

CELTIC v RANGERS

Bell's Premier Division

Sunday March 16, 1997

Kick-off 3pm

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Official Programme No.22

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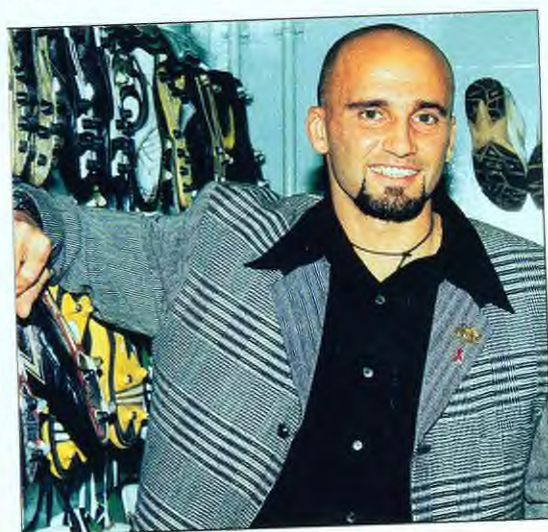


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PAOLO LATE FOR TRAINING AGAIN?

PAOLO DI CANIO reportedly has given the Celtic management further cause for concern, according to a completely made up story by an anonymous 'insider' at Celtic Park. It seems the crafty Italian loves driving his Honda so much, that instead of just parking when he reaches the stadium, he insists on going back and driving the same road again and again until finally someone has to take the ball (I mean his car keys) off him, park his Honda and drag him into training!



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1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1977,
1979, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1988,
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1908, 1911, 1912, 1914, 1923,
1925, 1927, 1931, 1933, 1937,
1951, 1954, 1965, 1967, 1969,
1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1977,
1980, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1995
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1969, 1970, 1975, 1982
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John Keane,

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Published on behalf of Celtic
Football Club by First Press Publishing
197 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4HU

Cheer us to the **double!**

FIRST of all I'd like to welcome Rangers to Celtic Park once again for the second important Old Firm match at our home inside a fortnight.

We were delighted to win the first game, in the Scottish Cup, and obviously everyone at the club wants to follow that up with another victory this afternoon.

It has been a busy week as far as the championship race has been concerned and a win tonight would take us within two points of Rangers.

I was bitterly disappointed with the result and our performance on Tuesday night when we went down 2-0 to my old club Kilmarnock knowing we had to win.

The game sandwiched last week's Old Firm match and today's and was always going to be just as important as those two.

However, somewhere along the line my players seemed to forget that. It was a desperately disappointing result, especially for the fans.

They were all up for it and gave us every encouragement at Rugby Park but there was no response to the supporters at all, and that disappointed me.

Rangers losing to Dundee United on Wednesday night has made the situation a little bit better for us but if we had won that night we would have been in an

even stronger position.

Indeed if we had won, another victory tonight would have put us top of the table.

However, we can't dwell on what might have been. We have to move forward and this is the perfect game for us to bounce back.

However, I am well aware of the fact that Rangers will be well up for this challenge after losing to us in the Scottish Cup, but we want to make it two wins in a row.

Everyone felt wonderful after the cup win, and we all want to have that feeling again at the end of this afternoon's match.

We have to go out there and produce the same sort of display this afternoon as did in the last Old Firm game - and all the players know that.

Celtic Park is an intimidating place when it is full of cheering and singing Celtic supporters, and I want the atmosphere to be as intense today as it has been in all of our big games so far this season.

It is a place that no other team enjoys coming to and we want to make sure it stays that way



'We all felt great after the cup win - and we want that feeling again'



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You've got it in you to save a life

THIS AFTERNOON'S VISITORS RANGERS WILL BE DESPERATE TO AVENGE TWO STINGING DEFEATS IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT.

BUT ARGUES ANDREW SMITH, THE CHAMPIONS HAVE PROVED THEY'RE AT THEIR BEST WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN.

RANGERS will come to Celtic Park this afternoon bears with sore heads.

These are strange and undoubtedly testing times for the Ibrox outfit who have been through such before...and invariably come out smiling.

Walter Smith's men have failed to secure a victory in their past three domestic matches - almost unheard of in recent years at a club that has claimed the last eight league titles and enjoyed regular success in the country's cup competitions.

However, their championship run has been built on their ability to work through whatever adversities they've been hit with and that makes them at their most dangerous this afternoon.

Rangers problems, though are the sort that any other team in Scotland would kill to have to cope with. Because for all the talk of the Ibrox club's poor form they go into today's Old Firm match with a five point lead over Celtic that has puts them in the driving seat in the title run-in.

That said though, there is no doubt that the last month has been a struggle for the Smith's side who have been badly affected by the loss of **PAUL GASCOIGNE** and **RICHARD GOUGH**, the inspiration captain expect to recover from the knock that kept him out the last time the Glasgow sides met.

This, of course, was the Scottish Cup quarter-final that brought that rarest of things - a win for Celts in derby encounter.

Celts wary of bears with sore heads



The Rangers team group pictured before a European clash

The 2-0 triumph Tommy Burns' men achieved in an emotional evening at Celtic Park a week past on Thursday marked the first reverse suffered by Rangers in an Old Firm clash in nine derby meetings - a period stretching back 22 months.

Dundee United piled on the misery for them by winning by the same margin at Ibrox on Wednesday and this loss meant that Smith's side have taken only one point from their past two league encounters with the 2-2 draw at Pittodrie a couple of weeks ago kicking off the three match hat-trick no-win sequence.

Good players do not become bad ones overnight, though, and despite the unavailability of **STUART McCALL**, **STEPHEN**

WRIGHT, **ERIK BO ANDERSEN**, **SEBASTIAN ROZENTAL**, **DEREK McINNES** and the aforementioned Gascoigne through injury, the side Rangers field tonight will be one that cost millions to assemble.

Their strength in depth is certainly being tested by their appalling luck on the fitness front but the fact they can still call on the likes of **BRIAN LAUDRUP**, **ANDY GORAM**, **JORG ALBERTZ**, **ALAN McLAREN**, **DAVIE ROBERTSON**, **JOACHIM BJORKLUND**, **ALLY McCOIST** and **PETER VAN VOSSEN** is testament to the power of their player pool.

It is this to which Smith will be looking to in order to reverse their recent fortunes and he is entitled to do so since it has worked for them so often in the past.

'These are testing times'

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NAME: Kristina Boyle
AGE: 8
FROM: Glasgow
GAME: Celtic v Rangers, Scottish Cup quarter-final, March 6, 1997

WHEN Kristina Boyle confidently predicted a 2-0 victory over our biggest rivals last week, she was elated to say the least when the referee blew the final whistle.

Maybe the fact that she was born in Celtic's centenary year of 1988 when the team won the double was a good omen...

Or perhaps she just sprinkled a little of her 'mascot luck' over the team when she led the Bhoys through the tunnel.

Either way, she is a lucky mascot we won't forget in a hurry!

Kristina said: "When I was watching the Hearts game, I said a secret prayer that maybe one day I would be chosen to be mascot. I had no idea

MEET THE MASCOT

I would be picked so quickly!

"Neither did my two big sisters who won't let me forget this in a hurry!"

Not that Kristina will give ANYONE the opportunity to let her big day slip from their minds - as the eight-year-old was presented with a video of the occasion!

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