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The Coca-Cola Cup Final 1997



Celtic v Dundee United

Ibrox Stadium, Glasgow
Sunday 30th November 1997
Kick-off 3.00 pm



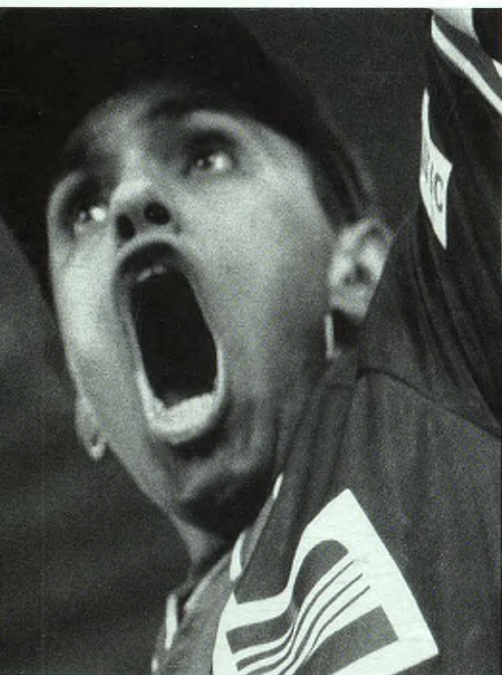
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goal so beautiful

you will want to marry it, have children and move to a small tropical island.



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A Competition That Provides Drama and Excitement

A very warm welcome to ALL fans attending Ibrox Stadium for The Coca-Cola Cup Final between Celtic and Dundee United.

This is the 52nd Final of this competition since its inception back in season 1946/47 and brings together two of Scottish football's top clubs. However, it is interesting to note that this is the very first meeting of the Bhoys and Tangerines in the Final of this competition, although they have played each other on 22 occasions in the tourney at various stages in the past, including three previous Semi-Final ties. Hopefully, both clubs will today continue with their traditional philosophy of playing skilful, fluent, attractive and free flowing football that will provide the sell-out crowd in attendance at Ibrox as well as the millions watching live on television throughout the United Kingdom and overseas, with a match befitting of the occasion.

This competition, despite in my opinion, some ill informed and unjustified criticism in certain quarters, is an extremely important competition in the football calendar in Scotland. With a total of only 39 ties to be played from the First Round up to and including today's Final and indeed, today's Finalists only having to play a total of five ties (remember, there are no replays) to win the famous three handled trophy, the short, sharp and snappy format is hardly burdensome on the domestic football calendar in this country. In fact, I know that the longer a club remains in this competition, it can act for managers and players alike, as a welcome respite during the first half of the season from the 'bread and butter' weekly grind of League Championship matches and from a supporters' perspective, this competition provides excellent, value-for-money entertainment. Certainly, The Coca-Cola Cup '97 has continued this trend and testimony to this can be shown by the fact that 124 goals have been scored from the 38 ties played so far, averaging an extremely healthy 3.3 goals per game.

Today witnesses the conclusion of Coca-Cola's current four year agreement with the League to sponsor this competition and during the past four seasons, The Scottish Football League and its member clubs have enjoyed a very special working relationship with our colleagues from Coca-Cola. Their enthusiasm and eagerness in assisting to promote this competition has been evident for all to see and through their association



with the League, they have become actively involved with many sectors of the game including grassroots football as well as the lifeblood of the game, that of the supporter, and in this regard, you can read more about their involvement in both of these areas on pages 24 and 25. As I have mentioned, Coca-Cola have been excellent sponsors and at the time of writing, discussions are still taking place between the League and Coca-Cola regarding the future. In the meantime and on behalf of the Management Committee, I would take this opportunity in extending a very sincere welcome to everyone from Coca-Cola attending today's Final and, together with their invited guests, trust that they all enjoy another exciting and memorable Final.

This will be Celtic's 22nd appearance in the Final of this competition, although it is now 15 years since the Parkhead club last won the trophy. It will also be Wim Jansen's first Cup Final since coming to Scotland and being appointed Head Coach of Celtic and I know that he will view today's match as an extremely important barometer in the progress being made at the club since he took charge of team affairs. I also know that his assistant, Murdo MacLeod, will also be looking forward in anticipation to today's Final as he played in the last Celtic team to win this competition back in season 1982/83, scoring one of Celtic's goals in their 2-1 victory over Rangers. Indeed, he has also tasted success in this competition in more recent times, captaining Hibernian to victory

in the 1991/92 Final and he will be hoping to impart his experience of these successes to the Celtic players today.

The current management team at Dundee United are also not strangers in experiencing past successes in this competition as players and in particular, manager Tommy McLean and two of his coaching staff, Gordon Wallace and Jocky Scott, will be using their knowledge of playing in League Cup Finals to spur on their players today. Tommy McLean gained three winners' medals for Rangers during the mid to late seventies, Gordon Wallace and Jocky Scott played ironically enough, for city rivals Dundee when the Dens Park club defeated Celtic in the 1973/74 Final with Gordon scoring the only goal of the game, while Jocky enjoyed further success three years later, this time with Aberdeen, when the Dons defeated Celtic 2-1. However, United have to go back even further than their opponents today, to season 1980/81 in fact, for the last time that they lifted this trophy.

Cup Finals are always special occasions and with the National Stadium, Hampden Park, currently undergoing Phase Two of its refurbishment work, Ibrox Stadium is a superb venue for such a prestigious occasion. With the Final a complete sell-out, I have no doubts that the atmosphere generated inside Ibrox today will be absolutely electric. This is the second occasion that the Final of this competition has been played at Ibrox Stadium and I would take this opportunity in thanking most sincerely, the Chairman, Directors and Staff of Rangers Football Club for their tremendous co-operation and assistance in the organisation of today's game.

What will the outcome be? As most of you will know, I have enjoyed a long association with Dundee United both as a player and as a Director and I am currently the Vice-Chairman of the club. However, although it is fair to say that I will have a vested interest, in my capacity as President of The Scottish Football League, I certainly hope that both clubs today will provide all fans attending and the millions watching and listening on television and radio, with another exciting Final to remember. May the best team win.

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A continental cocktail

Mix all of the ingredients for today's Coca-Cola Cup Final and what do you get? A continental cocktail of the most thirst-quenching sort, hopefully. It's not just that Wim Jansen has brought something of the European approach to Celtic's play since taking over at Parkhead immediately prior to the start of the season. Tommy McLean has Dundee United performing in much the same way.

Neither Jansen nor McLean could profit from any such strategy without the players to suit, of course, but both have ensured that their sides are well-endowed in that sense. Scandinavians of every sort as well as Dutchmen, a Frenchman, German and an Italian could all be on display at Ibrox, thus marking the changing times in Scottish football.

Celtic fielded ten Scots, one Englishman and an Irish substitute when they appeared at this stage of the competition, and at the same venue, against Raith Rovers just three years ago. But the recruitment programme signalled by Tommy Burns, and pursued subsequently by Jansen, has altered the balance of nationalities to the point that those of their players who were reared in this country are not guaranteed to be in the majority. Tommy Boyd may stand alongside Marc Rieper in defence, for example, Jackie McNamara might share the flanks with Regi Blinker whilst Simon Donnelly is liable to be up front with Henrik Larsson.

United have undergone a similar transition, albeit more recently, with the influx of players from abroad only gathering momentum since McLean replaced Billy Kirkwood 15 months ago. Yet this is nothing new for the Tannadice club, the arrival of players such as Kjell Olofsson, Erik Pedersen and Lars Zetterlund transporting their fans back fully three decades to when the first Vikings came to Tayside. Fin Dossing, Orjan Persson, Mogens Berg and Lennart Wing were amongst those who injected colour and excitement to the United team of the 1960's, helping lay the

foundations for everything that the club have achieved since.

Celtic were about to emerge as the dominant force in Scotland at that time although, despite their proud record of triumphs on other fronts, they had not exactly been accustomed to winning the League Cup. They saw the first 10 Finals pass them by, indeed, before exorcising all their misfortunes and progressing to meet Partick Thistle in that Final of 1956/57, lifting the trophy at the second attempt.

Authors, Tom Campbell and Pat Woods have recorded in 'The Glory and the Dream' that the League Cup "barrier was crossed by the signing of a new centre-forward, Billy McPhail". He it was who scored two of Celtic's three goals in the replay with Partick and he it was, in the following season's momentous Final, who scored a hat-trick in the destruction of Rangers. Travel the back streets of Glasgow and you're liable still to see, daubed on walls here and there, the scoreline 7-1 testifying to Celtic's greatest result over their old rivals.

However, it took the appointment of Jock Stein in 1965 for them to accumulate still more successes in this tournament, something they did spectacularly by winning it in each of his first five seasons. Dundee United Chairman, Jim McLean, cannot have forgotten one of the Celtic victories, 5-3 against Dundee in season 1967/68, as he scored one of the Dens Park side's goals. Stein was still in charge when, in 1974/75, Celtic contributed handsomely to another high-scoring Final by beating Hibernian 6-3 with players from both sides, Dixie Deans and Joe Harper, scoring hat-tricks.

Dundee United had yet to contest a Final, far less win one, by that point although, with Jim McLean having moved down the road from Dens to take over as manager, they moved much closer towards their destiny. United duly beat Aberdeen 3-0 in a replay of the 1979/80 Final, Dundee by the same score in the following season's competition and promised to make it three in a row until Rangers beat them at the last stage in season 1981/82.

"That first ever win still holds a special niche in my memory," McLean has recorded in his autobiography, 'Jousting with Giants', whilst recalling that a long-serving Director, close to tears, admitted, "I never thought I would see this club winning one of the major honours".

The score in the League Cup so far, then, is nine wins for Celtic and two for Dundee



Tommy McLean

United but it's nigh impossible to predict which of them is about to celebrate another. Both have the capacity to play excellent football, doubtless with their uncharitable defences making it difficult for the other to score. Celtic, remarkably, have yet to lose a goal in this competition, which says something for the sense of organisation that Head Coach Jansen has implanted in them since taking over in July. They made a spectacular start by beating Berwick Rangers 7-0 at Tynecastle with Simon Donnelly getting two of their goals and Henrik Larsson, Morten Wieghorst, Darren Jackson, Andreas Thom and Regi Blinker one apiece. Celtic's subsequent ties, against St. Johnstone, Motherwell and Dunfermline Athletic each ended 1-0 in their favour with Donnelly, Larsson and Craig Burley scoring the goals respectively.

Dundee United did not begin quite so impressively, beating Queen of the South 4-2 away, but they had to endure a taxing run thereafter, with successive ties against Hibernian, Rangers and Aberdeen. Gary McSwegan, who scored twice against Queen of the South, got the winner in a 2-1 win against Hibernian whilst Zetterlund claimed the other. But the little striker would testify that his piece de resistance was scoring in extra-time to give his side a 1-0 win over the first of his former teams, Rangers, at Ibrox. Robbie Winters claimed his share of celebrity status thereafter, scoring two of United's goals in a 3-1 win against Aberdeen at Tynecastle with young Craig Easton getting the other.

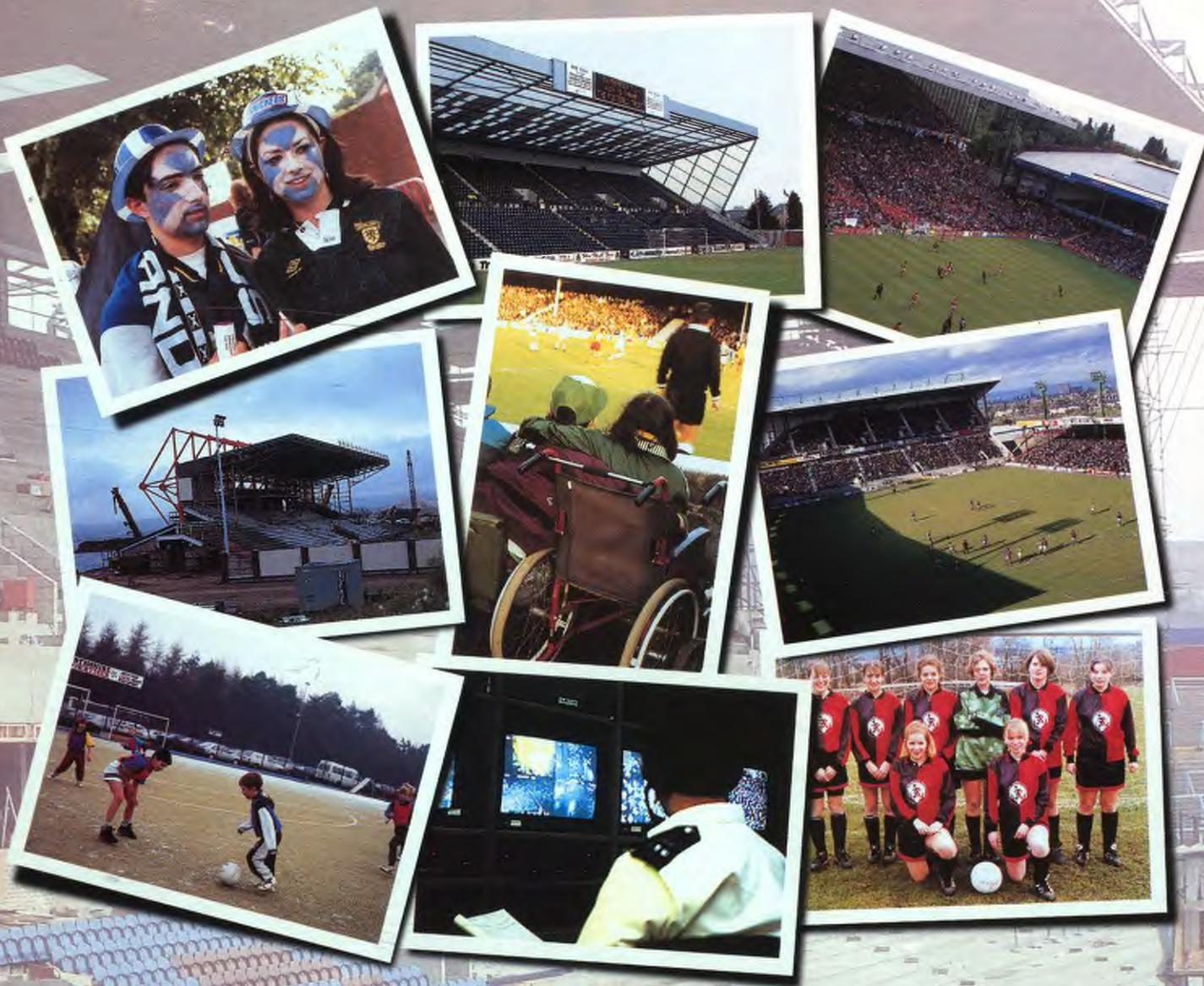
So two things can be said with certainty. Celtic and Dundee United thoroughly deserve to be where they are this afternoon; also that their home-reared players have much to contribute to the company of so many brought in from abroad. A continental cocktail may well be served to supporters but the Scots on show seem bound to give it extra piquancy.

BRIAN SCOTT
(Scottish Daily Mail)



Wim Jansen

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