

John Hughes' tribute to Craig Gowans



Should Inverness Caledonian Thistle beat Falkirk in the William Hill Scottish Cup final next weekend, manager John 'Yogi' Hughes will dedicate the victory to former Falkirk youngster Craig Gowans who was tragically killed on the training ground when a six metre high net, designed to catch stray balls, that he was carrying came into contact with overhead power lines.

The seventeen year-old was only two weeks into his professional contract with the Bairns when the tragedy occurred. 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.

Yogi said: "It's ten years since Craig Gowans died and to be playing Falkirk in a Scottish Cup final? The last time I managed in a Scottish Cup final it was his dad John who led the team out. And everything I do, that young kid's my inspiration. I've lost people close to me, my brother, parents, and it's different. You handle it because you have the rest of your family. With Craig, that young kid is my inspiration.

"I look at Scott Arfield and where he is now and often wonder 'Where would the kid be?' He was an Alan Hansen, he strolled through the game, he cruised, he was quick, strong, good passer – and he was caring and kind as well. Maybe that was the flaw in his game, he tried to help too many people, but that was his character.

“Over the years, when I feel sorry for myself, I just think of him and it gets me going again. If the cup comes back to Inverness and I get a medal, I will be dedicating it to Craig, that’s for sure. I’ll never forget him.”

“I spoke to John the other morning because for the tenth anniversary they are doing a 72-hour football marathon to get in the Guinness Book of Records. They’re a wonderful family and I always look back at him. He was a top academic, he could’ve been anything he wanted to be, but we offered him a football contract and he took it. ’

“They are a magnificent family and you can see why he had so much style and class about him. And then you look back and you say ‘tragic’.”

The football match will kick off at 3:00pm on Saturday the 4th July and will run continuously until they beat the Guinness World Record which currently stands at 72 hours. The match will consist of two teams of 11 players and 7 substitutes who will be working in shifts (night and day) to achieve their goal.

This will be the hardest psychological and physical challenge that each of the 36 players has ever undertaken; in terms of distance covered, this works out at an equivalent of approximately 9.03 marathons. Each player will be putting their bodies to the test with a maximum of 6 hours rest at a time over the period; this really will give new meaning to pouring blood, sweat and tears into achieving a goal for the greater good in the name of their friend Craig.