

Celtic



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CELTIC v ST JOHNSTONE

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
CELTIC PARK
SATURDAY JULY 28 2001
KICK-OFF 5.35pm



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martino'neill



We'll be striving for repeat of last season

A VERY big welcome to you all this early evening for the first match of the new season.

I'm just as excited now as I was at this time last year when we travelled to Tannadice for the opening fixture of season 2000/01.

It's hard to believe that 12 whole months have elapsed since we embarked on what eventually turned out to be as memorable a season as the club has enjoyed in quite some time.

The unfurling of the league flag by the chairman will be a special moment and it will fly over Celtic Park all season, a constant and visible reminder of what we are once again striving to achieve.

Clearly, the Champions League is where the club wants to be playing regularly and next season only the champions here in Scotland will be afforded that honour. Therefore, it's only natural that retaining the league will be uppermost in our thoughts over the next 12 months.

This evening, the arduous journey defending the trophies we won so impressively last season begins and, in this race, we all start level.

The silverware is resting in Celtic Park because we proved ourselves beyond any doubt to be the best side in

the country last year. But season 2000/01 is history now and you won't catch anyone in the Celtic dressing-room basking in the glory of past achievements.

This is a squad driven by a desire to succeed and I have been delighted with the way they've conducted themselves over a close season which came to a satisfactory close on Tuesday with the visit of Peter Reid's Sunderland.

That match was another excellent test for us and, for the opening half-hour, our visitors moved the ball very well while containing our own attacking threat.

But we came storming back and emerged with a creditable 1-0 victory thanks to yet another goal from Henrik Larsson. And while it's true to say that Sunderland's inferior fitness began to tell in the second half, our players upped the tempo and played some excellent possession football.

Of course, every manager in the country is trying to strengthen his squad in an attempt not to stand still. We're no different and you can rest assured that we are looking at making the acquisitions necessary to ensure that we can maintain our challenge for success both domestically and in Europe.

Incidentally, as I pen these

notes I am hoping to check on our European opponents, who are currently hosting a pre-season tournament.

I expect a tough game from today's visitors St Johnstone. With a limited budget, Sandy Clark has built a good side, one which includes a number of exciting young players.

We rarely had it easy against them last campaign and I'd expect them to relish the challenge of playing at Celtic Park.

Naturally, we need your support. I know what a thrilling and intimidating atmosphere you can generate when you are in full cry but there will be as many moments this season when we will be frustrated in our attempts to break down opposition defences.

It is then that we will need your support more than ever.

I believe 15,000 of you will travel south with us to watch our match with Manchester United in Ryan Giggs' testimonial. That's phenomenal.

It's no secret that Celtic fans love parties and, wherever you go, you represent the club impeccably. We'll strive to represent you just as well this season.

The league flag will be raised this afternoon and will be a moment well worth savouring

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today's squads

CELTIC ST JOHNSTONE



RAB DOUGLAS	ALAN MAIN
JONATHAN GOULD	DARREN DODS
TOM BOYD	STUART McCLUSKEY
STEPHANE MAHE	NICK DASOVIC
JACKIE McNAMARA	JIM WEIR
JOOS VALGAEREN	TOMMY LOVENKRANDS
DIANBOBO BALDE	CRAIG RUSSELL
HENRIK LARSSON	GRAEME JONES
ALAN THOMPSON	JOHN PAUL McBRIDE
CHRIS SUTTON	PAUL KANE
MORTEN WIEGHORST	GRANT MURRAY
TOMMY JOHNSON	PADDY CONNOLLY
PAUL LAMBERT	STEPHEN FRAIL
BOBBY PETTA	MOMO SYLLA
OLIVIER TEBILY	PAUL HARTLEY
DIDIER AGATHE	KEIGAN PARKER
NEIL LENNON	MARC McCULLOCH
DIMITRE KHARINE	ROSS FORSYTH
COLIN HEALY	KEVIN CUTHBERT
LUBOMIR MORAVCIK	DAVID McClUNE
PAUL SHIELDS	BRENDAN CROZIER
MARK BURCHILL	RACHID DJEBAILI
SIMON LYNCH	DARREN JACKSON
JOHN CONVERY	STUART MALCOLM
MARK FOTHERINGHAM	MARTIN LAUCHLAN
JOHAN MJALLBY	MARTYN FOTHERINGHAM
JAMIE SMITH	CHRIS CONWAY
STEPHEN CRAINEY	EMMANUEL PANTHER
JOHN KENNEDY	MARK FERRY
SHAUN MALONEY	
MICK DOYLE	



ntl:



PHOENIX HONDA

Referee: MICHAEL McCURRY

Assistant Referees: MARTIN DORAN

DEREK MASON

Fourth Official: COLIN HARDIE



FLAG DAY: August 13, 1977 A crowd of 34,000 watch a goal-less draw with Dundee United. A severe injury to Pat Stanton which would eventually result in his early retirement, and the transfer in the summer of Kenny Dalglish gives Celtic a poor start from which they would never recover.



lubo moravcik

Lubo feels no wait loss

Celts' Slovakian midfielder on ending his medal drought in true style. Interview: Alison McConnell

JUST as the advert says, the best things come to those who wait.

It's hard to believe that until veteran Celt Lubomir Moravcik donned the hoops and swapped France for Glasgow he had yet to lay his hands on a winners' medal.

However, since picking up his first piece of silverware with Celtic's 2-0 win over Aberdeen in the CIS Insurance Cup Final back in March last year he has emphatically ended his drought by adding another trio of medals from last season's celebrations.

The 35-year-old Slovakian quickly endeared himself to the Celtic support with a brace in his first Old Firm derby, and since then has displayed a breathtaking dexterity that has been instrumental in orchestrating the destruction of many Scottish defences.

Equally effective with either foot, Moravcik has secured the points on more than one occasion with a deft flick of his boot.

Last season's audacious strike against St Johnstone from a short corner was only one of a handful of memorable goals, and despite his ageing limbs the midfielder is desperate to get started all over again today.

The visit of St Johnstone this afternoon marks the beginning of Celtic's defence of the domestic grand slam, and with an imminent clash against



SILVER LINING

Lubo Moravcik's long wait to get his hands on a winners' medal ended with Celtic's CIS Cup win over Aberdeen in March last year

Ajax for a place in the Champions League creeping ever closer Martin O'Neill's side will be forced to knuckle down to serious business very quickly – and Moravcik can't wait.

He revealed: "I'm really looking forward to the start of the season. I think our recent wins over two Premiership teams, Fulham and Sunderland, has boosted our confidence and set us up for the game today.

"It is always good to beat teams from England, especially Sunderland who have played consistently well for the last few years and



GOAL-DEN OLDIE

Lubo Moravcik celebrates his strike in the 3-0 win over Rangers at Ibrox

finished seventh in the Premiership last season. They were a good team who made us work hard and it was good to win, even although it was only a friendly.

"Just about everyone got the chance of a work out and I think all the players are fit and ready for the game tonight."

Pre-season games against English, Irish and Portuguese opposition have honed the fitness of the squad and Moravcik is confident the Hoops now have a big enough pool to cope with the rigours of retaining their Championship as well as fighting for some European prestige.

He said: "We've got quite a big squad now. Everyone has had the chance to play in the pre-season games which is important to prepare us for what will be a long season.

"The team is ready and we know that if we want to play in Europe and hold on to the Championship it will be a demanding season in which everyone will have to work very hard. We need to be fit and strong.

"We have a 50/50 chance of winning against Ajax. They are a good team with an excellent reputation in Europe, but we are confident we can win our way into the Champions League.

"I haven't played against Ajax before, and nor have I ever had the chance to play in the Champions League. It is a great competition

and it's important our squad is ready for the challenge of playing at that level."

But before European action comes calling Celtic have to take care of St Johnstone tonight. They will be determined to make life as difficult as possible but with a packed stadium turning out to watch the raising of the flag, the Hoops camp is bound to be optimistic.

Celtic lost just one game throughout the entire campaign at Celtic Park last season, and that was the penultimate match of the season after the ribbons were well and truly tied on to the trophy.

O'Neill will be desperate to watch his squad emulate those feats again this season by ensuring that the ground remains a daunting place for opposition to visit.

Certainly though, Moravcik is relishing the prospect of tonight's kick-off.

He explained: "All our games are difficult, there are no easy matches. St Johnstone are a strong team who can be quite physical but I am confident we will start the season on a high. We also want to start on a winning note.

"It will be nice to play at Celtic Park once again in front of a full house for a competitive game, and the fact that we are being presented with the Championship flag will make it even better."



FLAG DAY AUGUST 11, 1979

Two second half goals from former Celt Andy Ritchie aren't enough to stop the Bhoys beating Morton 3-2 in front of 26,000 fans. George McCluskey (30), Davie Provan (32) and Murdo MacLeod (68pen) get the goals.

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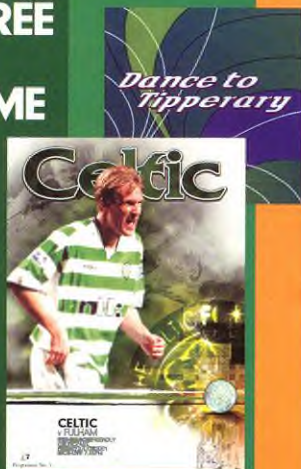
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competition *time*



CHAMPIONS Buying your programme every home league game means you could see the Bhoys for free next season in our super contest

win *season* tickets

IT'S the competition that every fan wants to enter – the chance to win a pair of season tickets for Celtic Park.

By getting your match programme for every Scottish Premier League game at Celtic Park this season, you could have the chance to win a pair of season tickets for next season 2002/03.

Every home league match, starting with tonight's SPL Champs' flag-raising game against St Johnstone we will print a voucher in the matchday programme.

All you have to do is collect 19 individually numbered vouchers from all 19 of Celtic's home league games and you could be in the draw for a fantastic prize worth over £800.

The winner of our previous competition, when over 4,000 Celtic fans entered, was Danny Heaney from Kirkintilloch.

And he was delighted to win a pair of season tickets for Celtic Park.

"I didn't think I had a chance of winning," Danny admitted,

"and I'm even more astonished now I've found out just how many people entered the competition."

And as well as thanking us for organising the competition, a delighted Danny passed on his thanks to Celtic boss Martin O'Neill, who drew Danny's name from the thousands of entries.

"My thanks to Martin O'Neill for selecting my name and giving me the opportunity to attend home games at Celtic Park this season," he said.

So if you want to be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize of a pair of season tickets, then make sure you get your match programme, starting this Saturday, when the Champions take on St Johnstone.

For programme subscription details, including information on a great free gift offer, **see page opposite.**

And don't worry if you can't get a programme for the big game.

Every week, we'll publish details in the *Celtic View* of how you can get hold of any programme you miss.

Collect all 19 vouchers and you could be watching the Bhoys free in season 2002/03

