

Miami Nice as a football fairytale unfolds for Calum

An Edinburgh footballing exile is preparing to “live the dream” on Sunday by going toe to toe with Inter Miami and their galaxy of international superstars including Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets.

Just over six months ago Calum Hall, 23, ex-Hutchison Vale, Hibernian Youth and Edinburgh City was playing part-time with Gala Fairydean Rovers in the Lowland League while working on a building site.



This is what living the dream looks like: Calum v Messi and co!



Calum Hall in action for his Hong Kong club who, on Sunday, entertain Inter Miami

But an opportunity to play full-time arose in Hong Kong where he has been chosen as part of a representative XI to face the MLS tourists co-owned by David Beckham, former England icon and featuring Messi, who captained Argentina to the World Cup last year.

At the same time Calum might have one eye on the opening of the Six Nations Rugby Championship where cousin Cameron Redpath is on the Scotland bench in Wales!

Says Calum, a defender who turned out alongside the likes of Ryan Porteous and Josh Campbell when coming up through the ranks at Hibs: "Games like Sunday's seemed impossible to imagine playing in at some point even six months ago but here I am just living the dream.

"Football has so many doors and opportunities so you never know what's around the corner. Just as long as I keep my head down and never get too high or too low I'll be proud with whatever the outcomes are for the future.

"Never did I ever think I'd ever get the chance to play against these types of players. The dream was to become a football player and managing to do that last summer was an opportunity that as time went on might never happen so to fulfil that dream was a feeling of pride and a bit of relief I suppose.

"Anything else I achieve in my career I can look at as a bonus as I know how hard I've had to work to continue fighting and never giving up on my dream of being able to play football full time for one year or for the next 15 years I can proudly say I got there eventually!

"Sunday has the potential to be one of the best experiences I might ever have in my career so I'll be making sure I cherish every moment.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. Just a perfect

example to any young lad from Edinburgh or anywhere to never give up on their dreams because in football especially you never know how far away you really are.”

Calum signed for the Eastern club and has settled well.

“I love it out here in Hong Kong and with the prospect of staying here for another six years and being eligible to represent the national team that would give me immense pride.

“I’d love to be able to give something back to the place that gave me a place and opportunity to do what I love. “

And with a smile he adds: “That’s unless Scotland come knocking first. Of course!”

The whole footballing scene has proved captivating:

“Asia’s footballing network is massive, a lot bigger than what people think.

“Experiencing different countries and cultures is something I’m always open to. I suppose you could say that I’m open to playing football all over the world as long as I’m happy then that’s what it’s all about.

“Living in the moment and making the most of the opportunity you get!”

And opportunities don’t come much bigger than being able to share a pitch with the record setting eight times Ballon d’or winner and his former Barcelona colleagues Busquets, Suarez and Albi.

Meanwhile, Calum’s mum, Billie, will be watching avidly on Apple TV along with younger son Rory, 18, an international gymnast and husband John whose sister, Gill, is married to Bryan Redpath, former Scotland rugby captain and father of Cameron.

Says Billie: "To see Calum picked as one of the foreign players in the Hong Kong team is such a dream for him and, of course, he'll be hoping to get the Messi jersey in a swap afterwards. But won't they all!

"Calum's already bought two Inter Miami jerseys anyway with the aim of getting them signed!"

Mrs Hall doesn't have to wait long for a reunion with her son as she is flying out next week just in time to see him play in a local Cup Final with an Eastern club that also includes players from Krygyzstan, Ghana, Israel and Spain as well as Chinese players.