

# Football – Craig Gowans Memorial Match



by John Hislop

Hundreds of people braved the overcast weather conditions at Saughton Enclosure today to pay tribute to the memory of Craig Gowans who died during a training ground accident in Falkirk in July 2005.

The seventeen year-old was only two weeks into his professional contract with the Bairns when the tragedy occurred. He was moving a six metre high net designed to catch stray balls, when one of the metal poles came into contact with overhead power lines.

As well as being a talented footballer, Craig was a straight A pupil and talented artist at Stewart's-Melville College, where he won the School's Athletic Championship. He also had an unconditional offer to study Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art, but chose a career in football.

The memorial event in his name started with an eight club tournament for under 10s, which was won by Spartans on the 'head to head' rule after the final ended in a 1-1 draw with Currie Star. The trophy was presented Craig's father, John, and Councillor Steve Cardownie, Deputy Leader of Edinburgh Council.

The main event was a charity match between Hutchison Vale for whom Craig had played before signing for Falkirk, and a Hibs/Hearts select featuring six former Scotland internationalists. Radio star Grant Stott presented the festivities and kept the crowd amused throughout.

Although the former stars had lost some speed and stamina, they retain their competitive edge, and were still able to show flashes of skill before the appreciative supporters.

The game was played in good spirit, and Henry Smith kept the home side at bay with several good saves, before Keith Wright scored a goal which would have graced any stadium. The former Hibs favourite met a Darren Jackson cross perfectly and his inch perfect header flew into the top corner leaving goalkeeper Kevin Swain helpless.



At half time, Radio Forth One presenter Mark Martin took over in goals for Hutchison Vale, much to the amusement of Grant Stott, but Mark made him eat his words on several occasions with superb saves from Darren Jackson, Jimmy Sandison Keith Wright and John Robertson. With the game evenly balanced, former Hibs fullback Graham Love sealed the victory with a close range header near the end.

Highlight of the game was late appearance of Hutchison Vale legend Les Trotter, on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his marriage to wife Flo. Les's appearance as substitute was met by a loud chorus of 'What's that coming over the hill, is it a monster?' by Grant Stott, but the match coordinator lasted only ten minutes before being shown the red card by referee Kenny Clark, for, according to Stott, "wearing a shirt which was far too tight for his ample shape."

After the final whistle, an emotional John Hughes who was the Falkirk manager when the accident happened, spoke to The Edinburgh Reporter, and told how Craig's memory inspires him to this day.

The former Hibs boss said:- "He was a wonderful kid, everything you'd want your own kids to aspire to. He was very intellectual, a very clever boy and a great athlete. His

biggest asset, I would say was that he wanted to help everyone. You could see that on the pitch, if one of his teammates was in trouble, he was over there trying to help, tackle for him, or cover for him and that was him in life. Nothing that you asked him to do was too big for him; he was just a wonderful person.

"He glided when he ran and was a great athlete. All we needed to do was give him a little bit of positional sense, but he was so clever that anything you told him, you only had to tell him once and he took it on board. He reminded me of a young Alan Hansen and you know how far he went in the game.

"It was just a tragic day, but I have to say this, he inspires me to this day. It's easy using words to say things like that but it's true. Any time life which has a habit of twists and turns and anytime I get a low bit, I just think of Craig laughing away and I do use him as my inspiration.

"He was from a wonderful family, Sheila and John, and they are everything that a family should aspire to with the values that they have got and certainly Craig had those values in abundance."

The select team included Henry Smith, Dave McPherson, John Robertson, Darren Jackson, Dave Bowman, Gareth Evans, John Hughes, Keith Wright, Jimmy Sanderson, Graham Love and David Farrell.

The day ended with a charity raffle, with all proceeds going to the Craig Gowans Memorial Fund, which to date has raised over £37,000, funding projects through the Sick Kids Friends Foundation, Children 1<sup>st</sup>, CHAS as well as helping towards new community projects which aim to offer help and support for children from deprived areas of Edinburgh and to provide state of the art educational facilities and transportation for disabled children.

