

Tribute to former Hibs' captain John Grant who has passed away aged 89

Former Hibs' player John Grant, who featured for the club in the late fifties and early sixties has sadly passed away at the age of 89.

The popular full-back played over 300 games for the club over 15-seasons and made his Scotland debut alongside Denis Law in a 3-0 victory over Wales at Ninian Park. He also played a significant role in one of Hibs' most famous games, the 4-3 victory over Hearts at Tynecastle where teenager Joe Baker scored all four.



Club Historian, Tom Wright, penned the following tribute.

“Born in Edinburgh on July 22 1931, John Grant began his football career as an inside forward with the amateur side Colinton Mains United, playing in the local park before moving on to Merchiston Thistle. It was while with the juvenile side that he was first spotted by Hibs and realised his boyhood ambition when he was signed by the then-manager Hugh Shaw in the summer of 1949. Turning out regularly for Hibs then-highly successful Third Team, the promising youngster would score 38 goals in just 44 games while also managing to make a couple of appearances for the reserves.

“Grant's work as an apprentice joiner with a Leith firm would mean his call up for National Service being deferred until his apprenticeship had been completed and he would be inducted into the armed forces at the start of the 1952-53 season, a

move that would obviously seriously hamper his progress at Easter Road.

“Nicknamed ‘The Duke’ by the rest of his team-mates on account of his immaculate dress sense and elegant manner, the stylish Grant, who could play either up front or in defence, would make his debut at right-half in a 2-1 home victory against St Mirren on December 4 1954, deputising for the injured Eddie Turnbull.

“It was one of 14 appearances he would make that season. At that time the halcyon days at Easter Road, when the club had been widely recognised as the most entertaining side in the entire country, winning three league championships inside a five-year period, was behind them, and a team now said to be in transition would eventually manage to finish fifth in the table, five points behind local rivals Hearts.

“The versatile Grant, however, would quickly develop into a rugged and dependable defender who never shirked a tackle, and after earning rave reviews for his outstanding performances at centre half, including in both games against the French side Reims in the semi-final of the inaugural European Cup in 1956, the elegant player would eventually revert back to wing half, before finally settling at right-back playing behind the experienced Eddie Turnbull.

“In the now well-known Scottish Cup tie against red-hot favourites Hearts at Tynecastle in March 1958, an inspired move by manager Hugh Shaw would see Grant pushed into the inside-forward position to nullify the midfield probing of the Hearts duo Jimmy Milne and Dave McKay, a move that worked better than possibly even Shaw could have anticipated, the space created in midfield allowing the young Joe Baker to score all his sides goals as underdogs Hibs claimed a thoroughly deserved, although unexpected 4-3 victory.

“By this time Grant, a strong tenacious tackler with a

tremendous recovery who was also good in the air, had found his true position at right-back, a position he would hold for the next few years, regularly lining up alongside full-back partner Joe McClelland, Grant's refined approach to the beautiful game perhaps in direct contrast to McClelland's far more direct and robust style of play. Their first appearance together as a recognised defensive partnership would be in the replayed semi-final victory against Rangers in the Scottish Cup only a few weeks after the success at Tynecastle as the Easter Road side went all the way to that year's final, only to lose narrowly to Clyde at Hampden.

"Grant's consistently dependable performances would soon catch the eye of the Scottish selectors, and he would make his international debut in a 3-0 victory over Wales at Ninian Park in October 1958 when lining up alongside fellow debutant 18-year-old Denis Law, then with Huddersfield Town, in what was Matt Busby's first game as manager of the national side. However, a 2-2 draw with Northern Ireland at Hampden a few weeks later would be his final appearance for the full side, although he would go on to make a further six appearances for the Inter League side between 1959 and 1962.

"In his long career at Easter Road, during which time he had regularly captained the side, Grant would score only three goals for the first team, two in competitive fixtures, the first from the penalty spot in a 3-2 victory against East Fife in December 1957, the last in a 4-1 home victory against St Johnstone in October 1963. His only other goal would be in a 3-3 draw against Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane in October 1956 in what was then classed as an unofficial floodlit league game.

"After almost 15 seasons at Easter Road and a fixture in the first team for almost 10, Grant's last ever appearance in a green and white jersey would be at centre-half in a 5-0 defeat by Celtic at Parkhead in March 1964. Just a few weeks later Jock Stein would replace Walter Galbraith as the Hibs manager.

By that time, the popular Grant was approaching the veteran stage of his career, and within weeks of his appointment Stein would return to his former club Celtic to make centre-half John McNamee his first signing, a move that would eventually spell the end of Grant's time at Easter Road, and he would be freed at the end of the season.

"After a season with second division Raith Rovers, during which time he would make 29 appearances in all games, Grant would retire completely from the game and would eventually settle in the Cheshire town of Bramhall, although he would still make regular trips to Edinburgh to visit family.

"Highly regarded by team-mates and opponents alike, in his ten seasons as a first team regular at Easter Road John Grant would make over 300 appearances in all games while wearing the famous green and white jersey, and he is another who will be fondly remembered by all who saw him play."