

Former Hibs' star pays tribute to the great Dave Mackay

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Tributes continue to pour in for the former Hearts, Tottenham Hotspurs, Derby County and Scotland midfielder Dave Mackay who sadly passed away last night aged 80.

Social media forums have heaped praise on the Edinburgh-born star who won 10 major honours as a player in British and European football as well as winning a 22 caps for his Scotland. He was also named Footballer of the Year in both Scotland and England.

Earlier today the Edinburgh Reporter spoke to former Hibs' star Dave 'Gibbo' Gibson who grew up watching Mackay play for his beloved Hearts before becoming his team mate for Scotland then his opponent in the English First Division.

He said: "I was very sad to hear of the passing of the great Dave Mackay today. I knew that he wasn't keeping too well these last few years as I kept in touch with his wife Isabel, but it was still a massive shock.

"Although I played for Hibs, I was a Hearts' fan when I was growing up and I remember seeing Dave play one of his first games as a teenager against a team from Belgium. He had just signed from Newtongrange Star, but I remember thinking who is this barrel chested youngster who took charge of everything?

"Thankfully for me by the time I made it into the Hibs' team, Dave had been sold to Tottenham Hotspurs so I never faced him

in the Edinburgh derby which was just as well. That was a magical time for Hearts and people used to say that even if you did get past Dave, John Cummings would get you.

“Dave was my hero as a fan but he was also a hero of all the players he played with. If you ask 100 players of that time, they will all agree.

“When I moved to Leicester City, my manager at the time Matt Gilles always used to say that if he could sign any player then he would sign Dave Mackay. That’s how good he was.

“I played in a Scotland A versus Scotland B game at Hampden just about the time Dave left Hearts and there was a number on Edinburgh based players on the field and we all shared a train to Glasgow. Dave told us that he was moving to Spurs and I think the fee was £29,999 which must be the bargain of all time.

“I played against Dave many times in England but also played with him for Scotland. We had a marvellous tour and I made my debut against Austria at Hampden which was abandoned due to the violence of the Austrians, then we played Norway, Ireland and Spain on tour.

We lost in Norway, when, after Dave Mackay had to go off we lost two late goals. Then, after we lost 1-0 in Dublin we got slaughtered in the press and some papers were insisting the tour be abandoned before we embarrassed Scotland in Madrid.

“I remember that there was a bomb scare at Dublin Airport and to pass the time, Dave started doing his party piece. He would juggle a half-crown coin, then flick it into his top jacket pocket which got us laughing. By the time we got to the Bernabeu, we were up for anything. We were annoyed at ourselves and the press, so we took a collective decision to have a go at Spain and we beat them 6-2

“During that tour Dave was the king of everybody, a real leader.

“I always said that it was a pleasure to play with him but not against him but he was never a dirty player. He was all heart.”

One game that sticks in Gibbo’s memory came after both he and Mackay had hung up their boots. He continued: “After I finished playing, I was invited to play a charity game for a Derby County / Nottingham Forest select against the students of Loughborough University. Dave was manager of Derby and Richie Norman was his physio.

“They both played that night and in the first minute the Loughborough winger ran down the wing, beat Dave and Richie before crossing the ball into the box for the centre forward to score. Richie said to Dave that it looked as though it was going to be a long night but Dave replied that the game wasn’t finished and he rolled his sleeves up. The next time the winger tried to beat Dave he ended up in the crowd and we went on to win 2-1.

“That sums up Dave for me. He was in his forties at the time and it was just a charity game but he was determined to win.

“The inscription on his gravestone should read ‘never say die until you are dead’

“Dave Mackay was one of the greatest football players of all time and he will be sorely missed by football fans everywhere.”