnley in 1985 lasted a mere four months.

These managerial hiccups should not detract, and never will, from a man with a marvellous playing record and who has gained the respect of the cognoscenti in the football world. Sir Alex Ferguson, for example, was fulsome in his praise of Martin, not only as a talented player but as a highly intelligent young man, fluent in Spanish, diligent and influential as a club employee, then of Puma and of the PFA, and a perfect gentleman to boot.

Martin, himself, admits to enjoying the experiences his footballing life provided although he did have a few reservations when involved with the Scotland National Team. His feeling was that it invariably was those playing in England, the Anglos, who were the scapegoats. "There always seemed to be division in the squad. Those of us playing in England were never given the same backing by the support and usually it would be one of the Anglos to be singled out if blame were to be apportioned". It's very different now with Steve Clarke and so many foreign players in all leagues but back then, sadly, there was undoubted animosity. Putting aside this minor complaint it's likely that bilingual Martin Buchan would sum up his footballing life appropriately **El futbol me he dado una vida maravillosa de sarisfaccion y disfute. Garcias a todos !**





SCOTLAND MEN'S INTERNATIONAL ROLL OF HONOUR WILLIE MILLER

Interview by Alistair Aird



In the last issue of the magazine, reference was made to the fact that Scotland have been fortunate to have been able to call upon a few of world-class goalkeepers over the years. The same can be said about central defenders too, particularly in the 1980s. And one of them is the featured player for this issue's International Roll of Honour article. His name is William Ferguson Miller.

Born in Glasgow on 2 May 1955, Miller actually started out at the other end of the pitch. 'When I came to Aberdeen and signed as an apprentice, I was a centre forward,' admitted Miller. 'I was farmed out to Peterhead during my first year [Miller scored 23 goals in the Highland League], but when I came back, I couldn't get into the reserve team as a striker. Teddy Scott was the reserve team coach and he asked me if I fancied moving to centre back. That worked out quite well and I played a number of games for the reserves before making my debut for the first team towards the end of that season.'

The first of Miller's 796 competitive matches for Aberdeen came at Cappielow on 28 April 1973. With the Dons trailing Morton 1-0, manager Jimmy Bonthrone introduced Miller from the substitutes bench after 53 minutes. He replaced Arthur Graham, and within ten minutes, Aberdeen were 2-1 ahead thanks to goals from Willie Young and Drew Jarvie.

The following season would be Miller's breakthrough campaign. He made 31 appearances in the league and 45 in all competitions. Another solid season followed in 1974/75, the last campaign before the new Premier Division was introduced. And Miller cemented his status as an Aberdeen regular when the newly-appointed Ally McLeod made him captain.

'Jimmy Bonthrone had taken over from Eddie Turnbull not long after I joined Aberdeen,' said Miller. 'But it didn't work out for Jimmy and Ally came in as manager. Bobby Clark was captain at that time, but Ally felt that it would be better for an outfield player to be the captain. He invited me to take on the role, and it would be a role I would retain until I retired as a player in 1990.'

International recognition soon followed. With Scotland still reeling from a 5-1 drubbing against England at Wembley, Miller was drafted in for the match that followed, a European Championships qualifier against Romania in Bucharest on 1 June 1975.

It was a much-changed Scotland XI that took to the field in the Romanian capital. Stewart Kennedy, who had been lambasted for his performance at Wembley, exacerbated an ankle injury in training, while Sandy Jardine injured his groin. Their places went to Jim Brown of Sheffield United, who was also winning his first cap, and Alex Forsyth, the latter coming in at left back with Danny McGrain moving to his more natural position at right back.

As if that wasn't bad enough for the beleaguered Scotland manager, Willie Ormond, he was short of a defensive midfielder too. And that's where Miller came in, although his selection took him by surprise. 'I didn't think I was in with a shout of playing for the full side,' admitted Miller. 'I thought I would be battling it out with Celtic's Pat McCluskey to play at centre back for the U23's. Jock Stein was manager of the U23's, and I wasn't sure he was going to pick me. But I found out that the national team manager, Willie Ormond, wanted to have a word with me, and when I spoke with him, I found out he wanted me to take Billy Bremner's place in midfield. Leeds United had played Bayern Munich in the European Cup Final a few days earlier and Billy had taken a knock which ruled him out. But although it was a surprise to be picked, I enjoyed the opportunity.'

A late goal from Gordon McQueen salvaged a 1-1 draw for the Scots, but Miller would have



Continued

to wait until February 1978 before he played for the national team again. In the meantime, he captained Aberdeen to victory in the Scottish League Cup in 1976 and earned caps at U21- and U23-level. His first of nine U23 caps came in a 4-1 win over Denmark on 28 October 1975, and Miller's U21 debut was almost two years later, a 3-1 win over Switzerland at Ibrox. His second and final cap at that level came a couple of weeks later in a 2-1 win over Czechoslovakia at Tynecastle.

Although he was fully established in an Aberdeen team that were emerging as a force to be reckoned with, Miller wasn't a regular for Scotland. But that wasn't surprising in the context of that era for the national team.

'Up until the late 1970s or even the early 1908s, it was unusual for players from the likes of Aberdeen and Dundee United to get picked for Scotland,' said Miller. 'Most of the team was made of players playing for either side of the Old Firm or for an English club. For that reason, it took me some time to make the breakthrough at international level.'

The turning point for Miller came at Wembley Stadium on 23 May 1981. Scotland beat England 1-0 courtesy of a John Robertson penalty, and from that moment on, W. Miller was, barring injury, always inked on the Scotland teamsheet.

'After that game I more or less felt accepted by the press and the Tartan Army,' said Miller. 'To go to Wembley and beat the best England had to offer and keep a clean sheet too was very significant. I think it was the first time Scotland hadn't conceded a goal at Wembley since the 1920s.'

Alongside Miller at the heart of the Scottish defence was his club mate, Alex McLeish. Like Miller, McLeish was still making inroads into the national team – the match at Wembley was just his 12th cap – but Miller felt much more comfortable alongside McLeish than he did with others he partnered in a dark blue shirt. And the paradigm shift in selection for Scotland would soon be complete when the back five would comprise players from Aberdeen and Dundee United.

'Scotland had a lot of very good centre backs at that time,' admitted Miller. 'But the fact that Alex and I combined so well for Aberdeen definitely helped both of us earn the amount of caps we did. That was a real breakthrough – a pivotal moment - and it wasn't long until Alex and I were regularly joined by Richard Gough and Maurice Malpas as the full backs with Jim Leighton in behind us.'

The timing of Miller becoming a mainstay in the Scotland team was perfect. Within a year, the Scots were off to sunny Spain to take on New Zealand, Brazil, and the USSR at the 1982 World Cup Finals. And it came as no surprise when Jock Stein named his squad that Willie Miller was included.

'I was on standby for the squad in 1978 when we went to Argentina,' revealed Miller. 'Gordon McQueen was carrying an injury, but he travelled with the squad although he didn't play in any of the games. Had he pulled out, I may have gone in his place even though I hadn't played in any of the qualifying games.' But the scenario was different in 1982.

Drawn alongside Sweden, Portugal, Israel, and Northern Ireland in Group 6, Scotland qualified with ease, losing just one of the eight matches they played. Miller played in six of the eight ties. He missed out when Scotland defeated Israel 3-1 at Hampden and again when Sweden went down 2-0 in Glasgow. But in the six matches he played, Scotland conceded just three goals.

'I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of playing at the World Cup in Spain, but the first game was a huge disappointment for me,' said Miller. 'I expected to play against New Zealand, but big Jock decided to go with Alun Evans of Aston Villa instead. Missing that game was probably the biggest disappointment of my international career.'
Scotland won the game by five goals to two, but the two goals conceded would ultimately prove costly.

Miller was back in the starting XI for the second match in Group 6, and he was thrown into the lion's den as the Scots faced a brilliant Brazil side that featured the likes of Zico, Sócrates, Falcão, and Éder.

'They say that that is the best Brazil side that never won the World Cup,' said Miller. 'But the conditions for the game in Seville didn't help us either. I think it was 4pm kick-off, so the temperature was in the 30's and that was difficult to cope with. And although we got off to a magnificent start with big Dave Narey's goal, Brazil were by far the better team on the day.'

The 4-1 defeat didn't extinguish Scotland's hope of progression, though. A victory over the USSR in their final game would see Stein's side progress to the next phase. But a calamitous collision between Miller and Alan Hansen led to a goal for the Russians and the match ended 2-2. Scotland were once again homeward bound.

'Alan was a really good player, but we weren't really compatible as a partnership,' admitted Miller. 'I preferred to play with a big centre back who would be the first to go and compete and challenge for the ball while I would play round about them. But Alan liked playing sides – he would take the left and I would be on the right – but that didn't work for me. Alan won a lot of honours with Liverpool, but Alex [McLeish] and I were much more suited to each other.'

Hansen would feature only nine more times for Scotland after that USSR match. Stein stuck with McLeish and Miller, and the duo were able to transfer their fantastic form for Aberdeen into the international arena too.

With the two in tandem at club level, Aberdeen won three successive Scottish Cups between 1982 and 1984, two Premier Division titles, the European Cup Winners' Cup, and the European Super Cup. And although Scotland tried and failed to qualify for the 1984 European Championships, Miller and McLeish would be afforded an opportunity to play together on the greatest stage of all when Scotland qualified for the 1986 World Cup in Mexico.

Unfortunately, qualification for the Finals was a tragic tale. 'We managed to qualify via the play-offs, but we lost Jock Stein in the process,' recalled Miller. 'After the game against Wales in Cardiff, David Will, the SFA president, came into the dressing room with Alex Ferguson. We were celebrating and in a happy frame of mind, but when they told us big Jock had collapsed, it just fell silent in the dressing room and the celebrations were curbed. We knew it was serious, and the news came shortly afterwards that he had passed away.'

Alex Ferguson took over as manager and led the nation to Mexico. But for Scotland, tragedy was not to be followed by triumph.
Miller, who won his 50th cap for Scotland in the 2-1 defeat against West Germany, said 'We got ourselves into a position where we



Continued

went into the last game [against Uruguay] needing to win to qualify. They got a man sent off, but we couldn't make that count and it ended 0-0. But it was still a great experience. Denmark had Michael Laudrup and Preben Elkjær up front, while West Germany had quality as an all-round team.'

This was the fourth World Cup in succession that the Scots had gone into the last round of fixtures with an opportunity to qualify. In 1974, Willie Ormond's side were thwarted by Brazil. In 1978, despite Archie Gemmell's wonder goal, a 3-2 win over Holland wasn't enough for progression. Goal difference was the deciding factor in 1982, while the hatchet men from South America curbed any enthusiasm we had in 1986. But Miller remains hopeful that one day a Scotland team will negotiate their way beyond the first phase of a World Cup.
He said, 'We've never managed to get out of the group section in any of the major competitions we've played in over the years, and that's something that needs to be broken soon. It does seem to be getting a bit easier to get past that first stage, so hopefully we can do that at the next World Cup.'

After earning cap number 51 against Uruguay, Willie Miller would add 14 more over the next three years. He made the last of his 65 appearances for Scotland when an Ally McCoist goal earned Scotland a 1-1 draw against Norway and secured a place at the 1990 World Cup.

A knee injury forced Miller to hang up his boots at the end of season 1989/90. In addition to those 65 caps for Scotland, he won three Premier Division titles, four Scottish Cups, three League Cups and the two European honours mentioned earlier. He was also voted Player of the Year by the Scottish Professional Footballers Association and the Scottish Football Writers Association in 1984.
Willie Miller scored just once for Scotland. It came after 23 minutes of a Home International against Wales at Hampden on 21 May 1980, and he still recalls it vividly.

'I played a couple of one-twos with Danny McGrain and Kenny Dalglish and found myself in the box,' said Miller. 'I slotted the ball under Dai Davies who was a tall goalkeeper. I knew if I played it low then I had a chance to score.'

The goal also allows a bit of one-upmanship with his close friend, McLeish. Although Alex won more caps for Scotland – 77 to 65 - he never scored for his country, something Miller is never slow to remind him of.

'Aye, and he was in the box a lot more often than me too,' laughed Miller.

Asked to sum up his international career, Miller is clear on what the seminal moment was.

'Playing at two World Cups will always be a highlight,' said Miller. 'To go to Spain and Mexico and compete at that level was excellent, but Wembley in 1981 will always rank as one of the most important of my career. That game showed everyone that mattered that I could handle that level of football. I captained the international team too, which was great honour, and I'll never forget my Scotland debut either.'

Miller was fortunate to play with many great players in a dark blue jersey. But when it comes to selecting the best, there is only one contender.

He revealed, 'I played with many very good players throughout my career, but the best has to be Kenny [Dalglish]. I didn't play with Denis Law, but Kenny was a later version of Denis. The amount of caps he accrued and the honours he won at club level were exceptional, and he was a really nice guy as well.'

And his most difficult opponent?
'I played against one of the best French teams of all time and one of the best Brazil teams, so it's difficult to pick one. But if I had to then it would be Michael Laudrup of Denmark at the 1986 World Cup. He had great all-round ability as a striker and that set him apart from any of the others I came up against.'

After retiring as a player Miller became manager of Aberdeen and nowadays, he is a respected media pundit.

In the 65 matches Willie Miller played, Scotland kept 29 clean sheets.

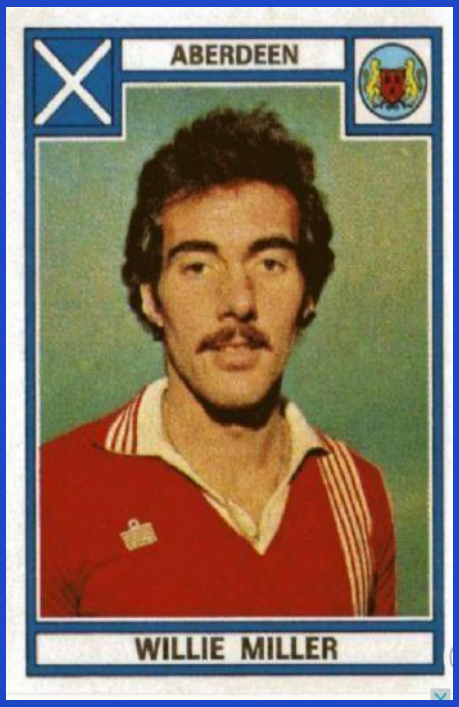
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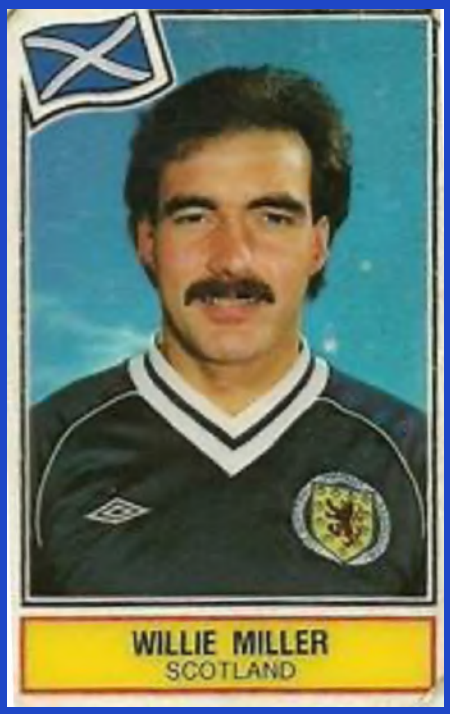
HOME : PLAYED 29
WON 14
DRAWN 11
LOST 4
GOAL CONCEDED 19

AWAY : PLAYED 31
WON 10
DRAWN 9
LOST 12
GOAL CONCEDED 29

WORLD CUP : PLAYED 5
WON 0
DRAWN 2
LOST 3
GOAL CONCEDED 57







SCOTLAND WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM LATEST by John Bleasdale

SINCE our last edition, the Scotland Women's National Team have had a busy couple of months. Firstly, there was the Easter Weekend friendly matches against Australia in London followed by the visit of Costa Rica to Hampden, which yielded two confidence boosting victories. Then a month later, the girls learned their opponents in the inaugural Woman's Nations League draw, and they were given a tough assignment for the competition running in the latter months of 2023.

Australia 0-1 Scotland, 7/4/23

It was a Good Friday in the London sunshine as Scotland claimed victory over World Cup co-hosts Australia at the Cherry Records Stadium. A tight game was decided by a moment of magic two minutes into the second half when Nicola Docherty's stunning strike from the corner of the penalty area swerved in off the left-hand post into the net. Scotland defended well in the game to see out victory with a clean sheet in a match that 17-year-old Emma Watson made her international debut from the start, whilst her club teammate Chelsea Cornet also won her first cap as a second half substitute.

Discussing her wonder goal to the SFA's YouTube channel, Docherty said: "I feel like we had a great start to the game, and it was really important to come out for the second half. It's nice to get on the scoresheet, but look it's a team performance. You make your own luck in football, that's something Leanne Ross said to me and it's so true, so as soon as I got the ball I've thought have a crack at goal and fortunately for me it's went in."

Scotland Team: Gibson, Brown, Howard, Mukandi, Docherty, Kerr, Weir, Watson (Cornet 66), Thomas (Hay 87), Emslie (Davidson 66), Harrison (Napier 78)

Scotland 4-0 Costa Rica, 11/4/23

Preparations for the upcoming Nations League and Euro 2025 qualifying campaign continued in a positive manner for the Scots as they swept aside Costa Rica on a rainy Hampden evening. Six minutes into her home debut, Emma Watson pounced on a loose ball inside the penalty area from Caroline Weir's free kick to sweep the hosts in front. Skipper for the night Weir was also the provider for the second goal on 28 minutes when her corner was headed home at the near post by Claire Emslie. It was then roles reversed nine minutes later as Emslie picked the ball up on the left wing and slid the ball into Weir, who controlled the ball well before passing the ball into the net from a tight angle.

Watson then completed a dream few days for her in the 66th minute by picking up Brogan Hay's pass inside the area, turning inside her marker and curling an unstoppable left foot shot into the corner. The game was also a landmark occasion for Fiona Brown, who won her 50th cap for her country as an 83rd minute substitute. After a period of two years out the game with serious knee injuries, Brown fully deserves this after her comeback from this tough period in her life.

Unsurprisingly, Watson was named player of the match, and the 17 year old told the Scotland National Teams YouTube channel: "It just feels surreal at the moment. I'm very proud to get my first cap and score my first goal, I'm very happy to play at Hampden on our home soil. So, this week's just been crazy but it's been the best week of my life!"

Scotland Team: Gibson, McLauchlan, Howard (Clark 70), Mukandi, Docherty (Robertson 70), Kerr, Weir, Davidson (Hay 56), Watson (Brown 83),Emslie (Thomas 56), Hansson (Napier 70)

UEFA Nations League draw

There was much anticipation about the inaugural Nations League draw to see who Scotland would get when it was announced that they would be in League A. As the pot four side, it was always likely Scotland would be given a tough assignment and that's exactly what they got as they were drawn alongside Belgium, Netherlands and defending European Champions England.

With the top two sides guaranteed qualification to Euro 2025 in Switzerland and avoiding the playoff route, there is a huge incentive for the Scots to perform in these games, and having such tough opponents means there's no room for complacency. It is also fitting that, in the SFA's 150th anniversary year, that two matches against the Auld Enemy should be in place.

Speaking to the Scottish FA's website, Pedro Martinez Losa said: "This is an exciting draw which has given us some tough opponents but these are the teams we want to play and compete against. It's obviously one of the more complicated groups with some top teams, but we will be prepared. The squad is ready to continue growing and giving the best version of ourselves in every match. We look forward to building on the momentum we've created recently as we prepare for the start of the tournament. The group are very motivated ahead of these games and the format of the competition means we can look forward to playing these great matches in front of our dedicated home support later this year."

Upcoming fixtures

Friday 14 July: Scotland v Northern Ireland, International Friendly
Tuesday 18 July: Finland v Scotland, International Friendly
Friday 22 September: England v Scotland, UEFA Women's Nations League
Tuesday 26 September: Scotland v Belgium, UEFA Women's Nations League
Friday 27 October: Netherlands v Scotland, UEFA Women's Nations League
Tuesday 31 October: Scotland v Netherlands, UEFA Women's Nations League
Friday 1 December: Belgium v Scotland, UEFA Women's Nations League
Tuesday 6 December: Scotland v England, UEFA Women's Nations League

Venues and kick off times to be confirmed in due course.







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DAVID MARSHALL INTERVIEW

By John Bleasdale

HIS is the most famous penalty save in the history of the Scotland Men's National Team. It was a moment that put COVID second in the local news headlines, added Baccara to many a Tartan Army playlist, and even had many grown men declare their ultimate man-love for him.

David Marshall's save from Alexsander Mitrovic that night in Belgrade has earned himself a warm place in the hearts of the Tartan Army forever. A 23 year wait for qualification to a major international tournament were ended with his excellent left hand save from the prolific Serbian striker's decisive spot kick, putting it up there with Joe Jordan's header against Czechoslovakia in '73, Davie Cooper's penalty in Cardiff in '85 and super-sub Ally McCoist's first touch that downed Greece in '95.

It was a far cry from a difficult debut for Marshall against Hungary at Hampden in August 2004. A humiliating 3-0 defeat was compounded when the keeper scored an unfortunate own goal after Steven Pressley's clearance hit an outstretched Marshall, who'd attempted to cut out a cross, on the back before the ball trundled over the line. It was a moment that summed up the Berti Vogts era, with the German leaving his post just over two months later.

Speaking exclusively to Famous Tartan Army Magazine, Marshall said of that first cap: "I try not to remember to much about the game to be honest. The own goal, you're trying to cut out a low cross and Steven's behind you, but it's one of those things that happens to every keeper. Not great memories of my debut!"

Marshall's second appearance for his country didn't fair much better, as Scotland were humbled 4-1 by Sweden at Easter Road in November of that same year in Tommy Burns's only match in charge before Walter Smith came in. It would be another nearly five years before his next Scotland appearance as a combination of Craig Gordon and Alan McGregor placed Marshall third in the pecking order during Smith's reign and Alex McLeish's first tenure as Scotland manager.

Following three more caps, and three more defeats, in 2009 under George Burley, Marshall would go through another three years and four months before his next Scotland appearance, with Craig Levein being the latest not to give him international minutes. However, he was honest enough to recognise the calibre of Gordon and McGregor was so high that he didn't grumble about not getting games, even though it would've been frustrating for him having turned up for every international camp.

"The goalies at the time, Allan and Craig, have had quite significant injuries in their career, but when they have played, they've been exceptional. We had Jim Stewart as the goalie coach for a long time, so that group was always very good. It wasn't as if you feel, because you've been in the squad for a certain amount of time, you should get a chance to play or anything like that at all, you have to deserve it, and I think all three of us have deserved to play at different times."

David Marshall's patience would finally payoff at international level in 2013. Gordon Strachan's arrival as Scotland manager, and injury problems for both Gordon and McGregor, opened the door for the keeper now earning plaudits for his performances in the Premier League for Cardiff City. Having played in the 2-0 defeat in Serbia earlier in the year, he started four of Scotland's last five matches in the calendar year and was now recognised as Scotland's number one goalkeeper for the next three years, including the Euro 2016 qualifying opener against newly crowned World Champions Germany.

It was just reward for Marshall after almost a decade of patience to wait for his opportunity to establish himself in the National Team under Strachan, who'd allowed him to leave Celtic for Norwich City in 2007 in search of first team football before his move to Cardiff. It meant everything to Marshall that Strachan still rated him so highly.

"I had left Celtic under Gordon, so he hadn't seen me up close for a few years. I think if he allows me to leave Celtic then make me Scotland number one, it was good that he recognised that there had been an improvement in my game and he was happy to put me in against the then World Champions Germany."

Scotland's began that qualifying campaign well with ten points from the first five matches. However, they only collected five points from the remaining five fixtures, a run that included a fatal 1-0 loss in Georgia, and finished fourth behind the Germans, Poland and Ireland.

The poor form continued into the World Cup 2018 qualifying campaign with just four points in the opening three games, leading to Strachan making eight changes for the visit to Wembley to take on the Auld Enemy. Marshall was one of those casualties and he wouldn't feature for his country for another two and a half years, with the opportunity of facing England at Wembley looking as if it would pass him by.

"It was disappointing," he said, "the England games are always big, you want to play in them. Going to Wembley, you want to start, and you've got the family coming down. It was an unexpected change by the manager, but he was proven right because we went on a fantastic run after that."

Despite a positive performance in the defeat at Wembley, followed by going the remaining six games undefeated, Scotland missed out on a tenth consecutive major tournament, costing Strachan his job. Alex McLeish's second tenure brought mixed results, but more importantly a Nations League playoff berth, and he too paid the price following the debacle in Kazakhstan.

Steve Clarke took over and one of his first decisions was to reinstate David Marshall as his number one goalkeeper following a frustrating two-year spell in the international wilderness. A freak injury at











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Hull City played a big part but, following the international retirement of Allan McGregor, coupled with Scott Bain not taking his chance, Marshall was delighted to be back between the sticks for the visit of Cyprus for Clarke's opening match in charge.

"I was on holiday at the time when Steve Clarke phoned me. Chris spoke really highly of the manager at Kilmarnock, then when he got the Scotland job, I thought it would've been a good appointment speaking to Burkey, so Steve phoned and I was delighted to get back in. I think thought there had been some sort of issue previously, but it hadn't been like that at all. I was delighted to get the call, after a few years out you don't think you're going to get straight back into play straightaway, but I'd played against Steve's West Brom team a few times and stuff down south, he spent most of his career down south, so he probably knew my performances more than the Scottish based coaches and managers, so that's why he gave me the call."

The late 2-1 win over the Cypriots that day didn't quite begin the Clarke revival as a run of four consecutive defeats by Belgium and Russia home and away ended their hopes of automatic qualification to Euro 2020. Fortunately, having the Nations League playoff in the bank meant there was still something to prepare for, and Scotland ended the campaign strongly with three wins in a row against San Marino, Cyprus and Kazakhstan to build momentum ahead of that playoff Semi Final against Israel.

As we know, March 2020 should've been the month where we were due to face the Israelis at a sell-out Hampden Park, with the prospect of an away Final to Norway or Serbia awaiting the Tartan Army. Instead, the world was turned upside down with the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, shelving Football almost everywhere across the globe for several months.

When international football did return in September that year, Scotland began their next Nations League campaign before that crucial playoff Semi Final for the now delayed Euro 2020 finals. Ironically, Israel were the first opponents and a 1-1 draw at an empty Hampden was followed with a 2-1 win away to a Covid-ravaged Czech Republic side.

The following month saw the return of the Israelis for that long-awaited Semi Final. A dour game ended goalless after extra time, meaning Scotland entered unfamiliar territory with a first ever penalty shootout in a competitive match. Marshall made a crucial contribution early, saving Eran Zahavi's spot kick, and Scotland advanced to the Final in Serbia after a 5-3 success.

That nervy victory set them up for the Final in Serbia, who'd won 2-1 in Norway in their Semi Final to earn a home final. If not having the Tartan Army behind them affected their performance at Hampden, Scotland benefitted from not facing a partisan Serbian crowd in Belgrade as they dominated for 89 minutes, with Ryan Christie's strike looking as though it was going to send the Scots to the Euro's. However, a lapse in concentration allowed Luka Jovic to rise unchallenged in the box and his header bounced beyond Marshall's reach to setup extra time.

With their tales up, the Serbians began to dominate a Scotland side licking their wounds in that extra period, and were looking certs to progress. David Marshall had to be at his best and produced a crucial save from Namanja Gudelj's rasping 20-yard effort, tipping the effort round the post when it looked goal bound. When asked if that was up there as one of his best saves, Marshall said: "Yeah, you can judge saves on their importance to be honest, and that minimal touch on an evening when it was soaking wet, so when I touched that you're hoping that it's enough to tip it wide. At the time, I was thinking that could hit the post, but it turns out to be a really important moment because we defend the corner after that, and that was what took the sting out of the game, and I don't think anything really happened after that and it went straight to penalties."

After that vital intervention, Scotland kept the Serbians at arm's length and the match went into penalties. Both sides converted their opening five spot kicks before Kenny McLean scored Scotland's last effort, piling the pressure onto Serbia's main man Aleksandar Mitrovic for their final effort. Coming close to at least two of the penalties, Marshall flung himself to his left and produced a stunning one-handed save, ending Scotland's long and agonising wait for qualification to a major international tournament.

Whilst the Tartan Army were going mental in their living rooms, Marshall was checking with the referee that the checks were ok regarding potentially moving off his line early. Once he got the nod, Marshall turned towards his teammates, who bombarded towards him in sheer delight to commence the celebrations.

"The referee was good to be fair," Marshall begins, "The Mitrovic one was the first time the game could've been won or lost, so he said to me wait for the check. I'm not calm at all, I knew what was happening, I was just trying to get the thumbs up before the celebrations started."

The reaction to Marshall's heroics were off the scale, so much so that it knocked the Covid pandemic to second spot in the local news for the first time in nine months. The SFA's videos of the post-match celebrations in the changing room and at the hotel, which showed Marshall leading a conga round the table, caused many to add Baccara and Whigfield to their Tartan Army playlists.

Although he doesn't have a public social media account, Marshall was well aware of the online reaction, including fans declaring their undying love for him and getting tattoos of their new hero. Recalling that aftermath, he said: "I knew how much it meant, because I'd lived through it. I used to watch Euro '96 and France '98, and being in the squads that never got there was difficult. So, to see people's reaction back home, like

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people on Edinburgh rooftops singing Flower of Scotland, reactions in living rooms, the telly getting smashed up and stuff, it was funny and it was emotional, and Ryan's interview summed it up to be honest. I think at that time, with Covid and no fans, by the time June came around, everybody would be allowed back and I felt as if it gave everyone something to look forward to after a shitty two years."

Not quite everyone was allowed back by the time the delayed Euro 2020 Finals came around, but 25% were able to attend Scotland's first games at a major finals since 1998. With two games at Hampden against Czech Republic and Croatia, and a trip to Wembley to face the Auld Enemy in between, there was major hype in the country going into the Euros.

Unfortunately, despite being on the front foot for most of the game, the Scots were downed 2-0 by the Czechs, aided by Patrick Schick's incredible 50-yard strike over Marshall that sealed the game. After the euphoria of his save from Mitrovic seven months earlier, the keeper had to endure stick for a strike that caught him by surprise, particularly as Jack Hendry's attempted shot was blocked then fell to the Czech striker on the halfway line.

Recalling that unfortunate moment, he said: "I'll take up that position every single game, certainly in the last few years with the way footballs changed. If you'd said to me before the game that Scotland would have a shot that was blocked, and the next action was that Czech Republic would have a shot, anybody would say 'how is that possible?' For Jack to have the shot, and three seconds later the Czech's have a shot is just bizarre. Don't get me wrong, it was tough to take, it's not what any goalkeeper wants to have happen to them. It was a difficult moment to deal with mentally, but it's just one of those moments that's a freak."

Next up was the small matter of England and, four and a half years after being axed for the last trip to London, David Marshall got his chance to follow a long list of goalkeepers to play for Scotland at Wembley. He became one of relatively few to keep a clean sheet as Scotland earned a deserved 0-0 draw against the eventual runners-up.

That draw gave Scotland a chance of reaching the knockout stages of a major tournament for the first time, but unfortunately the dream died as a Luka Modric inspired Croatia showed their class to emerge with a 3-1 victory.

It turned out to be the last of David Marshall's 47 caps for his country. A year later, after losing his place to Craig Gordon for the remainder of the World Cup qualifying campaign, and in the aftermath of the disappointing World Cup playoff Semi Final defeat to Ukraine, he announced his retirement from international football.

When asked why he called time on his Scotland career, Marshall said: "The gaffer and I spoke after the game, we had a two-year campaign coming up, and I just had a think for a couple of days, we had a day off after the Ukraine game and then back to training for the Nations League games. It just felt right, my wife and kids had been up in Scotland for three years and I'd been down south playing, so that was a big factor in the decision. It was difficult speaking to the manager, more difficult than I thought because he was brilliant to me bringing me back in, but it just felt like the right time."

David Marshall's international career is an example of how you can be rewarded for patience. After years of waiting in the wings, Marshall emerged from the shadows to become a national hero for his penalty save in Belgrade that ended a 23-year international tournament drought. He might have just missed out on the SFA Roll of Honour by three caps, but David Marshall's name is etched in Tartan Army folklore for eternity!

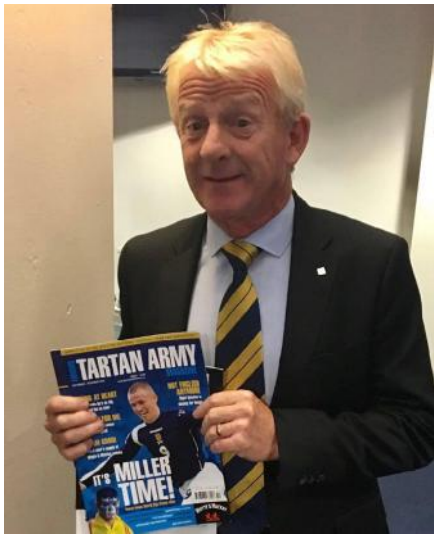





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GORDON STRACHAN

interview by John Bleasdale



Part One – The Player

ONLY 34 players have managed to achieve the haul of fifty caps for the Scotland Men's National Team, thus automatic inclusion into the SFA's roll of honour.

Gordon Strachan became the 16th player to reach this milestone in 1992 when he skippered the side in a pre- Euro '92 friendly against Finland at Hampden. It turned out to be the last time he would turn out for his country in an international career that saw him star at two World Cups and play under three managers – Jock Stein, Alex Ferguson and Andy Roxburgh. Strachan made his debut on 16 May 1980 in a 1-0 defeat by Northern Ireland in the British International Championship, a game he only remembers because he forgot to get his Dad a ticket to the game! "He didn't tell me he was coming," Strachan recalls, "Jock Stein gave me a shout 20 minutes before the game saying "your dad's looking for a ticket." I says to him "I didn't know he was here!" He'd popped over, and that was probably it really because the game was totally forgettable."

There would be more fond memories for Gordon Strachan to accumulate over his international career, starting with his first goal for Scotland in a World Cup qualifier in Sweden. He won possession inside the Swedish half and ran with the ball, played a one-two with Archie Gemmill, and placed the ball nicely with his weaker left foot into the corner of the net for the only goal of a game that proved crucial in Scotland's journey to the 1982 World Cup Finals in Spain.

It was a wonderful moment for Strachan, but manager Jock Stein was more concerned at the fact his right winger popped up on the left-hand side in the first place rather than congratulating Strachan on scoring the winner. When asked what that goal meant to him, Strachan said: "That's the moment where you can first recall the whole Scottishness of being able to make, at that point, four million people happy. Whatever age group you are, whatever you are, you've realised at that moment you've been able to make four million people happy. Scoring the goal, after the game when you think "YES, I've achieved something for my friends and family." Basically, I shouldn't have been there as Jock Stein will tell you! He came in after the game and went "what were you doing there? I told you not to go over there!" I was meant to be playing on the right but ended up on the left, just the way I played at Aberdeen, I used to turn up everywhere, so it worked out alright."

Scotland would go onto qualify for their third consecutive World Cup Finals, and unsurprisingly Strachan was selected in Stein's 22-man squad. Although the build up to Spain '82 was low key in comparison to the Ally's Army send off at Hampden four years earlier, the traditional World Cup song was recorded, and 1982 produced, arguably, Scotland's greatest recorded football song We Have A Dream by BA Robertson.

Strachan might be a fan of Robertson's work, but that didn't prevent him from getting kicked out of the recording studio for laughing! "He was a genius" Strachan said, "he produced it, directed it and I get on really well with him now. I speak to him a lot, send Christmas cards to each other, but he chucked me out of the recording session because I couldn't stop laughing, I thought it was hilarious."

Jock Stein was more interested in Strachan's footballing ability than his vocal talents as Scotland were drawn in a tough group containing Brazil, Soviet Union and New Zealand. The Tartan Army descended upon Malaga and Seville for the three games in jovial mood as they got the perfect World Cup tonic of football, beer and sunshine.

Us fans are, understandably, jealous of those select few Scotland players being good enough to be picked to represent their country at a major tournament. However, Strachan confessed that there is also a degree of envy from the players to the Tartan Army who get to enjoy themselves, as he painted the picture that a World Cup camp isn't all it's cracked up to be away from the pitch.

"When you're a player," Strachan begins, "you think "I'd rather be a fan" sometimes, because they look like they're enjoying it, and there's no real pressure, it's just go over there and enjoy it and have fun. When you see the fun, you say "I wouldn't mind doing that." The actual World Cup itself, the preparations and everything else, is actually boring. It's a time of the season where everybody is shattered, we're all knackered, we're all shattered, we're stuck in hotel rooms, in those days we didn't have any phones, and Jock Stein used to say to me everyday "what are you doing in the sun? Get yourself back to your bedroom!" So I spent most of the World Cup in a bedroom hiding away from the sun because big Jock said it drained me, so it was unfortunate I then had to play at Seville, it was 105 degrees or something like that, and I had to venture out into the sun. The games itself are great, apart from that it's hard-hard work getting your body to go for the 600th training session of the season for you, and the sun, and bobbly pitches, so it's not easy. The glamour is the games, and that's the only thing that keeps you sane."

Strachan certainly seemed to enjoy himself more on the pitch than hiding his pale skin from the sun as Stein started him in all three games. He was in fine form in the opening game against the group's weakest side New Zealand, setting up three goals in the 5-2 win. The next game was much tougher as David Narey made Brazil angry by opening the scoring, as Strachan recalls. "Yeah, it was a bit like that, and then we had a period where we kept the ball for about 30 passes, and you go "this is not bad," but really, we just annoyed them. It was hard work after that, and I didn't last long. I was playing in the number ten position, but that didn't work out really well for me. I got taken off with, probably, the poorest player in that







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side, it was the big striker that played for Brazil (Serginho), and went to swap shirts. Considering all these greats were on the one side, I had to swap shirts with the big fella, but he'd probably be as disappointed as I am, because he'll probably be in Brazil just now saying "I got Scotland's worst players strip as well," so both of us are, probably, hugely disappointed!"

That 4-1 defeat, coupled with a 2-2 draw with Soviet Union in the final game, sent Scotland out of the World Cup on goal difference for the third consecutive tournament. Qualifying for World Cups had become a habit for the Men's National Team, as had the annual fixture with the Auld Enemy at Hampden and Wembley on alternate years.

Strachan played in four of these fixtures, three at Hampden and one at Wembley. Two defeats in 1980 and 1983 preceded a 1-1 draw in 1984, where he set up Mark McGhee with a delightful floating ball over the English defence. More memorably though, he was part of the side that defeated England 1-0 in 1985 to win the Rous Cup thanks to Richard Gough's towering header past Peter Shilton. The winger recalls being relieved that Gough got to the ball incase it dropped to him, and he feared he'd mess up, as he explains. "It was pouring rain, I didn't play very well, Richard Gough got a header and scored and I was delighted because, if he didn't head the ball, then it was coming to my feet. I was having such a bad day that it could've went anywhere, so I'm so delighted that Richard Gough could leap that high and score a goal."

That Rous Cup win might have been one of the high points of 1985, but without doubt the most heartbreaking night of the year came on 10 September at Ninian Park, Cardiff. Not the result, far from it, as Scotland got the point they needed to secure a playoff for the 1986 World Cup Finals ahead of their Welsh counterparts thanks to Davie Cooper's late penalty.

Instead of celebration, there was sombre, as the team sadly learned that their manager Jock Stein collapsed and died from a heart attack. Strachan, who was substituted that night for Cooper, sums up the mood of the dressing room that fateful night. "When we got back into the dressing room, there was no sort of euphoria or any happiness, because we already knew as we walked in that something had happened. As we walked own the tunnel, Graeme Souness said to me "the big man's struggling," so we all got that. By the time we sat down, there was no cheering or laughing, we already knew there was something serious going on."

It was up to Alex Ferguson, Stein's right-hand man to take up the reigns in conjunction with his role as Aberdeen Manager. He steered the nation to its fourth consecutive World Cup for the Mexico '86 Finals. Unsurprisingly, Strachan was selected again, and was again kept away from the sun as Scotland prepared for three tough matches against Denmark, West Germany and Uruguay.
Again, Strachan would start all three matches, with his most memorable moment in a Scotland shirt coming in the second game against the West Germans. Roy Aitken played the ball down the right-hand channel for Strachan to run onto and he sent an unstoppable shot from a narrow angle into the top corner to put the Scots in front, which lead to his iconic celebration of placing his right leg on top of the giant advertising hoardings.

Explaining the celebration, Strachan said: "We were watching players scoring and jumping over these hoardings, and I said (to Charlie Nicholas and Paul McStay) "it would be just our luck that one of us scores, jump over the hoardings, and there will be one of these moat things at the back of it and we'll end up jumping eight feet down there and breaking out leg!" The guys close to me knew what I was doing at the time, just checking to see if there was a moat over there, incase I jumped over it and, being a typical Scotsman, smashing his leg as he jumped over."

Despite Strachan's goal, Scotland would go onto lose 2-1, meaning consecutive defeats after the 1-0 reversal to the Danes. Remarkably, they still had a chance of going through if they could defeat Uruguay in the final game. A nasty foul by Batista on Strachan and a history-making quickest World Cup sending off after one minute gave the Scots a huge advantage. Typically, they couldn't make it count as the South Americans done everything to come away with the 0-0 draw that saw them advance as one of four best third-placed sides.

Over the years, there have been many terms aimed at the Uruguayans for their antics in the match, with then SFA Secretary Ernie Walker famously dubbing them as the "scum of World Football". Indeed, some Scotland fans of that era have such resentment to them that they supported England against them in the 2014 World Cup.



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Although he too wasn't happy with the Uruguayan tactics, Strachan has sympathy with them given the inferior living conditions their natives had to endure compared to ours. He said: "It was a strange game of football. They said if you reacted to these guys, you knew somebody else was going to get sent off. So, we tried to play the game in a controlled manner, but it became that controlled it became mundane. It was probably the worst game of football I've ever played in. This was just a nasty game of football with really nasty people. You wonder why people behave the way they do, but if you actually go to South America, and go to favelas, and the place we played in called Neza, it was horrendous living conditions. As we're driving, there's a dead horse in the street, people living above garages, kids running about with no gear on, and you say to yourself "well, I can get it." We keep moaning about this country and saying how bad it is, it's probably the most wonderful country in the world, and you see where these people come from and what they have to do to survive, you can understand that they will do anything to win a game of football."

It would turn out to be the last time Gordon Strachan played at a major finals for his country. He initially continued in the dark blue under new manager Andy Roxburgh but an 18-month absence, caused by dropping down a division by moving from Manchester United to Leeds United, saw him miss the Italia '90 World Cup.

His form in Leeds' return to the top flight couldn't be ignored as he won the Football Writer's Player of the Year in the 1990/91 season, becoming, so far, the only player to win the accolade both sides of the border. Roxburgh brought him back into the fold for a friendly against Soviet Union in March 1991 and he would play in four of the remaining five Euro '92 qualifying matches as Scotland reached the European Championship finals for the first time ever.

Strachan made his 50th appearance for his country on 25 March 1992 in a 1-1 draw with Finland in a pre-Euro's friendly, thus including him in the SFA Roll of Honour. He had been hoping to add a first European Championship finals appearance to his two World Cup finals, but sadly a long term back injury forced him into retiring from International Football before Roxburgh named his squad. "I didn't think I'd be playing again," he said. "It was at that point, I had three operations on my back, and I thought "I can't do this anymore." I had another operation after that game (Finland), but I did recover and kept playing, which surprised me because I didn't believe I could do it again."

He might not have been part of the 20-man squad that performed admirably against Netherlands, Germany and CIS, but Strachan had the consolation of being in Sweden as a fan, fulfilling the other side of the Men's National Team story he was envious of a decade earlier. His journey is similar to that of most fans' tales with long trips across Europe to get to Scandinavia, as he recalled: "I ended up in Sweden for it, I went to the games, I went as a fan. I went via my mate's van, he had a builder's van, took me down to Rotherham, picked up another car there, drove down to London, got a flight to Copenhagen, got a train somewhere else, then another train and ended up in Norrkoping. It took me about 24 hours.

When asked how the experience of being a fan was, Strachan replied: "It was quite enjoyable, because I met a lot of people out there, football people, we had a chat and a laugh, a joke, got going to the games, got close to the training, so it was quite enjoyable actually."

Fifty caps, five goals, two World Cup Finals appearances, a place in the SFA Roll of Honour and a trip to watch his country at their first European Championship finals as a supporter, Gordon Strachan has plenty to be proud of with his International playing career. Add to that, he is one of just eighteen Scotland players to score at a World Cup Finals, with that celebration etched in the Tartan Army's minds for years – even those not even born when he scored against the West Germans.

Next issue of 'Famous Tartan Army Magazine' John Bleasdale chats to Gordon about his time in management







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MEET THE TARTAN ARMY

BY HAZEL GUILDER

MEET THE MASCOT – CALLUM BLEASDALE

I am Callum Bleasdale, I am eight years old and I was chosen to be mascot for the Scotland v Spain match on Tuesday 28 March 2023!

Before we went to Hampden, I was on Radio Scotland speaking to Martin Geissler, who wanted to know if I was excited. I told him I was a little bit nervous and I was a nine out of ten excited.

I was very excited when Me, Mum and famous Dad aka John Bleasdale went into Hampden stadium. I put on my Spain strip and, because I didn't know what to do, I just listened carefully and I got it right. Paul then took us away from Mum and Dad.

We went through the stadium, past the bus stop and changing rooms and then onto the pitch, where we all got our photos taken before going back inside.

We all then met the players and found out who we were walking out with. I was next to Grant Hanley. I was nervous at first but later I wasn't even close to being nervous.

We then went onto the pitch and sang Flower of Scotland, it was great. I went back to my seat beside Mum and Dad and was really happy when Scotland beat Spain 2-0. I was especially pleased that Mum was with us because she normally doesn't like football, but she loved this game!

I was very nervous but EXCITED!
Overall, I thought the whole day was fun.
Callum Bleasdale age 8







Scotland v Cyprus – 25th March 2023

Jackson McAllister
This is Jackson's 2nd Scotland game. His first game was against ROI back in September 2022. Jackson loves supporting Scotland and his favourite player is none other than our Super John McGinn.

Jackson's favourite moment so far was Ryan Christie's penalty beating ROI including a video of him celebrating. We are delighted to hear that Jackson has started a scrapbook of the games he is has been to, the scoreline and all pictures taken from the games are printed to keep in his scrapbook. Now an avid collector of pin badges from the games.

Jackson plays football for Newburgh Thistle up in the NE so his passion for Scotland and the national side as a young TA fan is wonderful to hear. Aberdeen is Jackson's home team and favourite player is Ryan Duncan who has also made his debut for the Scotland U21's. Jackson is now a proud owner of Ryan's Aberdeen match shirt from the Hearts game. Thank you to his dad, Darren McAllister for this photo and his mum for taking it. The FTAM look forward to seeing you all again at Hampden for more exciting games.



Millie Burns
This was Millie's first Scotland Mens game. Her first game was the SNWT Scotland v Jamaica at Hampden. Millie's mum Melanie made her this lovely pink tutu for her first game.



Colin and Chloe Irving
Row R South Stand Hampden Park
Chloe and her dad Colin sat in front of me at the Cyprus game. Her first game was our World Cup qualifier game against Ukraine on 1st June 2022; an unfortunate game to have as a first. However with every TA fan, young and old, the spirit never leaves us and so Chloe was completely undeterred by the result.

Chloe was completely hooked. The Scotland v Cyprus game is now her 5th game and now a junior SSC so will be attending all home games this year. Her favourite player, yes, you have guessed it, is John McGinn Chloe loves singing Flower of Scotland and can I say this again, the "Super John McGinn" song. @John McGinn, I think you owe me an interview now given how many times I have mentioned you; please get in touch as I live in Cambridge.

Thank you to Colin for allowing me to take this picture and we will see you at Georgia game very soon.



James and Patricia Perman
Regulars to all home and away games. Sit in same seats for all home games at Hampden. First game was away to Liechtenstein in 2012.



Last but not least….
A massive shout to our regular famous piper outside Hampden Park Laurie MacKinnon. Laurie's first match was at Scotland v Slovenia in a drab 0-0 draw.

We have all been to those types of games where the seagulls circling above us have become more interesting to watch than the team but thank goodness, we have not resorted to this past time over the last several years. Laurie can recall the 6-0 win against the Faroe Islands at Celtic Park when the campaign caught the imagination of the fans.

Laurie also pipes outside the stadium at Hampden when we won 2-1 against Denmark in November 2021; yes, how could all forget THAT game? What another big night of our wins against the big teams. The visiting Vikings were super friendly that evening, some more than others from what I remember, but we will leave that one to one's memory bank, but the Vikings loved Laurie and they took hundreds of pictures with our famous piper.

Everyone will know Laurie given he stands outside in all weathers playing his bagpipes along with his bagpipe case hoping to catch a few coins and notes however he now accepts card payments so look out for him.

I have seen and heard Laurie with his talent of all sorts of Scottish songs as well as some more up to date songs. I heard his rendition of the Super John McGinn song which was super impressive (yes, I have mentioned SJM one last time) and a young man dancing to it. Laurie has been piping for a living for all of his working life, 20 years and counting.

Busking Street entertainment is a huge part of it all and does private functions as well. Sporting events and the Scotland matches are a big part of what Laurie does. This year we are hoping to see Laurie at all of the away games and is now part of the Westa Tartan Army.

Please go up and say a massive hello to Laurie, please give generously at all the home games or if he makes it to Oslo or any other country, we will just let our ears locate him somewhere in the city or the stadium if he makes it there.
You can follow Laurie via Instagram **@awanderingpiper**

Laurie MacKinnon









FANS WITH MICROPHONES

Graeme and Keith Easton



THE matchday experience at Hampden, of course, is predominantly about the players on the pitch and the Tartan Army cheering them on. However, the pre-match entertainment is another important feature in the build-up to kick off, along with the appropriate music to fill the fifteen-minute half-time interval.

Brothers Graeme and Keith Easton of Woosh have been fronting the Hampden matchday coverage for over 14 years. Graeme is the one you see on the big screens and whose voice you hear projected over the PA system when John McGinn, Scott McTominay, Rachel Corsie and co put the ball into the back of the opposition net, whilst Keith ensures the operation runs smoothly in the background by cueing up the right tracks, key messages, what's on the big screen and show-calling the whole operation.

They spoke to Famous Tartan Army Magazine to give us an insight into the preparations that go onto ensure that their presentation goes as smoothly as possible to create that experience for us to appreciate. Before that, they talk about their early Scotland memories, which coincidentally features the same opponents to when they made their professional debut back in 2009.

Graeme Easton:
Match announcer and presenter



Memories of Scotland matches growing up:

"I remember going with Keith and my dad to the game against Iceland in '84 when Paul McStay scored two, and Charlie Nicholas scored another, I remember being in the North Enclosure as it was back in the day. I also recall being at the 3-1 win against Spain the same campaign when Dalglish scored, so I remember those two games. We went to a few, but these two stick out.

"My first Scotland game as match announcer was 1 April 2009 when we beat Iceland and Ross McCormack scored. Keith actually gave me a framed picture of that.

How does the sports presentation come together on match day?

"I think one of the ways to relate to it is you're basically running a TV show where everything is co-ordinated to the second. We work to a spreadsheet as there's as there are contractual elements to adhere from say UEFA or FIFA, what broadcasters Sky or ViaPlay may or may not be doing and other elements of video content for the big screens. In terms of co-ordinating between Keith and I, because it's scripted then there are some sections that are straight reads e.g., UEFA ones, while other sections that I'm doing to camera that are not scripted as such on what to say, for example teeing up a greatest goals compilation. I try my best at Scotland games to use the flags that are around the stadium, like "we've got the Stirling Scotland Supporters club here today" and that kind of thing as a backdrop just to engage with fans and get a bit of energy in the stadium. Without being too cheesy, as supporters are literally from right across Scotland, hopefully folk recognise that and, in my opinion, it's a good thing to do. Over the years, Keith and I, apart from the fact that we're brothers, we have learned how each other works. Keith will know the way I deliver messages and how I intonate. Keith will count me in 'three-two-one' when we do a piece-to-camera so, hopefully, it comes across as pretty seamless like a TV show.

How do you choose the music?

"In terms of music selection, there's some obvious tunes fans may or may not expect to hear. For example, you can have a huge debate about playing Loch Lomond at half time. It's been at half time since Adam was a lad. You might say "let's mix it up and change it" and some people may be quite happy about that, while others may say "how come there's no Loch Lomond, there's always Loch Lomond!" Even if we're getting horsed 5-0 at half time some fans would still expect to hear Loch Lomond. So, there's a lot of debate, you can have the same debate about 500 miles, Freed from Desire and Yes Sir, I Can Boogie, and whether they've had their time. During The Euros in 2021 when Kieran Tierney had a players' playlist, the players requested certain songs when they're warming up. Some fans might not understand that or think it's important, and we can have a whole psychological debate about the power of music and sport. So, this is an element of pre-match we are in tune with, which personally I think is a good thing because, at the end of the day, we all want Scotland to win, and if they request certain tunes to psych themselves up for the game and spur them on, even though they may not be our or The Tartan Army's choices then that's fine by me! For us it's getting the balance right between the what's good for players, and obviously the fans by getting the 'big hits' on, the big Scotland tracks on, but also what's in the charts. So, if that means a bit of Harry Styles or whatever, then so be it! Nobody's going to agree on it, but hopefully fans understand the process behind it. You've also got limitations on how much music you can play to fit in the overall schedule. You've got official announcements and UEFA and FIFA content, adverts to play, so in the last half hour before kick-off you'll be lucky if you get two or three tunes. What are you going to play? You're going to play the big hits! For example, putting the Tartan Specials on. Some people might love, some people might hate but we think it's a good choice because we know the majority of fans respond to it and you're going to get a bit of energy into the stadium as I think it did in the recent Spain game."

What does it feel like to be announcing at Hampden?

"It's a great deal of pride and I'm genuinely honoured to do it. It's a privilege. We've built good relationships with the Scottish FA and Hampden Park, and there seems to be trust, which is very nice to have in any occupation when folk trust you to get on with it and they want you to keep doing it. It's very much a partnership between Woosh and the Scottish FA. We have many meetings and conversations to plan match day and its great to work with people who are passionate and creative."











Continued:

Keith Easton:
DJ and Producer



Those who've been regulars to Hampden will recognise Graeme Easton as the face and voice of the matchday experience.
What we don't see on the big screens at the National Stadium is how things work behind the scenes, from music selection to team graphics, and the contribution from Graeme's wee brother Keith Easton. He is a vital cog in ensuring the production of the matchday event runs as smoothly as possible. He too kindly gave an insight into the operations that go onto making sure that they deliver an enjoyable matchday production for the Tartan Army.

Memories of Scotland matches growing up:
"My first memory was the '82 World Cup with that Panini sticker album and could've rattled off every single stadium in Spain back then in terms of where Scotland were playing, so I remember being engaged for the first time with that. Prior to that was the England v Scotland game at Wembley, I have a vivid memory of that. It was three o'clock, Saturday afternoon, and the thing that fascinated me was the Scotland players had their names on their back, which was one of the first times that had been done. I appreciate that's a really geeky thing to know. So that's my early memories, and out of that game came the brilliant lyric from We Have a Dream.
"I remember being into my music, Radio Scotland back in those days did the Scottish chart, and the Scotland World Cup songs would get into the Scottish charts and Tom Ferrie would present it. I was very engaged in my music, like buying seven-inch singles, and that whole We Have a Dream and that Top of the Pops performance, the lyrics, it's brilliant.





How do you plan what happens on match day at Hampden?
"I work very closely with the marketing and commercial departments at the SFA, to prepare a schedule, and it's timed, so we work back from when the teams are coming out of the tunnel. That is usually four minutes, though sometimes that can change if there's got to be a minute's silence or applause, so you're working back. The creative team at the SFA team produce some brilliant video content and it's great to use the big screens to show those hype videos. They're creating lots of great content and interviews on their social media channels, so a lot of the videos are they putting out are repurposed for match day in the stadium. We also have contractual adverts for sponsors and partners. So in the 90 minutes from the stadium opening until kick-off we have music, video's, contractual adverts, contractual content from UEFA such as VAR videos, behaviour messaging, racism messaging, police safety messaging – so it's a lot to schedule in up to kick off.

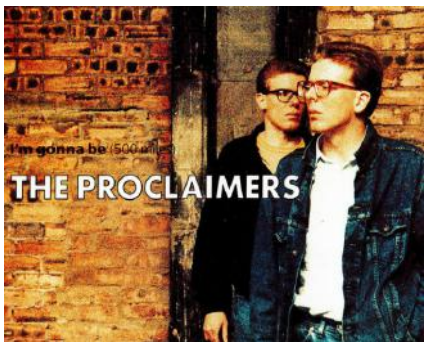
"For me, you want as many of those brilliant moments on screens, like a twelve-minute goals compilation, people coming into the stadium want to see Archie Gemmill's goal, McFadden, Dalglish, John McGinn goals. It's building up with all of that on a schedule that we put together - we'll have a spreadsheet and time everything as best we can, there's a countdown to kick off document which says when the players are on the pitch warming up, when the players are coming off finishing from warming up, is the pitch being watered and stuff like that. With live events there's a chance everything doesn't run to time, for example if the teams come out slightly later, so you've got to build a bit of a contingency when you're trying to build the atmosphere. You don't want the song just to cut short, but there's quite a big variable with the players if they come out on time, and then you've got national anthems to do. For the anthem for the opposition we'll get a digital version of that sent through, when I get that I'll download that and then I always cross-reference it by going onto YouTube or cross-reference it with other national anthems I've got in my library just to be absolutely certain. We don't want any embarrassing situation with the playing of the wrong anthem! And then with Scotland, you've got the live piper, and usually you've got someone signing for the deaf as well.



"People should not be surprised to hear that we rehearse on a lot of the pre-match, so the ground staff take on the role of the teams coming out of the tunnel and lining up, then we do the whole process of the oppositions anthem, Graeme announces it, then Flower of Scotland, the piper playing the music, we soundcheck that, and we have the camera in position to pick up the person signing for the deaf, and the piper's audio all tested and checked. When we are rehearsing all of that it is all overseen by a UEFA delegate as well as the SFA staff. Ahead of the game, I'll be working from five or six days out, not solidly every day, but there's a lot of contact with key personnel including Stephen who operates the big screens, so there's a lot of prep that goes into it!

How do you feel show-calling the Scotland games at Hampden?
"At the end of the day, it's not about us. There's the connection between the players and the spectators and the manager and how the team are playing. I remember I used to get really bored about this narrative with people saying "we've not got players playing in the top league in England", there was just all that narrative, but now we've got McTominay, McGinn, Andy Robertson and Hickey and there's that connection with the personality of the players, I remember the days when people were going "who's going to be playing centre half for us", now we're doing alright for centre halves! There's enough big personalities in the team that make the connection with the spectators, and Super John McGinn scoring. Basically there's role models and there's heroes for younger fans to connect with. Graeme and I have talked about the fact that the best thing for us is that chants start on the terracing as the worst thing we could ever be doing is try to force songs on them, that's not even on our radar. It's got to start on the terraces, that's where it will become a thing and people join in, and it's our job and responsibility to complement that at the right time. If the Tartan Army are starting absolutely brilliant new chants and songs on the terracing, that's the ideal scenario for us by a distance, so the more the better!"

***Graeme and Keith were talking to John Bleasdale**





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THE CHICK YOUNG COLUMN

Play-offs. Like taking a blow torch into a fireworks factory.



My personal favourites were Hamilton v Alloa and Ross County v Partick Thistle in the asylums at Douglas and Victoria Parks - or whatever they call them this month.

Bonkers. Stark raving bonkers. The nearest I've come to swearing on air such was the test of digging for words to do justice to the unfolding of our game in this wee outcrop of rock in the North Atlantic.

A different sport, to speak the truth, from what is produced in the English Premier League or the multi millionaires' playground of the Champions' League.

Not for them the recommended and traditional tactic of never mind the ball, get on with the game.

That's football watched from a leather chesterfield with a large Havana and a malt to match.

Our play-offs are more ice hockey marries cage fighting.

These fixtures were nuts. Pure adrenaline churning, jaw dropping, eye popping, heart thumping insanity throughout which you could only give thanks that your lot were not involved.

Passion, hunger, desire all marked present.

But playground defending, chances akin to metaphors involving cows' posteriors and banjos and kicks from the penalty spot still being tracked by air traffic control kind of put a dampening on quality control, although not the entertainment value.

All of which brings me nicely to my point. I don't want any stroke inducing, bodice ripping, sweaty brow madness from Scotland this month.

Unbeaten in six competitive fixtures, and top of Euro group A after two games… that is just lovely.

Ignore the choppy, frenzied waters in the style of the play-offs. Steady as she goes, Captain Clarke.

Currently I like the cut of Scotland's jib, with a balanced crew and a steadily beating engine room.

John McGinn , who has just picked up his fourth consecutive Scottish Football Writers Association international player of the year award, is become something of a legend.

Callum McGregor was a slither behind nudging Kyogo Furuhashi from being Scotland's player of the year and is having an astonishing career.

We produce wing backs like there is a wee factory somewhere.

We will get goals because Dykes grafts …and oh aye, McGinn thinks he is Denis Law.

At this point it might be wise to acknowledge that the opposition boast a couple of players who might well be the best in Europe at the moment.

The lad Erling Haaland is quite good. I'll give you that. But keep Superman away from phone box and all you have to deal with is Clark Kent.

The more we have the ball the less chance there is for him to get it.

Cut the supply and get us forward.

Ditto for the Georgian sensation Khvicha Kvaratakheli, the Napoli winger with motorbike acceleration and wings on his ankles.

Stay calm and have a carry on – and indeed a carry out - later.

Do not, Scotland – under any circumstances- put me through the lunacy of Dingwall and Hamilton .

A point in Norway and three at Hampden and we move on.

You know it makes sense…





HOMELESS WORLD CUP

by Michael McEwan

No matter what your background is, football is for everyone that's why it's called the beautiful game.

California is the venue for the 20th homeless world cup, the first to be held since the pandemic.

More than 500 players from 64 countries will compete in this. The first homeless world cup was 2003 in Graz, Austria and has been changing lives with football ever since.

The first tournament brought together 18 men's/ mixed teams from around the world with 144 players taking part.

Over the years the competition has saw a large growth in the sport, held in other cities worldwide, like Mexico to Amsterdam, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, Milan, Melbourne, Copenhagen, Cape Town and Gothenburg.

When the world cup was held in Paris 2011, it was the first time the tournament was broadcast online, so all over the world people could now watch this. This annual tournament is a celebration of the amazing work being done by the grassroots organisations worldwide.

Robbie Wood who is the regional manager for Edinburgh, and possibly the lead coach for Team Scotland explains:
"The opportunity for players to be part of the Homeless World Cup can be life-changing and will no doubt be an incredible experience. We are excited to bring together players from our programmes across Scotland to travel to Sacramento. It's the first competition in four years and previously we have seen the profound effect it has had on players to help them find positive change in their lives. Team Scotland can't wait for this".

Scotland has won the tournament on two occasions in 2007 and 2011. The event was hosted in Edinburgh in 2005, as Princes Street Gardens was transformed into football parks and between 5-6,000 people attended. In Glasgow 2016, George Square was transformed into an outdoor street football venue for the event.

This tournament is held in three overall categories, the homeless world cup includes both men's and women's teams, but also mixed gender teams.

On average 48 men's teams and 16 women teams are in the tournament, they're working on a 50/50 split between woman and men's teams and working on growing their women's programme.

After the draw each team plays all the other teams in their group. Their relative position in the preliminary group they will play in during the second stage. In the next stage each team will play each other team in its group in a round robin format.

Once all the group games have been completed, the team's final position determines the last stage of the competition. Teams that finish first or second within their group advance to play for the (men/mixed) or women's homeless world cup.

Those who finish in third and fourth place in their group compete for the next highest trophy. There is a minimum of four players per teams on the court, three outfield, one goalkeeper, plus four substitutes (flying or rolling substitutions apply)

During the game there two halves of seven minutes each, plus a one-minute interval in between each half. The match start when the referee throws the ball into the court. When a goal is scored, the team that has conceded the goal receives the ball and the goalkeeper is allowed to bring the ball back into play immediately after the referee whistle.

Each game is played under the Spirit of the Homeless World Cup, all taking part, including management, uphold a high standard of behaviour and integrity both on and off the pitch. The event gives the most marginalised in society hope and purpose, for some time structure and a sense of community, in this way all taking parts are winners.













FOOTBALL SHOULD BE FREE TO ALL By Michael McEwan

For many years Scottish fans have been left in the dark when it comes to watching the national team playing football. The few times which we see Scotland games free to air is at World Cups and European Championships, and in my opinion that is not right.

Now that we also have the cost-of-living crisis it is getting more difficult for some fans to afford tickets. But this also goes back to well before the crisis.

Scotland fans will be expected to fork out at least an extra £250 a year. MP Gavin Newlands has been holding a roundtable with major broadcasters BBC, Alba, Sky, Channel Four, Viaplay and the SFA.

This was to try to put Scotland's national football games on free to air TV, some matches were broadcast on Sky before moving last June to Premier Sport, now Viaplay. The streaming service secured exclusive rights to Scotland matches from 2024 to 2028 in a deal struck with UEFA.

England matches are currently shown on Channel Four in a contract taken over from ITV, whilst Sky has an agreement that Wales matches are broadcast on Welsh language Channel S4C, with Welsh commentary.

Scotland Men's and Women's teams should have the whole nation behind them, however at the moment, only through BBC Alba are we able to follow Scotland Women's national team.

To follow the men's team, we must either pay channel subscription or attend the matches, which sell out fast and which many can't afford, and this is fundamentally wrong.

I'd like to go one step further, that we can get more league games on free to air. I remember during lockdown there were some English Premiership matches on Free to Air TV but no topflight games, now that is not right.

It's a historic moment that Sky Sports will show a minimum of five SWPL, still not on free to air, and just five throughout this season isn't much, there should be a wide spectrum of SPL football readily available to all fans.

If we want the next generation of fans to look up to the current players, have idols and role models, then they need to be able to see them in action. National and club football should be for everyone, not just pay to view. In years gone by our grandparents had coverage on the turn of a radio dial, without being expected to pay for the experience.

In the 21st century it is perceived that the lucky fans can pay for the full experience, while free to air will throw out the scraps of highlights, no longer a one for all sport but a profitable industry, where the only winner is the club. A club is only a real success through support from fans, it's time to reward them for their loyalty.

Lobbyists, MPs such as Gavin Newlands and fan groups need to keep the pressure on powers that be, to ask why football fans aren't getting a fair deal.

Football is open to all, so why is that not the case for fans watching it?









The Tartan Army Autobahn to Deutschland has commenced in Schottland

by Hazel Guilder

It has been a quick 5 months since we kicked a ball in our last international game against Turkey. A lot of the Tartan Army fans were not particularly impressed with the poor performance from the squad that night in Diyarbakir, however we were willing to overlook the result given it was a friendly. Our 2-1 defeat, metaphorically speaking, was kicked so far into the stratosphere, it resembled Harry Kane's World Cup missed penalty against France.

Then at the World Cup, we saw an exciting final between France and Argentina with the South Americans and Messi crowned champions of the world. As the Arabian curtains came down, most of us looked forward to the festive season and getting back to attending mainstream football in seasonal climates with a pie and hot Bovril.

By time the Christmas came along, most of us were enjoying an early snifter or three on Christmas Eve when we all heard the drama unfold on social media that our Scotland number one, Craig Gordon, had suffered a double leg fracture during a Hearts game; that picture painted a thousand words. The news hit us as if Santa would not be able to do the big present drop off on Christmas Eve. Our thoughts went out immediately to Craig, and It then became clearer that Craig was not going to recover by March or even by June and so our attention turned to who would replace our outstanding and dependable No1 for Scotland.
The issue in all our minds is that Steve Clarke had not used any of the friendly games during 2022 to evaluate the likes of Zander Clark or Liam Kelly but instead, had kept Craig between the sticks.

So, this lack of testing alternative keepers would prove more than a headache to the Scotland backroom staff.

Born and bred Norwich City regular Angus Gunn announced that the Canary was willing to switch his allegiances on the run up to the Cyprus game; naturally, this created a topical and trending tweet with the TA. Despite his father Bryan Gunn appearing for Scotland at international level, Angus represented England at various youth levels. Despite holding out for a place within the England squad, and with no immediate return of Craig Gordon, Angus made the decision to switch his international allegiance to Scotland and in quick succession, was handed his first cap to start his Scotland career against Cyprus.

In other big news for TA fans is that Steve Clarke has signed a deal to remain as the Scotland head coach until 2026. Our very own "Dumbledore" Clarke came to the Hogwarts of Hampden in 2019 bringing along his magical soccer sorting hat. You may be reading this and thinking that the writer has lost the plot. However, with each campaign, it feels like Clarke uses his wise old hat with his squad which chooses their positions and brings out the best in each of those players within the squad. Steve's wise use of his footballing book of potions and spells has in my view, created a magical group of talented players and I think the results so far in 2023, speak to for themselves.

See you all on the road in June – Hazel Guilder



Photo: Scottish Sun



Photo: Scottish Sun

Continued:

Scotland vs Cyprus. European Championship Qualifying Group A.

2:00pm, Saturday 25th March 2023
Hampden Park: Attendance: 48,195

Rockin all over the world.
Scotland's focus to qualify for EURO2024 got off to a winning start with our very own Super John McGinn magical strike and Scott McTominay's incredible late double earned Scotland a 3-0 win over Cyprus at a sold-out Hampden Park.

Our ever-popular midfielder SJM fired in from Robbo's deflected cross in the first half for his 16th goal for the national side. After a lengthy VAR check, the Tartan Army burst into a rendition of 'We've got super John McGinn' and the qualifying campaign burst into life. It was a sight to behold and a thrill to be back on the world stage yet again amongst the TA at Hampden.

Scott McTominay, who had a shot blocked minutes after coming off the bench, smashed the ball into the roof of the net late on to secure the victory in the Group A opener.

The Manchester United man then added another goal in injury-time to wrap up a comfortable afternoon against the visitors, who managed just one shot on target.

Scotland manager Steve Clarke was clearly delighted with victory in their group opener but as we always know, Steve is very grounded and was looking for improvement against Spain on Tuesday night.

Man of the Match: John McGinn

Scotland vs Spain. European Championship Qualifying Group A.

7:45pm, Tuesday 28th March 2023
Hampden Park: Attendance 47,976

What a night to remember, in fact I almost needed a St Johns Ambulance after 7 minutes during this firecracker of a game. I was incredibly nervous before the game however the three double G&T's I had in the hospitality suite calmed my nerves as I took to my comfortable seat and got to know my seating companions. Dominic, you had predicted 2-0 to Scotland and I must admit, at the time of kick off, I either thought you had been at the bar too long or the utter belief, which we love, that Scotland would come out of Hampden basking in glory.

McTominay fired in a double canon across the Spanish Armada's fleet to secure Scotland famous victory over Spain which will go down in the football history books. Scott and the whole squad took complete control from the get-go of Scotland's EURO2024 qualifying campaign in every sense. The Manchester United midfielder fired in the opener at Hampden Park after just seven minutes to a stunned Spanish team. Then McTominay volleyed home Kieran Tierney's deflected cross just after the break to secure Scotland's first victory over the Spaniards since 1984. In all of the 36 years of going to see Scotland play at Hampden, I have never really heard the famous roar, however, to be part of it that night was incredible and will stay with my dad and I forever.

I asked my dad Gordon to pinch me to make sure I was not in a dreamland but here we were, celebrating and hugging each other. I have to say that this particular game was a perfect start to our EURO2024 qualifying and once again our nation dares to dream.

Man of the match: Scott McTominay


Photo: Scottish Sun


Photo: Scottish Sun


Photo: Scottish Sun


Photo: Scottish Sun

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- In the last 3 years, has your business improved any processes, services, materials, or devices?
- In the last 3 years, has your company developed any software or IT solutions (e.g. APP/IT to improve your business) by your internal staff or by external contractors?
- Have you ever manufactured or modified any products in house?
- Have you invested time and money into failed projects or developed products that have never launched?
- Have you ever outsourced any product design?
- Have you ever purchased an off-the shelf item and modified it to a better standard?
- PAYE staff

R&D Tax Relief

The scheme was introduced by the UK Government in 2000 for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with a separate scheme for large companies launched in 2002. Any company carrying out Innovation in their field, is likely to qualify for the relief. The definitions of eligible R&D and eligible costs are reasonably broad, and eligible R&D activities can take place across a wide range of company operations.

Please scan the QR and fill out your details if you believe your company or a company you know could be eligible for R&D Tax Relief

Filling out your details and completing this form for your own business or a referral and enter into a draw to win a pair of hospitality tickets for a Hamilton Academical Football Club home game courtesy of ZLX.