

# Former Hibs star Jimmy Thomson dies aged 80



Former Hibs star Jimmy “Tiger” Thomson, who played a major role in the club’s first European campaign passed away last week in Edinburgh, aged 80.

Brought up in the Gorgie/Dalry area, Jimmy attended Tynecastle Secondary School and was in the same class as Jimmy Murray who made his name with Hearts and actually made history by scoring Scotland’s first World Cup goal in Sweden in 1958.

Jimmy’s football skills soon brought him to the attention of the senior clubs, and after starring as a goal scoring forward with junior team Edinburgh City; Hibs manager Hugh Shaw invited him to join the club for whom he made his first team debut in a friendly against Sheffield United in March 1954.

His first competitive game for the club came a month later in a 3-0 defeat to Celtic in front of 45,000 fans at Easter Road. Two days later he scored his first senior goal against Aberdeen in a 3-0 home win. His only other game that season was a 2-2 home draw against Rangers

The following season, Jimmy played nine times in the forward line; the most memorable was a 2-1 win against Celtic at Parkhead.

Shaw then realised that Jimmy possessed the skills to play in midfield, and after an injury to established first team right-half Archie Buchanan, Jimmy was handed the role, and played 25 times in a young half back line alongside Jackie Plenderleith and Tommy Preston, earning the nickname ‘Tiger’ in the historic season of 1955-56.

That season, Hibs became the first British club to play in the inaugural European Cup, and on 14 September 1955, Jimmy helped his team-mates beat German champions Rot Weiss Essen 4-0, thanks to two goals by Eddie Turnbull, and one each from Lawrie Reilly and Willie Ormond, in rain soaked and muddy conditions.

The second leg was played four weeks later at Easter Road, and Hibs qualified for the next round after a 1-1 draw despite missing Gordon Smith and Tommy Younger who were stranded in the fog at Heathrow, and Lawrie Reilly who was injured.

Unusually for Hibs, who were famed for their forward line, it was Jimmy and his two midfield colleagues who received the post-match plaudits from the media and the 30,000 home fans due to their performances.

Swedish side Djurgardens were the next opponents, but the weather conditions meant that the first leg was held at Firhill which Hibs won 3-1, thus becoming the first team to play (and win) a European fixture in Glasgow. Once again, Jimmy tigerish performance in midfield won praise from all concerned.

An Eddie Turnbull penalty in the second leg at Easter Road saw Hibs reach the European Cup semi-final where they met Stade de Rheims in Paris on April 4 1956. Unfortunately the French side, which contained legendary centre-forward, Raymond Kopa, and other outstanding players proved too strong for Hibs, but they were far from disgraced.

Jimmy was ruled out of the second leg of the semi-final at Easter Road due to injury, which Hibs lost narrowly by a single goal to exit the competition..

Jimmy played 14 times during the 1956/7 season, scoring four times, including a double against in a 6-1 away victory and again, against the same opponents in a 4-0 home win. His other goal came in a 3-3 draw at home to Celtic.

The following season was to be his last at Easter Road, and Jimmy made only five games, although he did add to his goal tally, scoring in an incredible 5-5 draw with St Mirren at Easter Road. He was in good company that day as the other scorers were Eddie Turnbull, Willie Ormond and a youngster called Joe Baker.

His last game in the famous green and white jersey came in a 2-1 defeat to Clyde at Shawfield on 3 May 1958. In the close season he moved to Ayr United then Cowdenbeath before ending his career at Vale of Leven.

Incidentally, it was a matter of pride to Jimmy, that despite the tough, competitive tackling style that earned him the nickname 'Tiger' he was never booked during his four year Hibs career.

Former team-mate Dave Gibson remembers Jimmy as a good players and a likeable man. He told the Edinburgh Reporter: "I am really sorry to learn about the death of Jimmy Thomson. He was a first team player at Hibs when I was a kid playing in the reserves, but he was a nice likeable fella, and a really clever wee player. He was a neat and tidy payer who could pass the ball. I met him at a function for Tommy Preston about three years ago, and he looked great. He was always immaculately dressed in collar and tie and looked smart as a cookie that day.

"My abiding memory of Jimmy came in a training session at Easter Road. We had a new coach who decided that we should play baseball for a change. Jimmy was the catcher and after the rules were explained to us, big Joe McClelland the full back took the bat. He missed all three pitches and started to run round the pitch, but forgot to drop the bat. The players all shouted at him, but instead of dropping it, he threw it back and hit Jimmy on the nose. It was funny at the time, until we realised that Jimmy's nose was broken and he was carted off to hospital. We never played baseball again at

training. Please send my condolences to his family."

Jimmy is survived by wife Lucy, daughter Elaine and a brother and sister.