



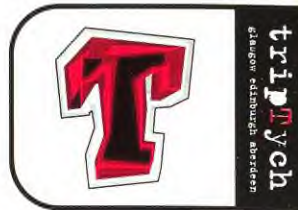
Semi-Final

AYR UNITED v CELTIC

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH • HAMPDEN PARK, KICK OFF 5.35PM



OFFICIAL PROGRAMME £2

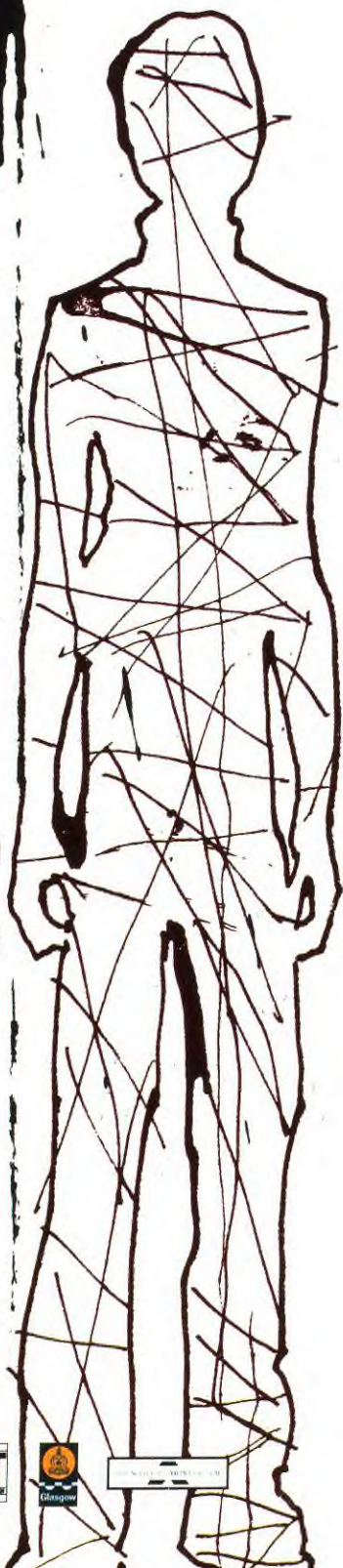


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THE WEEKEND OF
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TENNENT'S SCOTTISH CUP

Semi-Final

WELCOME



IT IS my great pleasure, on behalf of the Scottish Football Association, to welcome you to Hampden Park for this afternoon's Tennent's Scottish Cup semi-final between Ayr United and Celtic.

Though Ayr United will be cast in the role of the underdog, they have already shown themselves capable of defeating Scottish Premier League opposition on more than one occasion in cup competition. They will not be

daunted by the task facing them, particularly given the successful cup pedigree of their manager, Gordon Dalziel.

I am sure, therefore, that we will see an absorbing cup tie today and that whichever team reaches the final, they will have had to work extremely hard to get there. The incentive is, of course, a place in the Tennent's Scottish Cup Final, back here at Hampden on May 4.

The month of May will be a momentous one for Scottish football, with our own cup final being closely followed by the UEFA Champions League Final, here on May 15. Everyone at the SFA has been working long and hard to ensure that this Final is one of the most memorable events in Scottish football history. There is still time to apply for a ticket through the UEFA website - but be quick as you only have until noon on Monday - and I urge football fans to take this opportunity to see the pinnacle of European football.

Back to today's event, I am delighted to welcome, once again, the representatives and guests of the tournament sponsor, Tennent Caledonian Breweries. This is the thirteenth year of the Tennent's Scottish Cup, one of the most enduring and successful partnerships in the history of football, and their hard work in promoting this tournament has proved extremely beneficial to the Scottish game.

I hope you enjoy a fine sporting occasion today.

Jack McGinn,
President, Scottish Football Association

THE SCOTTISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

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programme do not necessarily
reflect those of the Scottish
Football Association.

FRONT COVER:

John Hughes (Ayr United)
Paul Lambert (Celtic)





Semi-Final

WELCOME FROM TENNETT'S LAGER



On behalf of Tennent's Lager, I would like to wish you all a very warm welcome to the National Stadium, Hampden Park for this year's Tennent's Scottish Cup Semi-Finals.

As always it's been an exciting competition which is only to be expected considering the prize at stake – the chance to win the oldest original national trophy in world football and the opportunity to play against some of Europe's finest in the UEFA Cup.

Those teams making the semi-finals should be justifiably proud. The first semi-final game is between Celtic and Ayr United. The Glasgow team are still on a roll after winning last year's Tennent's Scottish Cup when Martin O'Neill completed his first domestic treble. But Ayr won't let that reputation scare them as they set out to put the record straight after losing a semi-final two years ago against the other old firm team Rangers.

Speaking of which, they take on Partick Thistle in a game which promises as much excitement as the previous day's footballing action. Partick has had a remarkable turn around of fortune when you consider that five years ago they faced bankruptcy. Now they are favourites to top Bell's Division One and are playing in a Tennent's Scottish Cup Semi-final. Despite certain comments from one quarter in particular, it is clear that Partick are playing football to an excellent standard.

Rangers will be well aware of this as Alex McLeish leads his new team out at Hampden for the first time as part of the Tennent's Scottish Cup competition. He was in this position last year with his former team Hibs, and he'll obviously be hoping for a similar result to get to the final on the 4th of May.

Many people seem to think the finalists are a foregone conclusion, well they aren't which is the beauty of any cup competition – anything can happen and will happen which is why these semi-finals will be so exciting.

As the longest running commercial supporter of our national game, we are well aware of the passion and emotion evoked by the Tennent's Scottish Cup, and I am sure this weekend will be no exception.

I'm glad that you could be here today to enjoy the occasion. I wish you, your team and the officials all the best for the game ahead.



Callum Mackay
Head of Sponsorship
Tennent Caledonian Breweries



SCENE SETTER...

THERE WAS Falkirk's charming appearance in the 1997 Tennent's Scottish Cup final and Airdrie's determined efforts in the 1995 final of the same competition. If Scottish Cup finalists from a lower division are not as rare as they used to be, they are still only to be spotted on their own. This season, however, offers the prospect of the Tennent's Scottish Cup final being an all-First Division affair.

Tomorrow sees First Division pace setters, Partick Thistle, locking horns with Rangers. Today, the spotlight falls on Ayr United, who have constantly belied their First Division status by defeating Scottish Premier League opposition this season, including Dundee United in the last round of this competition and, famously, Hibernian in the semi-final of the CIS Insurance Cup, to guarantee the club's first appearance in the final of a major competition since their formation in 1910. Add a 3-0 defeat of Dunfermline, also of the SPL, in the fourth round of this competition, and there is no telling how Ayr will perform against Celtic.

After having had a taste of Old Firm opposition only last week - this time, Rangers - in the final of the CIS Cup, Ayr will not feel in the least fazed by what lies ahead of them today. The odds are, of course, heavily stacked against both the Old Firm falling at this penultimate stage.

Rangers' 6-0 defeat of Second Division Forfar Athletic in the last round and Celtic's 5-0 third round win over Alloa Athletic, also of the Second Division, suggests that both the Old Firm have no hesitation in going for the jugular. Then again, Rangers required two attempts to brush off the challenge of another Second Division club, Berwick Rangers, who raised the delicious possibility of repeating their famous 1967 Scottish Cup win over their Glasgow counterparts with a battling 0-0 draw at Shielfield Park in mid-January.

Over the last few seasons, it has become much harder than it used to be to predict the outcome of Cup matches. Giant-killing has become that commonplace. When Ayr played



Stilian Petrov rounds Aberdeen's Kjaer to score his second goal

THE STORY SO FAR



Morten Wieghorst celebrates

host to Dunfermline, few would have dared bet against them winning. But to win 3-0? That was an impressive dismantling of the conventional wisdom. When Threave Rovers, Forres Mechanics, Deveronvale, Spartans, Gala Fairydean, Wick Academy, Buckie Thistle and Tarff Rovers emerged from the north and south qualifying competitions for non-league clubs, the dream of springing a surprise or two and



Chris Sutton and Eugene Dadi battle for the ball

making it at least to a possibly money-spinning third round tie could certainly not be dismissed as fanciful.

In the end, however, it was to be only Gala Fairydean and Forres Mechanics who would manage it to that coveted stage. For Forres - making their first appearance in the competition in 13 years - the first-half of their third round tie away to Dundee United saw them more than match their more illustrious hosts.

Forres even had the odd glimpse of an opportunity to go ahead. With their goalkeeper, Mark McRitchie, pulling off a string of impressive saves at one end of the park, Andrew MacLeod had chances to net at the other.

Eventually, United were to win 3-0. The scoreline somewhat flattered them, however, not least because each of their goals were breath-taking, long-range strikes that couldn't be legislated for by Forres, who certainly had a case to dispute the awarding of the free-kick, 25 yards out, that gave Hasney Aljofree the chance to smash in United's first in 52 minutes. It was one of those dead-ball strikes that seemed to gather pace the further it travelled. McRitchie had no chance. Aljofree would go on to crack in another, again from long-range, seven minutes later. And the tie would be eventually over with a mere 35-yarder from Charlie Miller.

Elsewhere in the third round, St Mirren's disappointing season would be further cemented at Clyde while Livingston would eventually make 'light work' of Albion Rovers, but only after a second attempt - the first being halted because of floodlight failure at Albion's Cliftonhill stadium. Ex-St Mirren striker, Mark Yardley, at last managed a goal in the Tennent's Scottish Cup, in the colours of Forfar, during a 5-0 away rout of Gala Fairydean. Kilmarnock's 3-0 win over First Division high-flyers, Airdrie, was more emphatic than most people had predicted.



James Grady tussles with Dunfermline Athletic's Andrius Skerla

And of course, there was Berwick's 0-0 draw against the big Rangers. It may not have quite replicated their 1-0 win of 1967, but it certainly had plenty of pundits declaring it was every bit as impressive. What it certainly did do for Berwick Rangers was bolster their bank balance and make them the centre of tremendous media interest. Not even poor weather - which caused the game to be postponed by ten days - could take the shine off Berwick's moment in the media spotlight. Their match was still broadcast on television live and their goalscorer from 1967, Sammy Reid, found himself in huge demand for interviews.

There was, during that third round, another 0-0 draw between a SPL club and one from a lower division. But Hibernian's 0-0 draw at Stranraer could in no way be likened to that of Rangers' with the 'wee Rangers'.

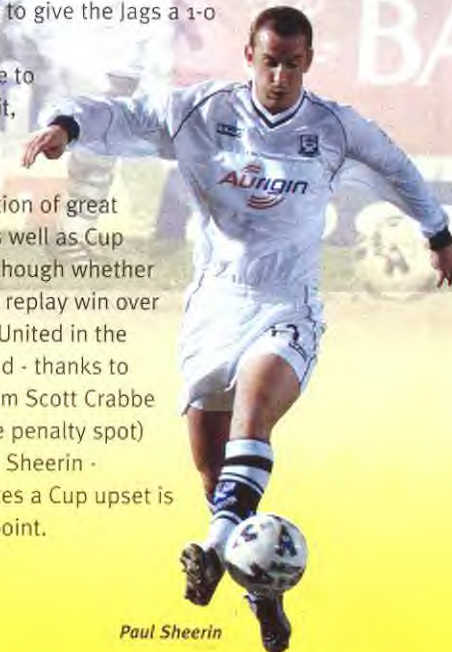
Though Hibernian were to comfortably ease past Stranraer in the replay, their 4-0 win was a rare highlight in the short and troubled reign of manager, Franck Sauzee. Although two of the goals were from players scoring for the first time for the Edinburgh club - Gary Smith and Eduardo Hurtado - the win failed to revive the club from a long slump, which was to reach its lowest point when they came up against Ayr - and its

sprinkling of former Hibs players - in the semi-final of the CIS Cup.

And then there is Dundee. They only competed in the third and fourth rounds, but each time their games had to go to a replay. In the third round, against Falkirk, they sneaked through thanks to an 11th minute goal from their now-departed Chinese international, Fan, in a game that saw two penalties missed - one for each side. They would not be so lucky next time. Favourites to win their replay against Partick Thistle, because it was being played at their Dens Park stadium, Dundee proceeded to lose 2-1, in a match graced by one of the best goals of the competition, Thistle's Gerry Britton's delicate juggling of the ball before unleashing a volley from the edge of the Dundee 18-yard box.

It meant a fifth round tie involving two First Division victors over Premier League opponents. Partick Thistle, away winners over Dundee, versus Inverness Caledonian Thistle, away winners over Hearts. Inverness too had reached the fifth round through some remarkably well-taken goals. And, for a while, it looked like it would be they, rather than Partick Thistle, who would be making it to this weekend's semi-final stage. But up popped Scott Paterson. First, he scored a long-range volley to take the tie to a replay. Then, in the replay, he scored a sizzling free-kick to give the Jags a 1-0 win.

Come to think of it, it has been a competition of great goals, as well as Cup upsets, though whether Ayr's 2-0 replay win over Dundee United in the last round - thanks to goals from Scott Crabbe (from the penalty spot) and Paul Sheerin - constitutes a Cup upset is a moot point.



Paul Sheerin



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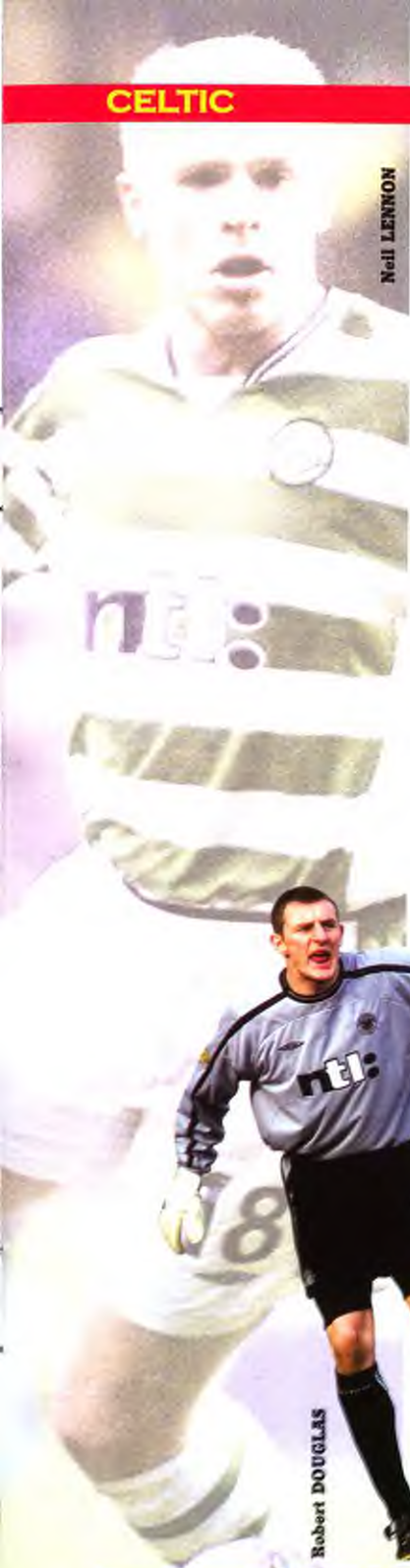
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NEIL LENNON

ROBERT DOUGLAS

NEIL LENNON

ALMOST A year ago, Celtic manager, Martin O'Neill, was rating his midfielder, Neil Lennon, up there with world class midfielders such as Manchester United's Roy Keane and Arsenal's Patrick Vieira. "His contribution has been immense," began the Celtic boss. "His ability on the ball, his ability to keep the momentum going with a five-yard pass, his ability to take the sting out of the game, I have seldom seen him get beaten for pace or for trickery by players renowned for it. Lennon aspires to get into that world class group [including Keane and Vieira] and he is not far removed from it and I can't pay him a much higher compliment. He doesn't score goals. If he could score ten goals a season, he would be the best player in the world." Twelve months on, it is clear that - despite the odd incident of social high jinx - Neil Lennon continues to give his manager cause for satisfaction, the Northern Ireland international's partnership with Paul Lambert in the middle of the Celtic midfield remaining the bedrock of the club's march towards an almost certain second, successive Scottish Premier League title. Lennon was a player at Leicester City when O'Neill was manager there. And though it took protracted negotiations before the pair could link up again at Celtic Park - in a £5.75 million move - the wait was worthwhile. For one thing, Celtic were Lennon's boyhood heroes. The industrious midfielder began his senior career with Manchester City, but made only one appearance for the Maine Road club. Freed in 1990, he moved to Crewe Alexandra for whom he played 187 times, scoring 18 goals. Leicester picked him up for a bargain £750,000 in 1996. After 208 appearances and nine goals for the 'Foxes', the 30 year-old joined Celtic on December 8 2000.

JOHN HARTSON

IT TOOK the Welsh international striker longer than expected to get his name on the scoresheet, following his signing from English club, Coventry City, in August last year. But when he did, he did it in style: with a hat-trick against Dundee United on October 20. Then again, John Hartson is a player who rarely does things by half. An aggressive and direct marksman, the 26 year-old is also provider of goal-scoring opportunities for others, his physique providing an ideal foil to the likes of Henrik Larsson, his more diminutive striking partner. Picked up a red card in Celtic's last Tennent's Scottish Cup clash, against Aberdeen, but collecting the wrong headlines is becoming less and less common for the former Luton, Arsenal, West Ham, and



JOHN HARTSON

Wimbledon forward, who is now earning more plaudits for keeping his cool than receiving criticisms for losing the plot. Famously, when he signed for Arsenal, from Luton, he was considered such a bright prospect that, despite being a trainee at Kennilworth Road, Arsenal were prepared to spend £2.5 million to secure his services. He responded with 14 goals in 53 league appearances. At his next stop, West Ham, he pitched in 24 goals in 60 league appearances. At Wimbledon, whom he joined for £7.5 million, he scored 19 goals in 49 league appearances. But for a failed medical, could have been playing for Celtic's Old Firm rivals, Rangers.

ROBERT DOUGLAS

WITH TEAM-MATES such as Paul Lambert enjoying such consistent good form, Robert Douglas may be very much an outside bet when it comes to collecting Player of the Season awards from Celtic supporters' clubs. But having any odds at all is something the former Dundee and Livingston goalkeeper ought to feel immensely proud about. After an uncertain start, this season has shaped up to be very impressive indeed. But for a string of outstanding saves from Douglas during their first leg tie against Spain's Valencia in the UEFA Cup, Celtic would not have needed to turn up for the return fixture. So overwhelming were the Spaniards on their home soil, Celtic could have been nursing a 5-0 thumping or worse. However, managing, thanks to Douglas, to escape with a 0-1 defeat, they had more than enough reason to pull out all the stops back in Glasgow. Only a couple of weeks ago, Douglas was again rising to the occasion, this time in his side's 1-1 draw with fellow title chasers, Rangers. The 29 year-old signed for Celtic in October 2000, for a fee of £1.5 million. Before that, he spent three years at Dundee, for whom he made 123 appearances, following his move from Livingston on the eve of season 1997-98. Now part of the Scotland set-up too.

THREE TO WATCH

