



SOCIALISING WITH THE KRAYS – JACKIE FERGUSON



Jackie Ferguson was a forward who played for us for just one season, 1967/68, scoring twice from 15 appearances.

There was little information available regarding where we might find Jackie to invite him to join SUEPA so we took a punt that he might be residing in Ayr which is the team he left us for in the Summer of '68 (one year short of being a Bryan Adams track) and put out a post on their community group page. Very quickly someone responded suggesting that we try a fantastic little Facebook page called 'Ayr United Fans UK and Beyond' - and that quickly led to Jackie's son getting in touch.

Jack Junior told us that his 83-year-old dad was in good health but, like so many former footballers, is sadly suffering from dementia now. He added that Ayr United run a great initiative to help in holding 'memory days' for former players, something we know that the PFA are actively involved in themselves.

We will let Jack Junior take up his dad's story:

"My dad spoke a little about his time at Southend United - mainly that they played on a Friday, and that he socialised with the Krays in their clubs not knowing they were gangsters! (Editor's note: anyone know if the Krays turned up at the Shrimpers Bar?!)

When he was 15-years-old he had polio and was paralysed for several months before, at 16, he was asked to play for the local amateur side as his brother hadn't shown up. He had only ever played with a tennis ball so was surprised how easy the big ball was and scored seven goals. Hal Stewart of Greenock Morton signed him the next day.

Whilst at Morton he was on national service in Germany and flew home every weekend to play. He played in a British army game where two professional players were allowed - my dad and Alan

McGraw of Morton were the pros in British side, with Franz Beckenbauer and Gerd Muller being the pros in the German side. The British side won the game, and a Tottenham Hotspur scout described my dad as 'the greatest inside right he'd ever seen'.

Spurs tried to sign him, but national service put them off, and as Hal Stewart had a deal to fly them home free, he stayed at Morton. He then moved to Airdrie and two years ago was named in Airdrie's greatest ever midfield of all time. It was from Airdrie that he signed for Southend, wanting to 'try down south' - and you know how he did there.

Whilst at Southend dad was informed that he'd agreed with Ally McLeod to sign for Ayr United and he told them he'd never spoke to Ally, but he then drove to meet Ally who informed dad that the Ayr owner would give him a Rolls Royce if he signed which he did!

Ayr United were promoted to the top league at the end of the 1968/69 season, and then on 13th September 1969 my dad scored the winner in front of the club's record attendance (still to this day) in a 2-1 win against Glasgow Rangers. They also took recent European Champions Celtic to a replay at Hampden Park in the cup semi-final which was only decided with an extra-time goal which is generally considered to have been offside.

Dad is one of 30 recognised Ayr United club legends, a list which includes Alex Ferguson, Steve Nicol, Alan McInally, and Quinton Young. When he stopped playing, he managed at non-league level, receiving a lifetime achievement award for services to non-league football.

Above all that I guess he is just a superb dad, and is always, always, happy."

Andy Leeder, November 2022