

Celtic

V ABERDEEN

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LEAGUE
PREMIER DIVISION
SUNDAY MARCH 5,
3PM KICK OFF**

INSIDE

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ACTION SPECIAL**

Plus++Plus++Plus



**PAT BONNER'S
BIG INTERVIEW**



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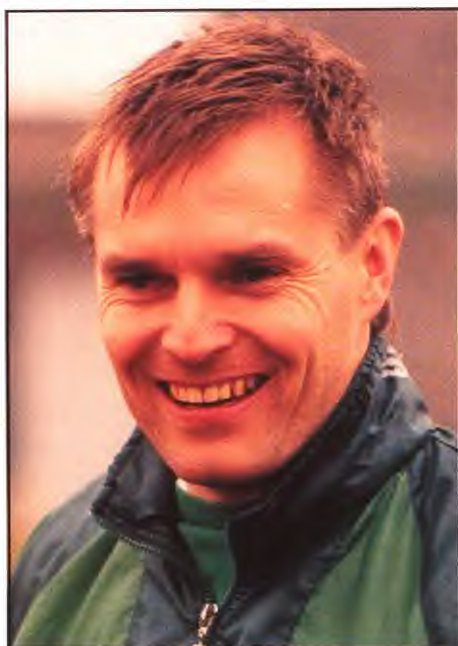
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TOMMY BURNS



FIRST of all I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Aberdeen Football Club who, like ourselves, have been going through a traumatic time recently.

I'm sure that with a man of the calibre of Roy Aitken at the helm they will get out of their difficulties.

Big Roy will take time to settle and make his mind up about players and strengthening his side.

But we have to get on with our own business and by that I mean collecting the full three points available in today's meeting.

Despite Aberdeen's recent problems that won't be easy. But we will be busy making our own improvements.

And we will make it our business to put those in place between now and the end of the season, with turning draws into wins one of our main priorities.

There have been too many one point games for Celtic this season.

To be fair, we should have won a good number of those drawn games. But the fact remains that they were still tied and with the three points system now in use, that is why we have fallen so far behind.

But, as I said earlier, we aim to start rectifying that by going out to earn three points today.

Fluency

I felt we that in the first half at Tynecastle on Saturday we played reasonably well.

However, I feel that we never passed the ball as well as we know we can do.

The team should be passing with more fluency and consistency and if that had been the case Hearts may not have been able to find a way back into the game.

Still, there wasn't a lot we could do about Willie Jamieson's goal as it was a bolt from the blue and came so near the final whistle there was not any time to recover from it.

We took a wee bit of a break in midweek to travel over to Malaga for the friendly with Real Madrid and despite the 2-0 defeat I still stand by making the trip as it was a good learning process.

Real are a good side and, although their side featured a fair smattering of reserve players, I was still

pleased with the game as an exercise.

However I am well aware that there was gulf between ourselves and the Spanish league leaders.

It was a marvellous atmosphere for the players to experience, in addition to coming up against a first-class team.

I hope that experience will register itself today with a winning performance and that we can take another forward step in the learning process.

‘We must make turning draws into wins a priority ;



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THE SQUADS



PAT BONNER



Referee:
A W WADDELL
(Edinburgh)

MICHAEL WATT



TOM BOYD



Linesman:
J C O'HARE
(Glenboig)

STEPHEN WRIGHT



TOSH MCKINLAY

STEPHEN GLASS



BRIAN O'NEIL

PAUL KANE



TONY MOWBRAY



Linesman:
I CATHCART
(Br. of Allan)

BRIAN IRVINE



PETER GRANT

GARY SMITH



BRIAN MCLAUGHLIN

STAND-BYS:
Gordon Marshall(GK),
Charlie Nicholas, Garry Carberry
Aberdeen-Derek Stillie(GK), Hugh Robertson,
Colin Woodthorpe

EOIN JESS



PHIL O'DONNELL

RAYMOND MCKINNON



PIERRE VAN HOOIJDONK

PETER HETHERSTON



WILLIE FALCONER

BILLY DODDS



JOHN COLLINS

DUNCAN SHEARER



ANDY WALKER

MASCOT:
LUKE MCCLURE
AGE 9
FROM NORWICH

JOE MILLER



PAUL MCSTAY

SCOTT THOMSON



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

CR SMITH



+ TODAY'S VISITORS +



ABERDEEN are having a nightmare season. To see a side of their ability at the wrong end of the league is a surprise to almost every fan. But, with Roy Aitken at the helm, they will fight dooggedly to ensure they beat the drop and fall into the feared first division. Below are the players who are out for those desperate points.



GOAL GETTER ...
Duncan Shearer has missed a lot of the season through injury but has now returned to the Aberdeen side. His talents in front of goal could be a saviour for the struggling side but it has been the service to the front players that is the problem.

MICHAEL WATT takes over between the posts after Theo Snelders was given his marching orders last weekend.

The young keeper is no stranger to the big time after a number of first team appearances. He is one of the best second string keepers in the country and his talents have been recognised with a number of call-ups to the national u-21 side.

STEPHEN WRIGHT is one of the most talked about defenders in the country and is being eyed with envious eyes from teams south of the border. It would be no surprise if he was to leave Pittodrie at the end of the season but the fair-haired attack minded left back is set to stay and help the Dons out of their present troubles.

STEPHEN GLASS has used the injury to Colin Woodthorpe to his advantage by breaking into the first team. His inexperience is his only weakness but he is holding up to the rigours of the relegation dog fight well.

PAUL KANE was rescued any Aberdeen after a spell at Oldham that would not go down as the highlight of his career. Was in and out of the side for a spell but recently has found form and is normally a regular. Has the kind of grit and determination that Roy Aitken's side need if they are to beat the drop.

BRIAN IRVINE is another of the Dons squad who has recently returned from a long spell on the treatment table. Has his critics but always gives 100 per cent and his strength at the back can never be underestimated.

GARY SMITH is a seasoned campaigner in the Aberdeen side despite his relative youth. Tipped for stardom while plying his trade with Brockville he has always been one of the Dons most consistent performers.

EOIN JESS is probably Scotland's brightest striking hopes and it is no secret that national coach Craig Brown is looking to the likes of Jess for the future Scottish sides. Had a barren spell at the start of the season but has found the goal touch again just when it is most needed. No matter who partners him in attack, the mere mention of his name has defences quaking in their boots.

RAY MCKINNON is another of the squad who came to Pittodrie after a rough ride in England. He might not have made the grade at Nottingham Forest but his talent has never been doubted. A pacy midfielder player his passing ability make him an asset to the side.

PETER HETHERSTON was rewarded for his



+ TODAY'S VISITORS +

Dons will fight to the very last



★ **STEWART McKIMMIE** (above) has been a greta servant for the club and is a stalwart of the side. Alongside him in defence is Gary Smith who is one of the most talented stoppers in the country.

strong performances for Raith Rovers with a move to the big time only to miss out on the Coca Cola Cup win! (Let's not talk about that). Failed to break into the side earlier in the season he is more of a fringe player than a regular. However, like the rest of the side, he does not want to tumble out of the Premier Division, and so will give us all for the club.

BILLY DODDS is pacy, has an eye for goal and can lay on goals for his fellow strikers. A fine buy for Aberdeen he needs now to start banging in some goals. Undoubtedly talented his close control is his greatest asset and likes nothing better than to be running at full flow towards a retreating defence.

DUNCAN SHEARER has been on and off the treatment table all season and his absence may have something to do with Aberdeen's league position at the moment. Talk about a natural striker and Shearer comes to mind. As good in the air as on the ground his physical strength allows him to mix it with the biggest of centre halves.

JOE MILLER is well known of course to all at Celtic after the seasons he spent in the Hoops. Looked all set to leave Pittodrie at one point this season before deciding to knuckle down and fight for his place. An old fashioned type winger he can have full backs tripping over themselves as they try to catch him.

SCOTT THOMSON is one of the Pittodrie youngsters who is being called on to rescue the club from the drop. Talented and pacy he seems at home in first team football.

BRIAN GRANT is probably one of the most underrated players in the country. There are few midfielders who give as much as he does and it is a surprise his talents have not been recognised before. Whether he will play today is another matter.

+ Lowdown + Lowdown +

MICHAEL WATT (Aged 24)
Signed from Cove Rangers, 1987
STEPHEN WRIGHT (Aged 23)
Signed from Eastercraigs, 1987
STEPHEN GLASS (Aged 19)
Signed as an 'S' form
PAUL KANE (Aged 29)
Signed from Oldham, 1991
BRIAN IRVINE (Aged 29)
Signed from Falkirk, 1985
GARY SMITH (Aged 23)
Signed from Falkirk, 1991
EOIN JESS (Aged 24)
Signed from Rangers, 1987

RAY McKINNON (Aged 24)
Signed from Nottingham For, 1994
PETER HETHERSTON (Aged 30)
Signed from Raith Rvrs, 1994
BILLY DODDS (Aged 25)
Signed from St Johnston, 1994
DUNCAN SHEARER (Aged 32)
Signed from Blackburn, 1992
JOE MILLER (Aged 34)
Signed from Celtic, 1993
SCOTT THOMSON (Aged 22)
Signed from Brechin City, 1991
BRIAN GRANT (Aged 30)
Signed from Stirling Albion, 1984





Keeper has many more years to go

The big INTERVIEW PAT BONNER

“ Celtic is a major part of my life. To walk away would have been a real wrench ”

IRISH legend Pat Bonner is relishing the thought of many more years between the sticks for Celtic, knowing full well that goalkeepers can carry on performing at the highest level way past the sell-by date of most outfield players.

The 34-year-old has fought his way back into the team after starting the season as second choice to Gordon Marshall BUT since coming in Aberdeen on Boxing Day hasn't looked back.

A bug sidelined him for the recent Scottish Cup-tie against Meadowbank Thistle. But, that game apart, he has played in every match since the Pittodrie clash and is in line to make his 12th appearance with the visit of the Dons today.

However, although he is obviously happy at regaining the no.1 spot and would like to retain it as long as possible, he insists that he will know when it's time to take a back seat.

He said: "As long as I feel fit enough to play, enjoy the game and feel I can do a turn then I will be challenging for a first-team place. However the moment I believe that's not the case then I will step down. The way I feel at the moment I'd like to think that's a few years away yet.

"As long as I am up to it I will always be available for selection whenever Celtic need me."

When it comes to keeping the ball out of the net, it isn't just the needs of Celts that are on the agenda.

Packie has already won 78 international caps for the Republic of Ireland and a few more could be on their way in the next couple of years.

He said: "It's got to the stage where my international career will be winding down soon. But I'd like to get next year's European Championships out of the road first.

"Over the next couple of years I'm sure Jack Charlton will be introducing some new faces and the current side will begin breaking up.

"There are some talented youngsters on the way through and a wee bit down the road there will be a new Irish side on the horizon.

"But I'd like to think I can still do a job in the championships and, just as with Celtic, I will be available for selection."

His delight at emerging as first-team keeper is increased by the fact

Interview: JOE SULLIVAN

that he looked as if he wouldn't be appearing for club at all this season after being freed by Lou Macari.

Macari's departure, and the introduction of Tommy Burns, turned any move away from Celtic on its head.

The keeper said: "Coming back here was a major surprise as at the end of the day I thought my Celtic career was over. But I was delighted at being given the opportunity to return.

Milestone

"I had been coming into Celtic Park for so long it was a major part of my life. So to walk away from it all was a bit of a wrench.

"But I'm truly overjoyed at being back."

Indeed if Packie's wishes of playing on do come true then he could bring up a 20-year milestone in his playing career with Celtic.

He admits to achieve that would be satisfying.

Bonner, who joined the club in June 1978, remarks: "I've been here just about 17 seasons now so the 20-year figure isn't all that far off. It certainly would be nice to see it through.

"A lot has happened in those 17 years but I'm amazed at just how quickly things have been happening recently.

"The new stadium is going up and obviously I would love to play in the new arena when it is finished so that is

another incentive for me to keep in there.

"It's not just the stadium though as everything seems to be changing for the better at the club and I'm delighted to still be part of it.

"I spent two months during the summer as a non-Celtic player and I was in limbo at the time so I'd really like to make it to the 20-year mark.

"One thing is for sure though and that is that you are always a Celt no matter where you go.

"And with everything changing for the better I see this as a springboard for a very successful future."

"It's very important that we have a base to start from and the new stadium, as well as the new share structure, will enable us to attract quality players to the club.

"The difference will be seen with the new Celtic. So we will have to have things running the right way on the park as well as off it.

"And I want to be part of that and delighted that I still have that opportunity."

Part of his new contract with Celtic means that he is also involved in the set up in coaching capacity and that has also given him a new lease of life.

He claims: "This is something I'm very keen on and I'm positive there is market for coaches who specialise in bringing on young keepers.

"There are two young keepers just now with Celtic who are very promising 14-year-olds and I think it's vitally important that they start learning good habits as early as possible.

"If they can pick up the basics from myself at that early age then by the time they are 17 and playing for the youth side then they could be very close to being the finished product.

"It's a matter of them learning their trade at the earliest possible age and so far it's been very encouraging."

