

When 'Big' Jock Stein managed Hibs

This month marks 35 years since the death of Scottish football legend Jock Stein who sadly died while manager of Scotland following a 1-1 draw with Wales in Cardiff.

Stein was mostly associated with his success at Celtic however his short spell in charge of Hibs is still fondly remembered by older supporters.

Whilst playing part-time with Albion Rovers, Stein had been a member of the Rovers side defeated by Hibs in a Scottish Cup tie at Coatbridge in 1948 on the afternoon that the Hibs manager Willie McCartney had complained of feeling unwell at half-time, dying of a heart attack later that evening at his home in Edinburgh.

After a move to the Welsh non-league side Llanelli in 1950, Stein would make a surprise return to Scotland to sign for Celtic where as captain he lead his side to victory against Hibs in the Coronation Cup Final in the summer of 1953 and the league and cup double the following season.

In 1957, an ankle injury would bring his playing career to an end and he took charge of the Celtic reserves before becoming manager of Dunfermline Athletic where he enjoyed great success.

He quickly came to the attention of the Hibs' board and in 1964 was appointed manager at Easter Road, taking over from Walter Galbraith.

His influence on the players was immediate and a 3-2 victory against Aberdeen in the Summer Cup final at Pittodrie, a game that had been held back from the end of the previous season due to an outbreak of Typhoid in the Grampian area, gave the long suffering Hibs fans something to cheer about at last.

With no competitive European football in the city that season, Stein persuaded the board to invite the mighty Real Madrid to play a challenge match in the capital and around 30,000 spectators paid to see the Spaniards beaten by a Scottish team for the first time.

A few days later, the same eleven beat Rangers 4-2 in Glasgow, the visitor's first league victory at Ibrox since 1952 and Hibs became the most talked about side in the country.

A famous victory against Hearts at Tynecastle on New Year's Day 1965 with Willie Hamilton scoring the only goal of the game from an almost impossible angle near the bye-line, followed by a 6-0 victory against Falkirk at Easter Road the following day, lifted Hibs into second place in the league.

Later that month a Neil Martin goal secured Hibs' first league double over Rangers for 62 years and the jubilant home supporters in the 45,000 crowd were convinced that the title and potentially the Scottish Cup would be returning to Leith.

Hibs had been drawn to face Rangers at home in the third round of the Scottish Cup and with the sides were level at one goal each with just two minutes remaining Hamilton scored to secure a memorable victory.

On the Monday morning however a giant shadow was cast over Easter Road when Stein left to return to Parkhead.

Since taking over less than twelve months before, his time as manager had been nothing short of phenomenal. Of the 37 competitive games played, 25 had been won with six drawn, 88 goals scored against just the 37 conceded.

He would be succeeded as manager at Easter Road by his great friend Bob Shankly, brother of the perhaps more famous Bill of Liverpool fame, but a defeat to Dunfermline in the Scottish Cup semi-final coupled with a loss of form in the league resulted in the remarkable season ending with no further silverware.

For Jock Stein however, it would be only the start of an incredible journey. His new side Celtic would defeat Dunfermline 3-2 in that seasons Scottish Cup Final before going on to secure not only a historic nine consecutive league titles but also eight Scottish Cups, six League Cups, and in 1967 would become the first British side to win the European Cup.

Many supporters still insist that the 'double' would have been won had Stein remained at Easter Road until the end of that season.

One man who is in no doubt is prolific striker Neil Martin who later recalled: "The team we had in 1964 was fantastic with great players such a Willie Hamilton, Pat Quinn, Pat Stanton, Peter Cormack and John MacNamee. Hibs had two great wingers, Eric Stevenson and Jim Scott and many of my goals came from their crosses.

"Willie (Hamilton) was a brilliant and graceful player but a wayward lad. Some managers couldn't handle him but Jock could.

"That was a great period and we beat Real Madrid at Easter Road. Peter (Cormack) scored from my pass and I thought I'd scored as well near the end. It was a goal all the way but their keeper produced a fantastic save.

"It was fantastic to be on the same pitch as Puskas and I later played with him in Jackie Milburn's testimonial when I was at Sunderland.

"We should have won the double that year. With eight games to

go we were second with a game in hand and also in the semi-final of the Scottish Cup. We had beaten Rangers three times and Celtic twice but when Stein left to go to Celtic it fell apart.

“Dunfermline beat us in the semi-final at Tynecastle which was unheard of. I felt he let us down as Celtic were fifth at the time and had no chance of winning anything so he could have easily waited till the end of the season.

“The following season we went to Parkhead and beat Celtic 4-2. I scored a hat trick after 20 minutes and showed Jock what I thought of his decision in a ‘friendly’ gesture to the dugout.”



Jock Stein on the right with the Hibs team. Photo courtesy of Hibernian Historical Trust