

Former Hibs' keeper Jacky Wren dies in South Africa aged 84.

Jacky Wren the former Hibernian goalkeeper of the 1950's has died in South Africa aged 84.

The following obituary was written by Hibernian FC Historian Tom Wright.

Born in Bonnybridge in 1936, the former Gairdock juveniles goalkeeper Jackie Wren, a distant relative of Eddie Turnbull, was first spotted by Hibs when playing for Bo'ness United against the Easter Road side in a friendly and had impressed enough to be immediately offered signing terms.



At that time the Scottish International Tommy Younger had just joined Liverpool creating a goalkeeping crisis at Easter Road with just three untried goalkeepers on the books, Wren, Jim Rollo and Jackie Proudfoot, and although he had been signed only during the summer, Wrens impressive form in the pre season public trial match had guaranteed quick promotion and he made his first team debut in a 6-1 defeat by Hearts in the opening League Cup game at Tynecastle, the youngster perhaps

failing to receive the assistance that he could have expected from the more experienced players in front of him.

He would keep his place in the side however, making 21 appearances that season until the signing of the highly rated Lawrie Leslie from Newtongrange Star who would end the season as the man in possession of the first team jersey. The fine form of the future Scotland goalkeeper Leslie however would make it extremely difficult for Wren to force himself back into contention and he would make only sporadic first team appearances during the following couple of seasons, particularly when Hibs went all the way to the Scottish Cup Final in 1958 only to lose to Clyde.

During the summer of 1959 Leslie had required an operation on an injured elbow that would threaten his career, and Wren would be thrust back into the side that lost heavily to Rangers in the opening League Cup game at Easter Road. Initially losing his place to the recent signing Willie Wilson from Musselburgh Windsor, an early injury to Wilson would mean a return to first team action for Wren and he would be in the Hibs side that defeated Partick Thistle 10-2 at Firhill in the December.

However, just a few weeks later Hibs would be defeated 5-1 by local rivals Hearts at Easter Road on New Year's Day, a day incidentally that had seen Gordon Smith making his first appearance at back Easter Road since his transfer to Hearts at the beginning of the season. Perhaps predictably, and probably unfairly, just as after the Rangers game on the opening day of the season, Wren would again be made the scapegoat for the heavy defeat. It would be unfair however to place all the blame on the shoulders of the goalkeeper who quite obviously had once again failed to receive the assistance he would, and should, have expected from his far more experienced team mates, but regardless he would never feature in the first team again.

At that time Hibs had been convinced that Leslie's injury was beyond repair, wrongly as it would turn out, and he was allowed to sign for Airdrie, Wren's place in the side taken by new signing Willie Muirhead.

A more than competent goalkeeper, Jackie Wren had perhaps been unfortunate to have been in the side during the heavy defeats by Rangers and Hearts, particularly as at that time both the former were the best sides in the country by far while Hibs going through a so called transitional stage. Freed at the end of the season Wren would join Southend before a move to Rotherham United, but unsettled in England, he would soon return to Scotland where he would have brief spells with Stirling Albion, Falkirk, Dundee United and Berwick Rangers before a move to South Africa to play for Hellenic and Cape Town City, eventually settling in the country until his recent death.

In all Jackie Wren made 40 competitive appearances for the Easter Road side between 1956 and 1960.