


Prestigious SFA award for Scottish Walking Football legend Peter Collins



Congratulations to Scottish Walking Football legend Peter Collins who was presented with the SFA Volunteer of the year in Adult Football award at Easter Road stadium on Saturday ahead of the game against Hamilton.

Peter was nominated by former Hibs and Scotland striker Keith Wright who wrote: "Peter is a very dedicated and unbelievably 85-year-old who amazes with his energy and enthusiasm. He put walking football on the map, not only in Midlothian where he founded the walking football centre in Loanhead five years ago, but in the whole of Scotland. He spoke at Age Scotland's annual awards in Perth letting people know the benefits of walking football. He also spoke at a similar event in the Borders. Peter and his Loanhead team recently won the Scottish Walking Football Cup and this achievement has given him more exposure to let everyone know what a wonderful game walking football is."

 Peter played in goals for the victorious Midlothian side that won the Scottish Walking Football Festival, the sport's equivalent of the Scottish Cup, at Glasgow Green on Saturday 24th June.

The prestigious event featured a record 32 teams from throughout Scotland and was organised by the charity Paths for All in conjunction with Glasgow Sport.

Midlothian won the tournament after defeating Gretna 2-0 in the final having disposed of Hearts 6-2 in the semis and Peter performed heroics to secure the trophy.

He is a 'weel-kent face' at Walking Football tournaments throughout the country where he always wears his treasured Hibernian goalkeeper's top which was given to him by the club, and he will now represent Scotland in the Walking Football Home International Championship later this year.

Peter is a hugely inspirational figure who works tirelessly for several charities in addition to playing walking football six times a week, line dancing and lifting weights at the gym in his 'spare time' when he is not working at race tracks as Scotland's oldest bookmaker.

✘ Brought up within earshot of Easter Road, Peter has supported Hibernian through thick and thin, from the halcyon days of the Famous Five up to the present day.

His love of the club has been passed on to his family and the name Collins is well known to staff in the ticket office with a plethora of offspring taking their seats in the Famous Five stand for every home game.

Peter told the Edinburgh Reporter: "I am from a real Hibs family. My parents are buried against the wall in the cemetery behind the goals and I regularly go there to tend their grave.

"The week after the Scottish Cup final the cemetery was a mass of green and white flags and scarves draped over gravestones and it really was a wonderful sight to see.

"I was brought up in Marionville Road and as a youngster I could hear the cheers coming from Easter Road whenever Hibs played. My father died before I was born and my mother had to bring myself and three sisters up on 19 shillings (95p) a week. Money was tight so I couldn't afford to go to games but I used watch the last 10 minutes when they opened the gates.

"When it was bad weather, the Hibs' players used to run from Easter Road to Portobello to train and I would join in and run with them for the length of my street.

“One of my earliest memories was after playing football for Edinburgh BBs against Leith we were taken to a café in Leith Street which was owned by a Hibs director called Mr Littlejohn. The Hibs players were there and Jock Govan came over and spoke to me which was a great thrill.

“I have five children and they are all Hibs fans. I used to take them to Easter Road and we would get there early because of the big crowds. I took them to the upper section of the old east terracing and they sat with their feet dangling over the edge where they could see with no one in front of them.

When the ‘bricks’ came out we bought three with the name Peter Collins on them and someone from the club actually phoned me to make sure it wasn’t a mistake but it was three generations.

“I have seen many great players over the years and I have some brilliant memories of watching the Famous Five play. They were all fantastic footballers and I later became friendly with Lawrie Reilly.

“There have been so many wonderful games over the years it’s difficult to pinpoint my favourite but I remember going to the European Cup semi-final against Reims and going through to Hampden for the League Cup final against Celtic in 1972.

“Since my wife Mary died I have been playing walking football and now play six times a week at Port Seton where Billy Brown sometimes plays, Lasswade, Loanhead, Mayfield, Dalkeith and Penicuik.

“I’ve even played for the Hibs’ Walking Football team at a tournament in Stenhousemuir when they were short of players and I always wear my Hibs’ goalkeepers top which was given to me by the club.

“Midlothian always like to field a strong team in the Scottish Cup so I only played this time because our other goalie couldn’t make it. We played well and I was delighted to lift

the trophy and what made it even more special was the fact that my son Douglas was also in the team.

“We took a strong squad through to Glasgow Green including former Hibs’ winger Kenny Davidson and we beat Hearts in the semi-final but I lost count of the goals so couldn’t tell you the final score. By the time the game finished I was just having laugh with the crowd.

“We beat Gretna 2-0 in the final with Archie Macpherson commentating from the sidelines.

“I had a good chat with him afterwards about the Hibs chances this season. Archie’s son is also a Hibs’ fan so he takes an interest in the team. I think he was surprised to be presenting a medal to someone older than himself though.

“I took my medal to the walking football on Monday and all the guys wanted to score past ‘the Scottish Cup winning goalie.’

“It’s a great way to stay fit but walking football is much more than that. It’s about meeting new people and companionship and I would happily recommend it to anyone.”

Tournament organiser Matt Ramsay from Glasgow Sport said: “Peter is a character you can’t help love with his infectious smile and delight to continue to take part in the game he loves. Peter is far more than ‘just a player’ and plays the game in the correct manner. He truly has become the face of Walking Football Scotland!”

Photographs courtesy of SFA