

Bert Cunningham celebrates his 88th birthday by playing Walking Football



Bert Cunningham celebrated his 88th birthday playing walking football for Edinburgh City at Meadowbank Sports Centre this afternoon.

18 Players turned up for the session and Bert left the pitch to a well deserved standing ovation before tea and cake was served.

The inspirational pensioner has been playing the sport for almost two years and is the oldest player in Scotland.

Bert has been physically active all his life participating in football, cricket and athletics. As a young man he was a competitive cyclist and he continued cycling until a few years ago averaging 120 miles per week in the saddle.

He was also heavily involved with the Boys Brigade in several roles including physical training instructor and in his early 40's he took up trampolining, coaching the sport for over 40 years at Meadowbank.

Bert said: "I saw an advert about a new session starting at Meadowbank in January 2015 so I went along. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and have been a regular ever since, rarely missing the weekly sessions.

"They are a good bunch of lads we all go for a cup of tea and a good chat after the game which makes it a great social occasion"

When asked how long he would continue played his reply was "As long as I am physically able!"

On learning of Bert's achievement, fellow goalkeeper and Scotland Hall of Fame internationalist Alan Rough sent his best wishes and told the Edinburgh Reporter. "I'd like to send my best wishes to Bert on his birthday and I hope he has a great day and keeps a clean sheet. I take an interest in walking football and helped launch sessions at Partick Thistle a couple of weeks ago so I know how competitive and strenuous

it can be so to still be playing at the age of 88 is absolutely fantastic and it is to his credit that he has kept himself fit enough to continue participating. Hopefully Bert has many seasons left between the posts. He really is an inspiration to all."

With Meadowbank closing in a few months Bert will have been one of the few individuals involved with the centre during its entire sporting history – an incredible achievement and he is a truly inspirational role model encouraging older adults to engage in an active, healthy lifestyle.

Walking Football is one of the fastest growing sports in the country with thousands of men and a few women in their 50's, 60's, 70's and even older, playing the game each week. The Edinburgh City group currently play at Meadowbank Sports Centre every Thursday from 12.30 to 14.00, newcomers always welcome – Tel: 0771 971 4932.